***That’s Me: My Choices* Survey Evaluation Activities**

*Submitted by the Michigan Fitness Foundation*

**Evaluation Framework Indicators:**
A three-year process to develop to revise *That’s Me: My Choices* based on extensive expert review, and verification of validity and reliability, produced a useful evaluation that is understandable and appropriate to use with children in grades three and higher in SNAP-Ed programs.
Outcomes indicators identified in the [SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/national-snap-ed/snap-ed-evaluation-framework-and-interpretive-guide) *That's Me: My Choices* can measure include the Healthy Eating ([ST1](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/materials/framework-indicator-individual-level-st1-healthy-eating), [MT1](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/materials/framework-indicator-individual-level-mt1-healthy-eating-behaviors), [LT1](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/materials/framework-indicator-individual-level-lt1-healthy-eating-behaviors)) and Food Safety ([ST4](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/materials/framework-indicator-st4-food-safety-goals-and-intentions), [MT4](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/materials/framework-indicator-individual-level-mt4-food-safety-behaviors), [LT4](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/materials/framework-indicator-individual-level-lt4-food-safety-behaviors)) indicators with MT1 and MT2 measures being 2 of the priority indicators identified by the USDA for SNAP-Ed programming. Specific outcome measures of these indicators *That's Me: My Choices* can report on are:

* ST1a: Fruit
* ST1b: Vegetables
* ST1g: Make half your plate fruits and vegetables-vary your veggies
* ST1h: Make half your plate fruits and vegetables-focus on fruit
* ST1l: Drink water instead of sugary beverages
* ST4: Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often
* \*MT1c: Ate more than one kind of fruit
* \*MT1d: Ate more than one kind of vegetable
* \*MT1g: Drinking Water
* \*MT1: Drinking fewer sugar-sweetened beverages
* \*MT2f: Buy Fruits and Vegetables
* MT4a: Clean: wash hands and surfaces often
* LT1: Healthy Eating Behaviors
* LT4: Food Safety Behaviors

*\*indicates measure associated with one of the USDA priority indicators for SNAP-Ed*

**Evaluation Activities:**
In the early years of the [PE-Nut](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/materials/pe-nut%E2%84%A2-physical-education-and-nutrition-education-working-together) program, it became clear that a short, understandable survey that was valid and reliable was needed to assess food behaviors of children in elementary grades of low-income schools. To meet that need, the development of a survey (*That’s Me: My Choices*) began in 2009; field testing and establishing validity and reliability was completed in 2012.

Phase One included professionals with expertise in evaluation, community health, and nutrition education program planning and implementation reviewing the draft survey to determine if items accurately and completely assessed constructs of interest. They were also asked to review items related to understandability and appropriateness for the target group. Second, SNAP-Ed nutrition educators (n=22) critiqued the survey and made suggestions to improve wording of the items and instructions. Third, teachers of grades 2-5 identified words they thought would be difficult for children to read or understand and provided feedback about students’ ability to use “bubble sheets” to indicate their answers. Students in grades 2-5 identified words that were difficult for them to read or understand. Lastly, the MFF evaluation team reviewed items and responses options. Numerous changes were made based on expert review.

A major decision point related to which type of survey would yield more accurate results, a traditional pre/post format or a post-test that included a retrospective pre-test recall format where at the end of the lessons children reflected back to identify pre-program behaviors. The post/retrospective pre-test was selected due to several advantages:

* It controls for some threats to validity better than the traditional pre/post format: investigator pleasing (relationship between students and educators that formed across the year), social acquiescence (learning the most acceptable/positive answer from lesson content), and lack of interest (being more interested in healthy eating at the end of the program than at the start).
* Scores for the pre-test students completed before the program were not statistically different than pre-scores from the retrospective pre-test completed after lessons, for the same students.
* Time to administer pre-tests during or before the program is not needed with the retrospective pre-test version since students’ record pre and post-behaviors at the end of the program.
* Matched pairs are created automatically since students complete the pre-test and post-test at the same time (end of program). Therefore, all data can be used instead of eliminating surveys that were only completed at the start of the program or the end of the program.
* It was not difficult for most students to reflect back to identify their “pre” behaviors. Since most of the students that reported difficulty with recall were in second grade, the survey is recommended for use in third grade and higher.

A Cronbach alpha of .83 resulted from a test-retest procedure to check reliability (temporal stability) of the tool (a minimum of .7 is acceptable.

Phase 2 of the survey development involved finding out how the survey performed during program implementation. It was used as part of the [PE-Nut](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/materials/pe-nut%E2%84%A2-physical-education-and-nutrition-education-working-together) program in 250 classrooms throughout the state. Nutrition educators followed the protocol for survey administration. Educators indicated that completing the survey was not difficult for students and that they were engaged in the process. Students followed the instructions and understood how to select a response. Survey results (n=5,105, mean age=8.9 years) showed that students had statistically significant change on each item and for all items combined. Change was statistically significant at every grade level. Although girls had greater overall change, both boys and girls showed significant change.

Phase 3 included impact evaluation studies and further validity studies comparing results for students that did (intervention group) and did not (comparison group) receive classroom nutrition education lessons. The experimental group scores were significantly higher than the comparison group for 11 of the 12 items measured on *That’s Me: My Choices*.

Using *That’s Me: My Choices* and the nutrition section of the School Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) questionnaire for fourth graders, a previously validated dietary assessment instrument, data was collected in 10, 4th grade classrooms in the Van Buren Intermediate School District and in Inkster Schools to perform concurrent validation/invalidation tests. The purpose of this was to test if *That’s Me* is a valid survey instrument for Fruit and Vegetable consumption by comparing *That’s Me* results to SPAN results for the same classrooms and students as well as if *That's Me* information can predict SPAN fruit and vegetable consumption measures.

Both the SPAN and the *That's Me* fruit and vegetable questions show some internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha); there may be an argument that *That's Me* performs slightly better overall. Additionally, the *That's Me* question on “I eat vegetables” contains meaningful and statistically significant information useful for predicting the outcome of the SPAN vegetable consumption question. The converse of this is also true, but not to the same extent. Heuristically, *That's Me* seems to capture more information on vegetables than does SPAN. Choosing water, washing hands, and trying new foods had predictive power for SPAN fruit and possibly vegetables, but not for *That’s Me* fruit or vegetables. Race is an important explanatory variable for SPAN outcomes but not *That’s Me* and classroom is a confounding variable. Despite these exciting results a larger sample size is needed to establish statistical significance and full confidence in the findings (e.g. the results are strongly affected by classroom). In summary, the findings are promising and further studies are warranted.

*That's Me: My Choices* was presented as an emerging evaluation tool at the 2010 Society for Nutrition Education and behavior annual Conference in Reno, Nevada. The abstract was published as; [Scott, MK, Murphy, A, Sheppard, L, Cullen, S. Involving students in validation of a nutrition education behavior change survey. JNEB. 2010; 42(4S): S79.](http://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046%2810%2900144-2/abstract)