

Can Branding Improve School Lunches?

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Abstract

As school food services outsource more and more of their food preparation, the processed products they offer to school children are increasingly branded. There is a legitimate concern that branding will make the more indulgent foods even more attractive. Conversely, a promising question is: could branding more dramatically improve the attractiveness of healthier foods? Brands, characters, and icons attract the attention and interest of children. Pairing favorable icons with healthy food is not widely used, yet a low cost way to make healthy food more salient could be to associate it with a favorable icon. In fact, children doubled their apple choice when it was paired with a character icon. This is in contrast to the icon having no effect on cookie selection.

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