Children and Food: Public Policy Informed by Science

Marlene B. Schwartz, Ph.D.

Yale Center for Eating and Weight Disorders
Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity
Yale University Department of Psychology

The food environment

Poor Foods	Healthy Foods
Highly accessible	Less accessible
Convenient	Less convenient
Good tasting	Worse tasting
Promoted heavily	Not promoted
Inexpensive	More expensive

Possible Remedies

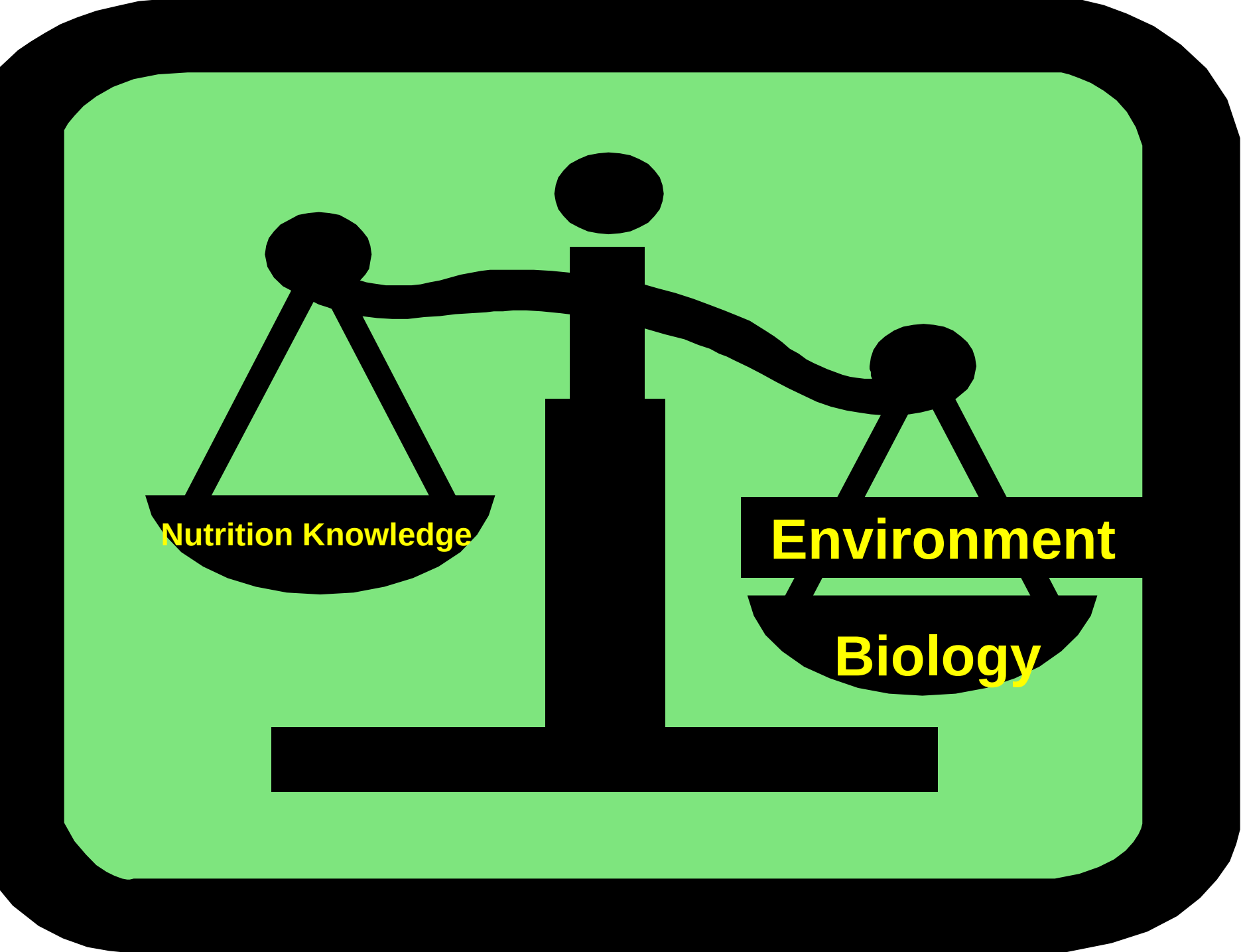
- Treat unhealthful foods like cigarettes – stop advertising to kids, ban from schools
- Tell people to be more personally responsible, eat all foods in moderation, and exercise more
- Change the environment so it is easier to eat better, and harder to eat worse

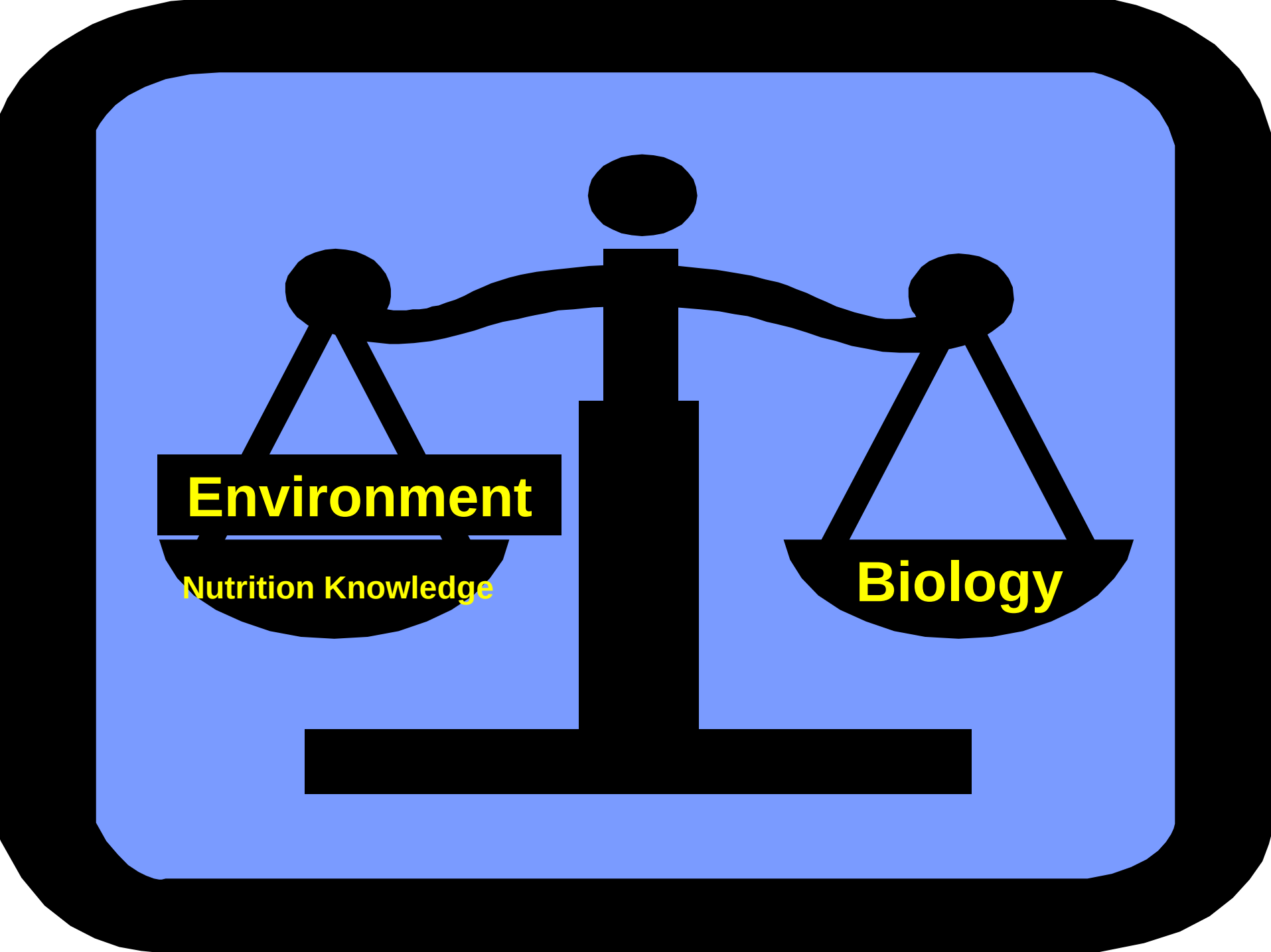
Some progress

- Easier to eat better
  - CT mandate for healthy alternatives
  - apple slices instead of French fries
  - salad bars at schools and restaurants
- But, most children are still choosing the unhealthful foods

Why aren’t children choosing the “healthy choices”?

Chee·tos
BRAND
PUFFED
CONTAINS
REAL
CHEESE!
OREO
NABISCO
OREO
Ahoy!
Chocolate Chip
Cookies
Real Chocolate Chips
HERSHEY'S
MILK CHOCOLATE
1/2 LB.
Real
Chocolate
Nestlé
milk chocolate
net wt 5 oz
Peter
Pan
CREAMY
PEANUT BUTTER
Salami
HEBREW
NATIONAL
BORDEN
EAGLE BRAND


Nutrition Knowledge
Environment
Biology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You're com'n with me!

What about “sometimes” foods?

- “Is it sometimes now?” – Cookie Monster
- The problem of variable reinforcement
- Moderation and sometimes are too vague
- Establish rules for predictable access

Establish rules for predictable access

- Return control to parents
- Keep “sometimes” foods out of the school environment
- Schools currently undermine parental efforts to limit their children’s intake
- Let parents decide how / when to provide those foods

Connecticut Bill #1309

- Beverages allowed to be sold in schools:
  - water, milk, 100% juice
- High schools can also sell
  - diet soda and sports drinks
  - 30 minutes past last lunch period
- All snacks sold must meet certain nutritional guidelines
- 20 minutes of recess for K – 5th grade
- Form School Wellness Committees

Conclusions

- Real change in eating requires real change in the environment
- We are more vulnerable to environmental influences that we like to admit
- Children and parents deserve schools that provide the best possible environment
- Right now, foods are innocent until proven guilty
- Burden of proof must shift – what is the health impact of selling a particular food in schools?