



Promoting Child Involvement in Food Decision-Making for School-Aged Youth

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Background

Research suggests child involvement in meal preparation is associated with greater preference for and consumption of healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables (Berge et al., 2006; Vollmer & Baietto, 2017).

However, parents may be reluctant to involve children due to increased time or hassle (Fulkerson et al., 2011).

For school-aged youth who are becoming increasingly autonomous and strive to make decisions for themselves (Kuhn & Franklin, 2006), involvement could occur in different forms including help with food shopping and decisions about their own food, such as lunches for school.

To encourage child involvement, indirect outreach such as parent newsletters is not always effective (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hingle et al., 2010), but incorporating interactive technology could help engage parents (Mitchell et al., 2013).

Objectives

Objective 1: Describe child involvement in:

- Food preparation at home
- Food shopping
- Decisions about lunches
- Selection of lunch foods
- Lunch preparation

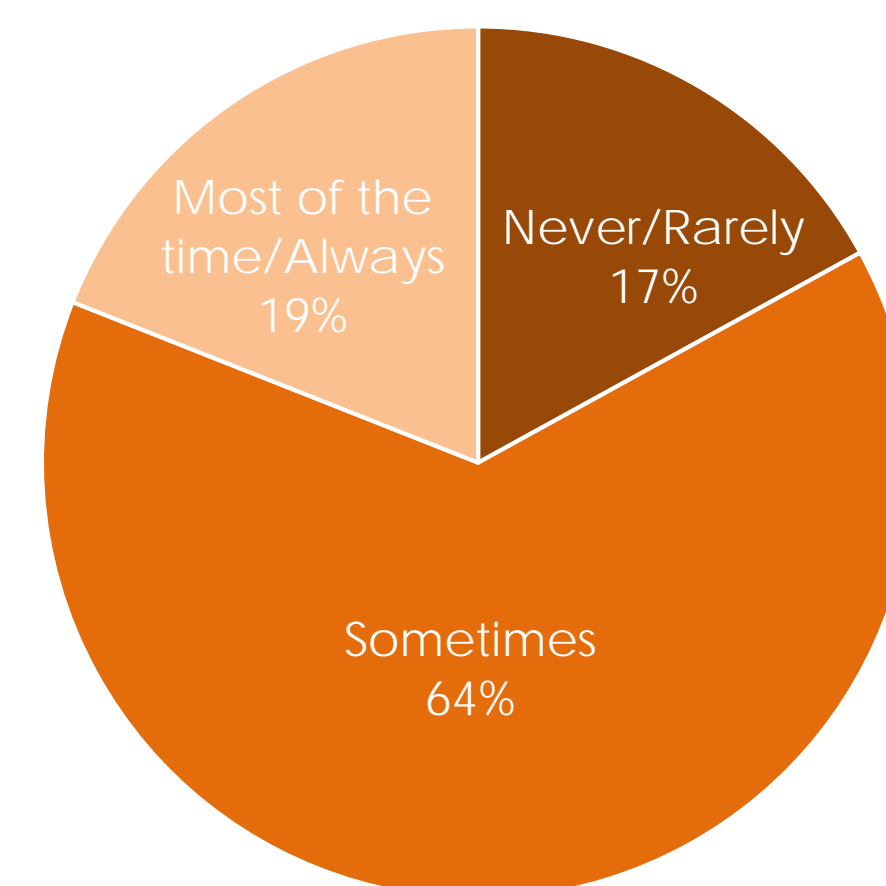
Objective 2: Examine associations between child involvement and dietary intake

Objective 3: Describe outreach and engagement with newsletters including added online interactive component aimed at promoting child involvement

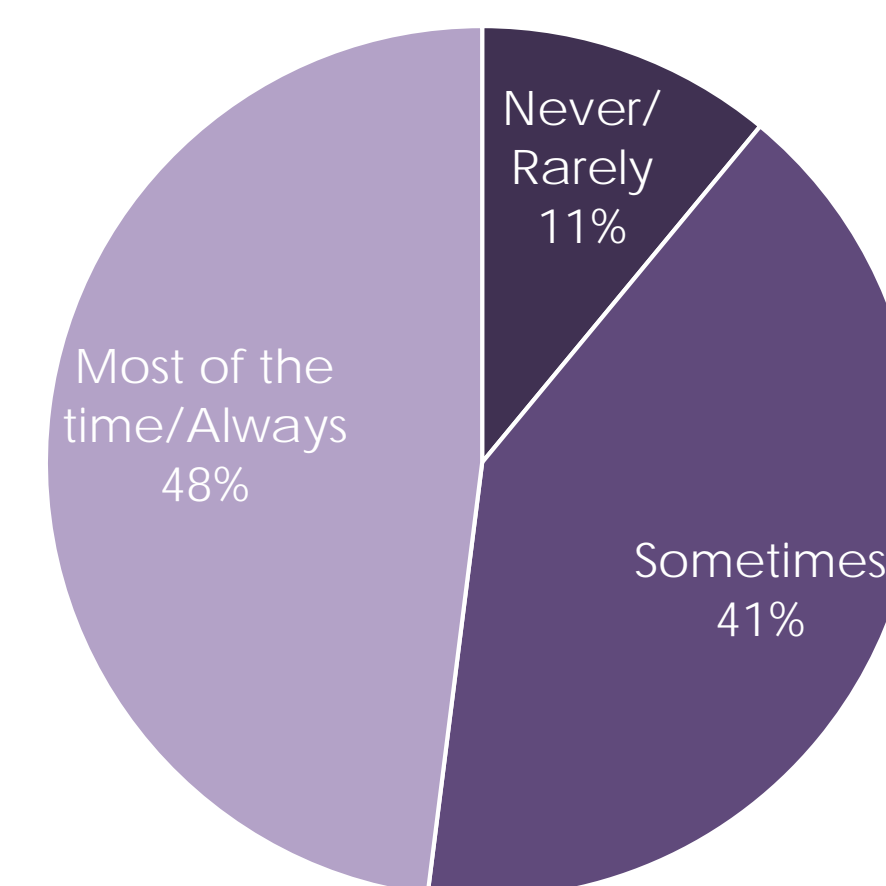
Objective 1: Child Involvement

Sample 1:

How often does your child help with preparing food at home?

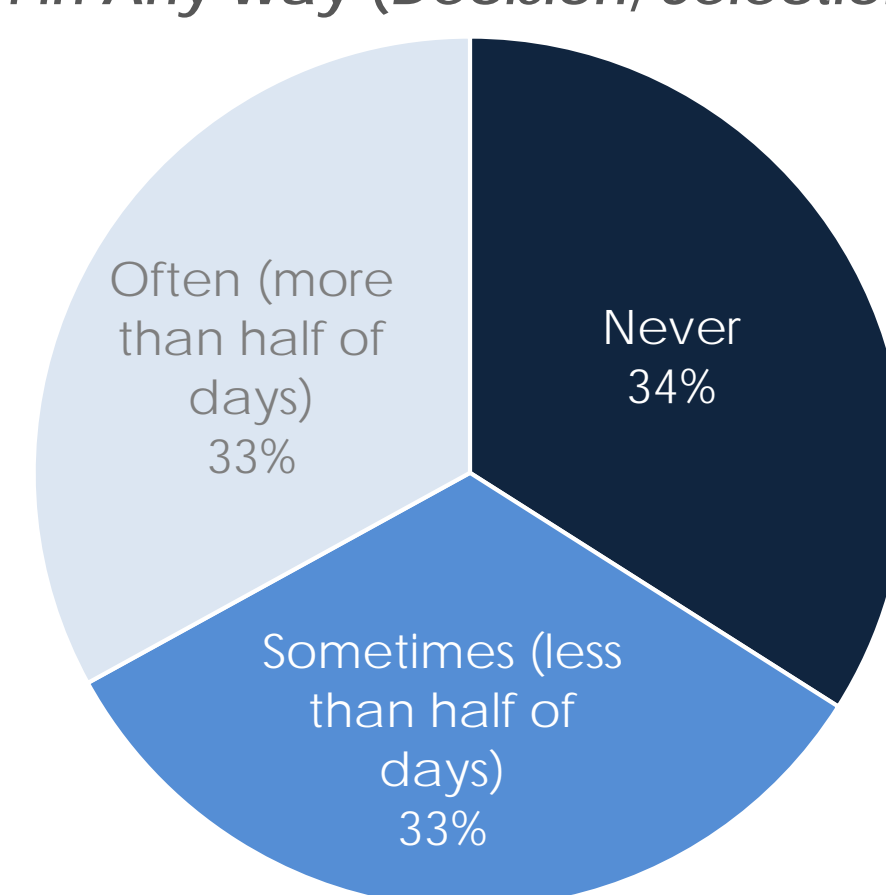


How often does your child go shopping for food with you?

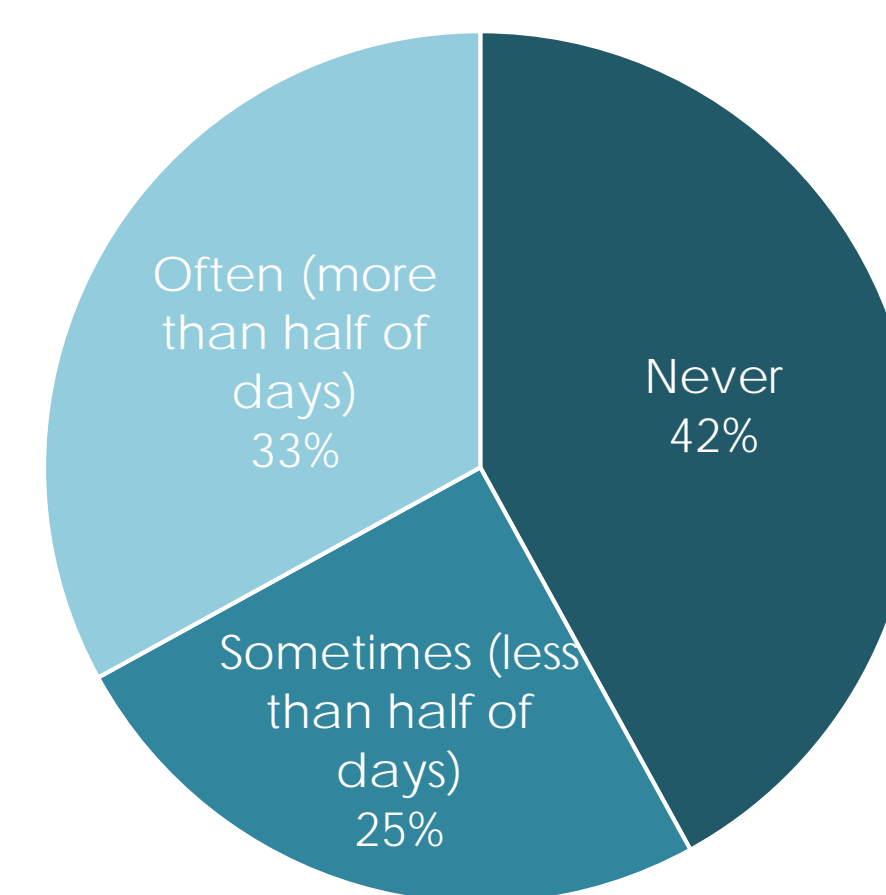


Sample 2:

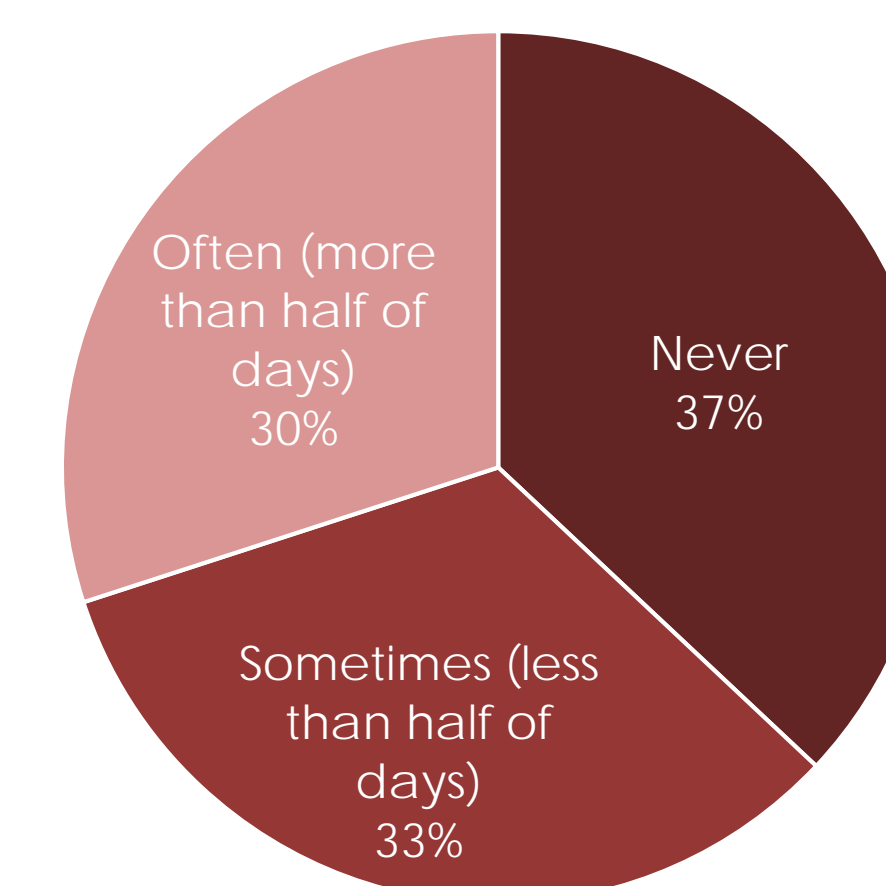
Overall Frequency of Child Involvement with Lunch in Any Way (Decision, Selection, Prep)



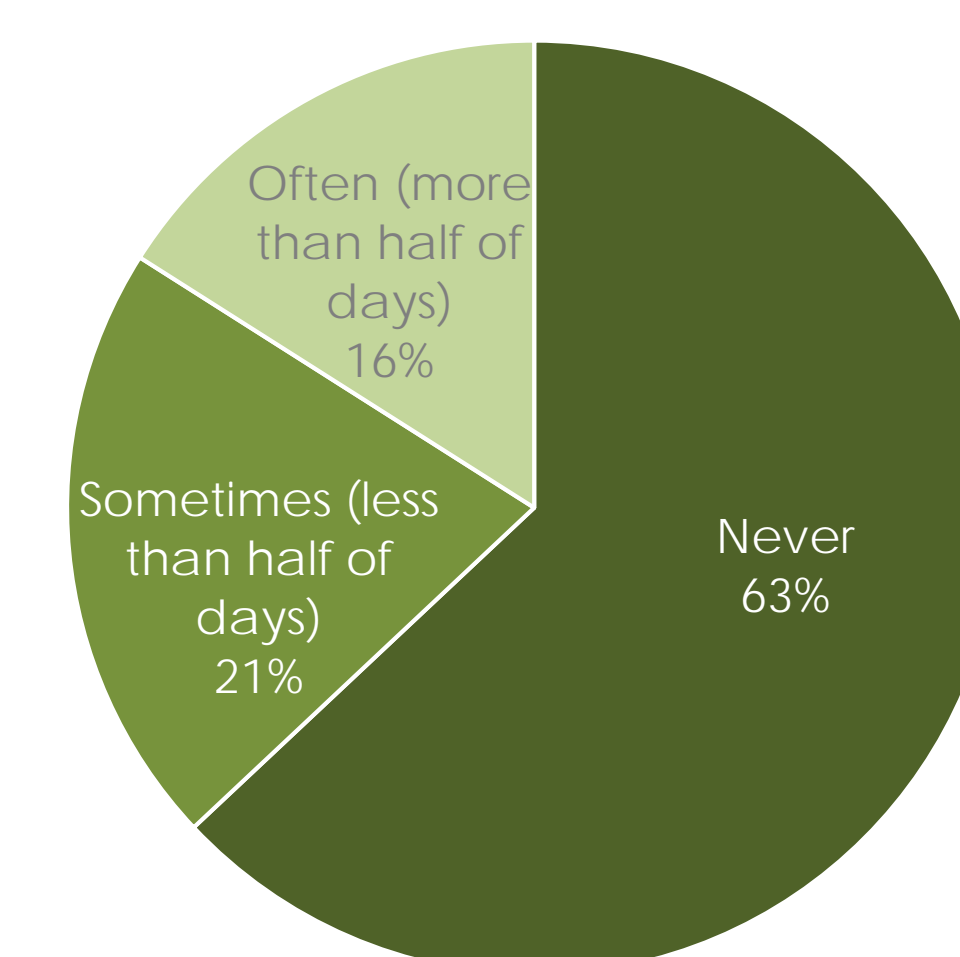
Frequency of Child Involvement with Decisions about Lunches (school-bought versus home-packed lunch)



Frequency of Child Involvement with Selection of Lunch Foods

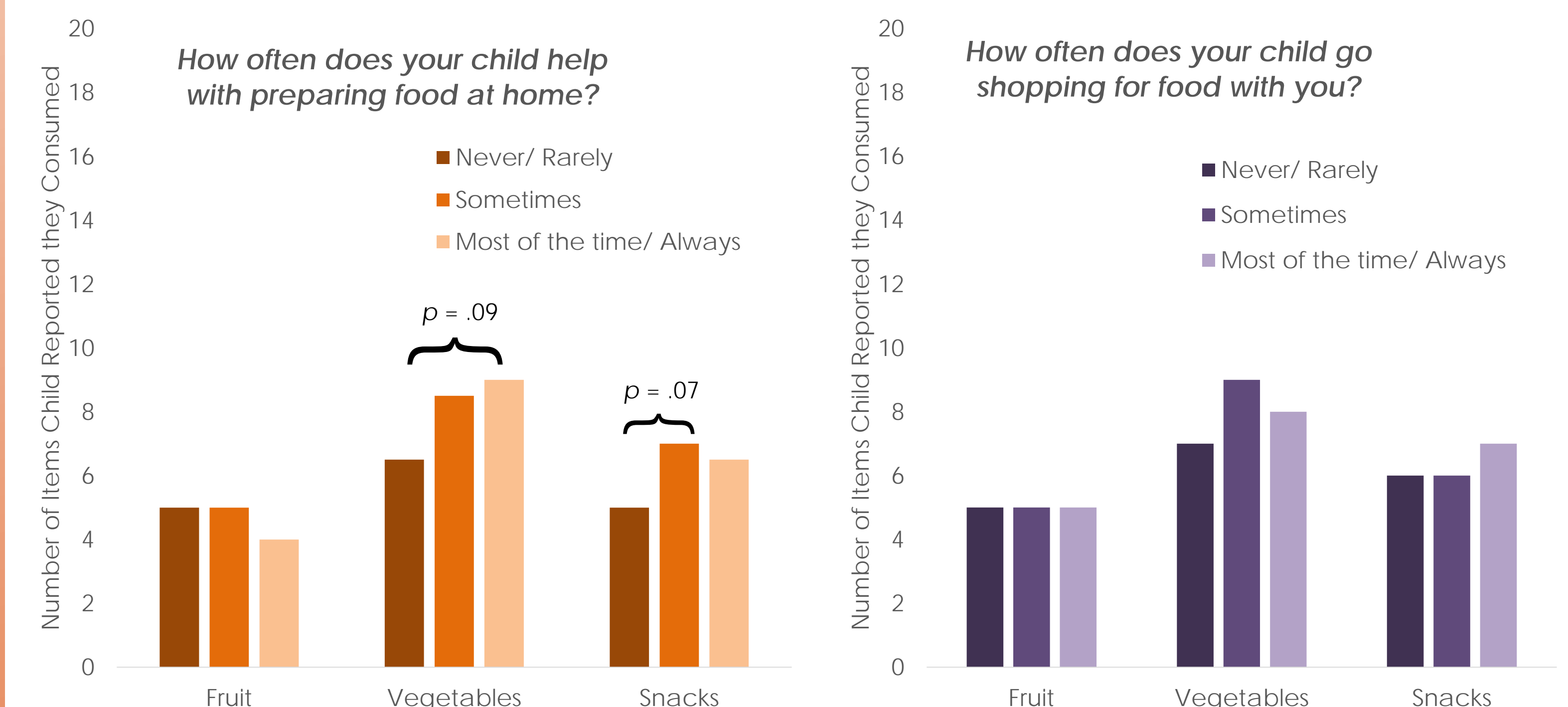


Frequency of Child Involvement with Lunch Preparation



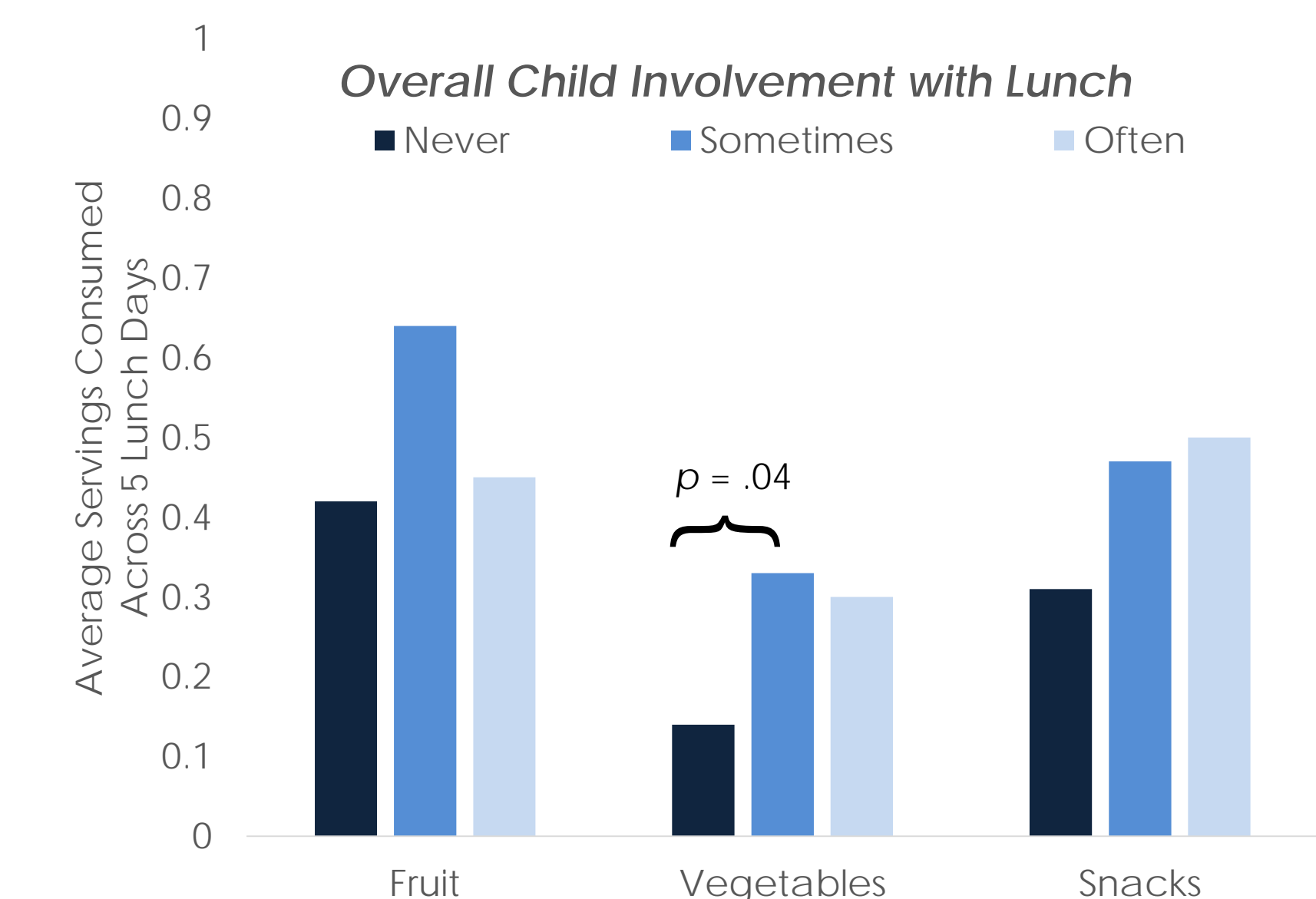
Objective 2: Associations with Dietary Intake

Sample 1: In line with prior research, child involvement in food prep can encourage consumption of food at home, including a greater variety of vegetables. Involvement in food shopping did not have the same effect.



Graphs depict median values compared using Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis Tests

Sample 2: Child involvement with lunches (including help with prep and food selection) can also encourage consumption of healthy foods.



Graph depicts median values compared using Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test. Findings for child involvement with preparation and selection follow same pattern. There were no significant differences for involvement in decisions about lunch type.

UC Davis Parents to Peers Study

Sample 1: Parents and their 4th, 5th or 6th grade student ($n = 195$)

- Completed surveys about:
 - How often does your child go shopping for food with you?
 - How often does your child help prepare meals at home?
 - Child reports of food consumption in the past 7 days (y/n) for items, summed in categories of fruits, vegetables, and snacks (Di Noia et al., 2014; Masters et al., 2014; Vespalainen et al., 2015)

Sample 2: Parents and their 4th, 5th or 6th grade student ($n = 121$)

- Reported daily for 5 school days:
 - Did your child help decide if they would buy lunch or bring a packed lunch from home?
 - Did your child help select items in the lunch (for packed)?
 - Did your child help prepare their lunch (for packed)?
- Students' lunches were imaged and analyzed to calculate the average number of servings they consumed of fruits, vegetables, and snacks across 5 school lunches (Taylor et al., 2018)

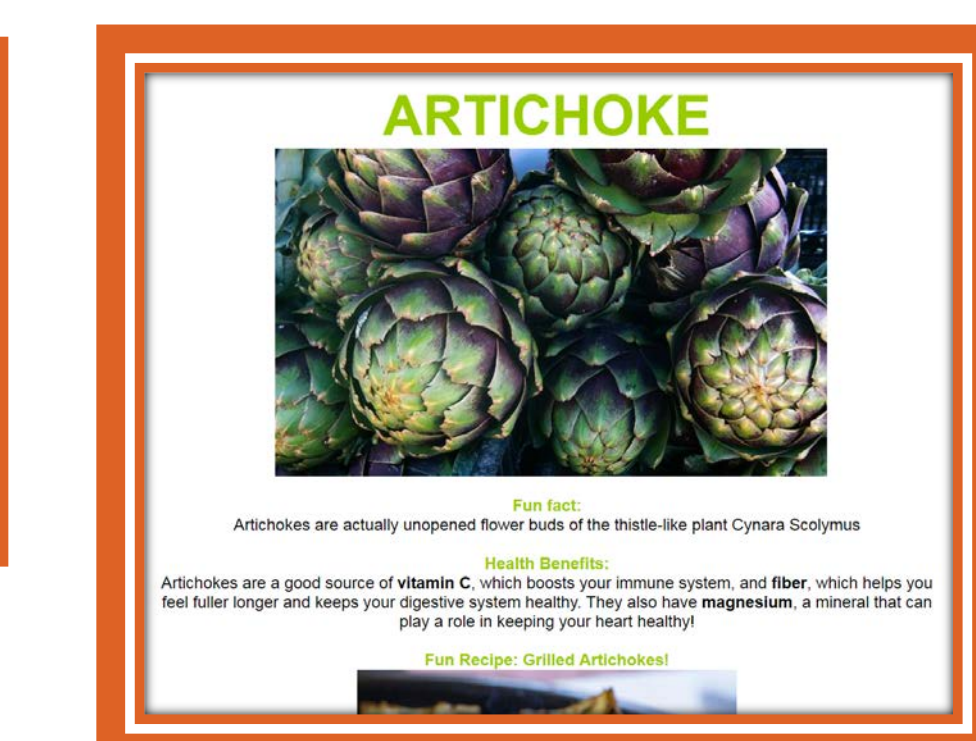
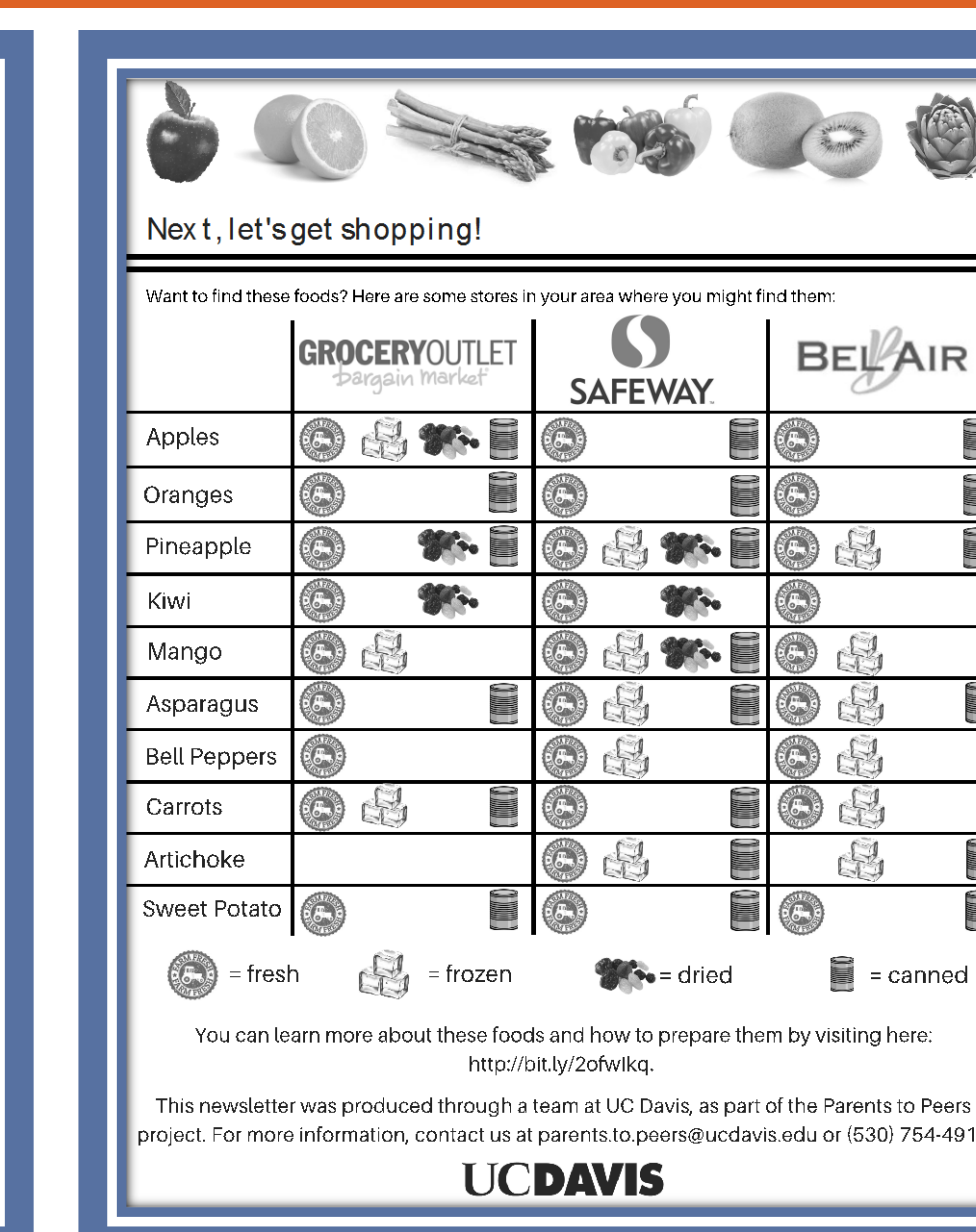
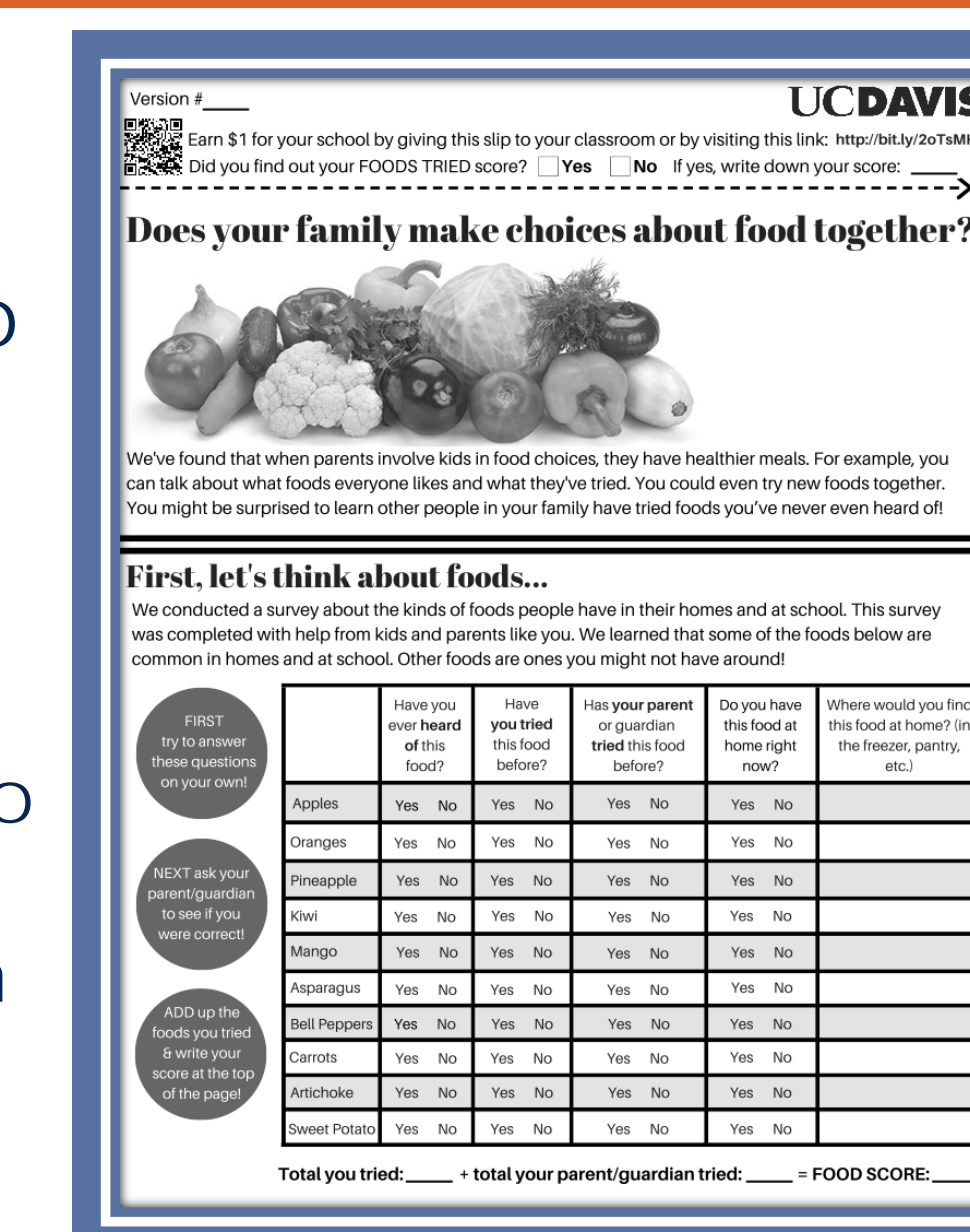
Objective 3: Outreach

We sent home family newsletters with links to an online, interactive component geared towards encouraging child involvement in:

- **Food selection** via a "foods tried score" and info about new foods
- **Shopping together** via info about local places to buy new foods, the costs, and forms (e.g., frozen)
- **Meal preparation** via recipes for new foods with child-specific recipe tips

Approximately 400 newsletters were distributed to students in their classrooms

- **63 parents (16%) indicated they saw the newsletter**, via online or paper reports returned to the school for which they received \$1
- **Of those, 58 (92%) entered a foods tried score**, indicating some engagement
- The online interactive component received **15 visits**
- Avg. time spent on website was ~ **13 minutes**



Discussion

For families of school-aged youth who find involving children in meal prep difficult, involvement with school lunches may be an easier option.

Parent engagement through newsletters and promoting child involvement remain difficult. More work is needed to address barriers.

Additionally, new avenues to connect with parents, such as through social media, need to be explored.

Contact

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For more information about the Parents to Peers study: ontailab.faculty.ucdavis.edu/research-projects