

Vermonters' perceptions regarding barriers to children consuming more nutritious meals at school and at home & the importance of "food, farms and nutrition" in Vermont K-12 curriculum

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Center for Rural Studies
207 Morrill Hall
University of Vermont

For more information contact:
Erin.Croom@uvm.edu

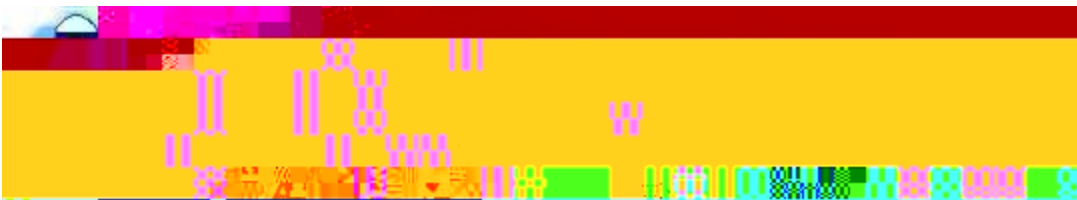


Table 1: Demographics

preference was the largest barrier. Responses included, “picky eater,” “doesn’t like fruits,” “doesn’t taste good,” “[un]willingness to eat the stuff” and “her own preferences.” Eight percent of parents indicated that the biggest barrier was due to poor quality of school food. Parents stated, “ food is awful,” “high in sodium and fat,” and “the content is not really great.”

Parents stating that ‘time’ was the main barrier (7 percent), referred to the lunch period being too short for children to eat or simply stated ‘time.’ Nearly 5 percent of parents listed institutional problem as barriers, such as “lack of government funding” and the “food system.” Those who cited vending machines as a barrier (3.7 percent) offered responses such as “snack machines prevent children from eating their healthy lunch” or simply “snack machines.” Two percent of parents noted “price” was the main barrier.

Table 3: What is the biggest barrier to your child getting more nutritious meals while at ?

	Frequency	Percent
Child's preference	68	34.5
No barriers	51	26.0
Limited Time	33	16.8
Lack of parent supervision	9	4.6
Television influence	8	4.1
Poor parent modeling	8	4.1
Availability of nutritious foods	6	3.0
Cost of nutritious foods	4	2.0
Other	7	3.6
Don't know	3	1.5
Total	197	100.0

Table 3 illustrates that 34.5 percent of parents indicated child’s preference as the biggest barrier to their child obtaining more nutritious foods while at home. Responses include, “they don’t like anything,” and “personal selections.” Of those parents indicating ‘child preference’ as a barrier, 13.2 percent (N=9) of respondents specifically noted that their child preferred junk food. Twenty six percent of parents indicated that there were no barriers. Nearly seventeen percent of parents stated limited time was the biggest barrier, specifically citing “No time,” “scheduling” and “convenience.” Lack of parent supervision (4.6 percent) included responses such as, “supervision, guidance,” “if I am working, they eat crap.” Parents indicated that television influence was the biggest barrier (4.1 percent). Three percent of parents indicated that availability of nutritious foods was the biggest limitation, citing “ having nutritious snack available” and “lack of fresh produce.” Finally, poor parent modeling (4.1 percent) included responses such as “their father,” and “what we buy.” Two percent of parents stated that ‘cost’ was a barrier; example responses included “income,” and “can’t afford nutritious meals.”

Table 4: Yes or no, do you feel that it is important for children to study “food, farms, and nutrition” as a part of the curriculum in Vermont schools?

“Food, farms and nutrition” is important	Frequency	Percent
Yes	621	96.1
No	18	2.8
Don't know	7	1.1
Total	646	100.0

Table 4 illustrates that 96 percent of respondents feel it is important for children to study “food, farms, and nutrition” as a part of the curriculum in Vermont schools (see Table 4). When asked why it was important for children to study “food, farms and nutrition” as part of the curriculum in Vermont schools, respondents provided a wide range of answers (see Table 5). The largest response was categorized as respondents’ concern for children improve and/or maintain health (24.8 percent). Examples of respondent answers: “Kids do not have good eating habits and should be taught about proper nutrition,” or simply, “health.” Fourteen percent of respondents felt it was imperative for students to understand the food system or “where food comes from.” Answers in this category included “children need to know that food doesn't just materialize, it needs to be grown and cared for, and people invest time, money and effort into making sure it is safe... children need to respect where [food] comes from and the people that produce it,” and “To understand the cycle of our food. To get the entire idea of where food comes from, how much labor goes into the process...”

Table 5: Why is it important for children to study “food, farms and nutrition” as part of the curriculum in Vermont schools?

	Frequency	Percent
Improve and/or maintain health	79	24.8
Understand food system	84	13.8
Help children make good choices	74	12.2
Vermont history & heritage	72	11.8
Obesity and related disease prevention	47	7.7
Basic, essential knowledge	37	6.1
Because they are young	29	4.8
General Awareness	24	3.9
Understand farming	18	3.0
Parents don't teach	17	2.8
Counteract TV, junk food	17	2.8
Important for the future	9	1.5
Other	30	4.9
Total	609	100.0

Approximately 12 percent of respondents felt that including “food, farm and nutrition” in the Vermont curriculum was important so children could make informed choices about their food and related policies, as well as so children could learn to take care of themselves. Respondents stated that teaching ‘food, farms and nutrition’ “gives kids

information so they can make better food choice,” and “ makes them better able to take care of themselves.” Twelve percent of respondents reported the importance of children understanding the legacy and history of agriculture in Vermont. Responses included, “Farming is an important part of the heritage of this state, [there] won't be many farms left in the future,” and agriculture is the “backbone of our state.”

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Appendix A

Vermont Poll Questions

*Questions 20 & 21 asked to parents only.

Q: q20 *****