High School Students’ Opinions on Nutrition Information at Point of Selection

PURPOSE
To determine the opinions of high school students regarding nutrition information at the point of selection and the influence the information will have in their decision to make healthy food choices.

METHOD
- Researchers developed focus group questions for use in three high schools in three USDA regions (Midwest, Southeast, and Southwest).
- Focus group sessions were conducted in each high school with 9th and 10th grade girls, 9th and 10th grade boys, 11th and 12th grade girls, and 11th and 12th grade boys for a total of 38 girls and 33 boys participating in the sessions.

RESULTS
- Girls and boys thought nutrition information might affect their food choices and girls were more interested in seeing nutrition information for all menu items and entrées.
- Boys were more likely to want nutrition information for entrées only and more likely to state that taste was more important than nutrition in choosing menu items.
- Girls and boys mentioned calories, fat, protein, carbohydrates as nutrients of interest and boys were more likely to want protein and vitamin information posted.

APPLICATION TO CHILD NUTRITION PROFESSIONALS
School nutrition directors can provide nutrition information in their high schools as a means of increasing trust and satisfaction with their program and as an important component of the wellness policy.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS AND SELECTED COMMENTS

Would having nutrition information change your choices?
High School Girls
- It would help me figure out what to eat on certain days
- It would help with how much results
- Probably not
- I wasn’t the time to read it

High School Boys
- I think it would
- I’m trying to gain weight so it would
- Probably not, I’m very active so I can eat anything
- If it tastes good, I eat it

Would providing nutrition information increase your confidence in the school nutrition program?
High School Girls
- Yes, definitely
- It would increase my trust
- It would help with allergies
- Probably

High School Boys
- You would know something about what you’re eating
- I think it would if the nutrition information was good
- No
- It would still taste the same

Would providing nutrition information improve the image of the school nutrition program as providing nutritious meals?
High School Girls
- I like it, but I like to have my junk
- I would show they put thought into it

High School Boys
- Yes, if they provide it (nutrition information), then they don’t have anything to hide

What was the most important topic discussed?
High School Girls
- Nutrition labels
- Variety of foods
- Sense of food
- Creating a nutritious environment

High School Boys
- Nutrition labels
- Variety of foods
- Sense of food
- Creating a nutritious environment