

ABSTRACT

THESIS: The Effect of Vermicomposting on Fruit Consumption in the Elementary School Lunchroom: A Pilot Study

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Children are consuming “too many calories and not enough nutrients” (USDA, DHHS, 2010).

The number of children considered overweight or obese in the United States has risen substantially, and children are not meeting many of the requirements for what is considered to be a healthy diet. Schools have the ability to play a unique role in a national effort to educate children on the importance of healthy food choice and steer children toward behavior change that encourages the consumption of healthier foods. This study measured the effect of an interactive vermicomposting model in the elementary school lunchroom as a visual cue and environmental stimulus to promote behavior change in children and encourage the increased consumption of whole fruit. Students were introduced to the concept of vermicomposting, and an interactive vermicomposting bin was placed in the cafeteria. For a portion of the study, worm stickers were also utilized as a visual cue. Students were given the opportunity to provide fruit remnants (i.e. cores, peels) to the worms as food. Compared to baseline, both the vermicomposting and the vermicomposting + stickers led to a significant increase in fruit consumption. However, the vermicomposting + stickers did not lead to a significant increase when compared to the vermicomposting alone.