

# Impact of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Upon Vegetable Neophobia in Vermont Elementary School Students

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## ABSTRACT

Established in 2002, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides fresh fruit and vegetables to students outside of the cafeteria in all 50 states. Considerable research has explored the program's intention to motivate students to try new fruit and vegetables and provide nutrition education to produce sustainable healthy consumption. The present research focused on students' willingness to consume new vegetables. Data collection included student survey questions from the Farm to School Toolkit, school database information, and researchers' observations. Utilizing four survey questions regarding vegetable neophobia, student responses at Vermont elementary schools with and without a FFVP were compared. The majority of schools were located in counties with lower per capita income, higher percentage of residents living below the federal poverty line, and fewer residents completing post-secondary education in comparison to state averages. Data analysis included comparisons of averages and SPSS statistical analysis. Results suggest that students were more willing to consume new vegetables at schools without a FFVP. SPSS statistical analysis software indicated that income level was not a statistically significant confounder and schools with 100 students or less were significantly more willing to consume new vegetables ( $0.006 \geq p$ ). Food service staff and teacher interviews at elementary schools in Vermont provided insight into barriers to FFVP efficacy: lack of time, miscommunication between teachers and food service staff, and prioritization of other food service programs over the FFVP. This study provides a foundation for future research endeavors and the development of strategies to increase FFVP efficacy.

## Keywords:

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), vegetable neophobia, program efficacy