Opt-In Consent Process.

This study uses an opt-in parental consent process, meaning your explicit consent is required for your child to participate in this study. To provide consent for your child to participate in the study, please click the link below to electronically sign the consent form. By signing, you are agreeing to allow your child to participate in the research as described. **Please sign the link by February 28th, 2025.**

CLICK HERE FOR THE OPT-IN CONSENT FORM LINK.

HEALTHY

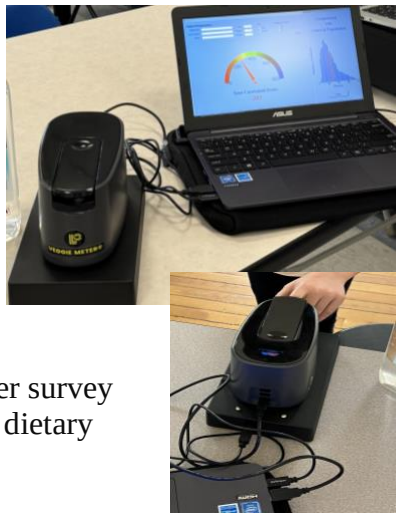
Helping Early Adolescents Live Their Healthiest Youth

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child is invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Amelia Sullivan, Registered Dietitian and Doctoral Research Assistant, and Dr. Jade McNamara, Associate Professor of Human Nutrition in the School of Food and Agriculture at the University of Maine and Registered Dietitian. **As a part of your school's ongoing participation in the Maine Farm and Sea to School Institute, your school has been selected to participate in a $5000.00 intervention funded by Wyman's Wild Blueberry Research & Innovation Center Fund**. The behavioral economics-based interventions will take place during the school lunch period in the spring and will involve various activities designed to encourage healthier food choices and improved nutrition behaviors, such as new equipment, a mini grant for the nutrition director, and educational taste tests. The purpose of our research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions in improving fruit intake, enhancing nutrition security, and reducing food waste among middle-school students.

What Will Your Child Be Asked to Do?

If you consent to your child's participation, your child will be asked to participate in the following *confidential* activities during a lunch period in the month of **January/February** and again in **May 2025:**



- ***Skin Carotenoid Levels.*** The Veggie Meter® is a portable, validated, and non-invasive device used to assess skin carotenoid levels with the touch of a finger. This serves as an objective biomarker of fruit and vegetable intake. This should take no more than 5 minutes of students' time.
- ***Qualitative Photographs***. Photographs of your child's lunch tray will be taken before-and after-lunch to assess food intake and waste. Your child will not be photographed under any circumstance; only your child's trays will be captured. This should take no more than 5 minutes of your child's time
- ***Paper Survey.*** Your child will be invited to participate in a paper survey regarding their perceptions of the school food environment and dietary habits. This will take about 10-15 minutes of your child's time.
    - **Sample Survey Question:**
        1. One of the school lunchroom staff knows my name:

a. Strongly disagree
b. Disagree
c. Neutral
d. Agree
e. Strongly agree

In addition to your consent, **your child will be asked to verbally assent to participate prior to starting these activities.** The total time required for these activities is approximately **15-20 minutes** and all activities will occur within the designated lunch period.

Risks.
Risks include time, inconvenience, and the potential risk of confidentiality loss. Data collection activities will take place during the school lunch period, ensuring no missed class time. While confidentiality will be prioritized, there is a small risk, where full confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. To minimize this, participants will be assigned unique IDs, and identifying information will be securely stored and destroyed by February 2026.

Benefits.
This study aims to improve students' dietary choices and enhance the school food environment. By integrating an educational component focused on behavioral economics, the study provides tools to help students make healthier food choices, aligning with the National School Lunch Program standards. While there are no direct benefits to students from participating in surveys or other assessments, the research will help identify factors influencing fruit consumption and develop future interventions to improve diet quality and reduce food waste. These outcomes are important for addressing poor diet quality among adolescents.

Confidentiality.
All data collected will be *confidential*. To protect your child's privacy:

- Your child's name will not be on any of the data. A unique ID code will be used to protect your child's identity. A key linking your child's name to the data will be kept separate on a password-protected computer with software that provides additional security. The key will be destroyed by February 2026.
- Survey responses will be digitized and stored indefinitely. Paper forms (e.g., surveys) will be stored in a locked drawer and will be destroyed by December 2025.
- Photographs will be removed from the camera by December 2025 and stored securely on a password-protected computer indefinitely.
- Veggie Meter data will be stored securely on a password-protected computer indefinitely.
- All data collected will be presented in a summary format, and individual identifying data will not be used. Any information that could lead to the identification of a participant will not be reported.

Voluntary Participation.

- Participation is voluntary.
- Your child may choose to skip any activity or question.
- Your child can withdraw from the study at any time. If they withdraw, their data will also be removed from the study unless the key that links their data to their identity has already been destroyed (February 2026).

Contact Information.
If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

- Amelia Sullivan | amelia.sullivan@maine.edu
- Jade McNamara | jade.mcnamara@maine.edu, (207) 581-4895

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Compliance, University of Maine:

- umric@maine.edu, (207) 581-2657

Thank you for your time and consideration of this study.
Sincerely,

Amelia Sullivan, MS, RDN
Doctoral Research Assistant
University of Maine

Dr. Jade McNamara, RDN
Associate Professor of Human Nutrition
University of Maine