

Editor's Note

There is always an excitement in the air as the school year begins and Fall is in the air. While you will be reading this issue as winter begins, as I write this note, I have just returned from the Annual National Conference (ANC) of the School Nutrition Association. It was a meeting filled with excitement and enthusiasm—and sessions for learning new information that will make our programs better. I expect the 2005-06 school year will be filled with dynamic new challenges and initiatives, such as coordinating a new school district wellness policy and planning and implementing a new food safety program. The more I learn about a school nutrition director's job, the more I understand its complexity and challenges. The amazing thing is how so many directors do their jobs with such ease and determination—and stretch their programs to become better and better.

One goal of the *Journal* is to provide research-based information for school foodservice directors to use as they work to improve their programs by applying innovative ideas. The bottom line is that children must eat school meals to achieve, so we are always looking for interventions that will encourage children to eat.

The focus of this issue of the *Journal* is on healthy school nutrition environments that encourage students to eat school meals. The first article, "Healthy School Nutrition Environments: Views of School Foodservice Personnel Compared to Other School Personnel," features research conducted by the National Food Service Management Institute to examine issues related to healthy school nutrition environments. Both school foodservice personnel and other school personnel believed that competitive foods and school foodservice funding were barriers to a healthy school nutrition environment. Barriers related to television/media and peer pressure also were identified as being very important.

Georgiou, Martin, and Long compared food and nutrient content of school lunches as they were offered, selected, and eaten by Third Grade students in Oregon. They found that students were less likely to select vegetables compared to entrees and milk. While students consumed two-thirds of the energy and vitamin C offered, only 10% met the iron requirement. This research supports the need to increase fruit and vegetable consumption by children.

Researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agriculture Research Service Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine evaluated a social marketing campaign to increase the fruit and vegetable consumption of middle-school students. Promotional methods developed for the campaign included providing attractive displays, offering free samples, advertising, and sponsoring contests. These are activities that school foodservice directors could implement in their districts.

In another effort to focus on a particularly important nutrient in children's diets, researchers at North Dakota State University developed The Kids' Calcium Project. This was another in-school intervention that focused on providing promotional materials and education and making environmental changes to encourage milk consumption. This intervention resulted in increased milk consumption and decreased soft drink consumption during the school day.

Research conducted by Conklin, Lambert, and Lambert examined sources of information that are used by school nutrition program directors in small districts. USDA resources are used frequently and are viewed as reliable and cost effective.

Dr. Deborah Carr summarizes research projects being conducted by the National Food Service Management Institute in the areas of human resources, child care, program operations, and financial management. The Institute provides most of its resources online at NFSMI.org. Research that it conducts is intended to provide school nutrition directors with relevant research for improving program operations. Institute staff would like to hear from you about your research needs.

Finally, we have included research abstracts from July's ANC. There were many very interesting research projects showcased, including one research project conducted in Malaysia by a delegate to the Global Child Nutrition Forum. The quality and scope of research reported at this year's Child Nutrition Showcase were outstanding.

I hope that you will find information in this issue that you can put to immediate use in your operation. Remember, we encourage small, operation-based research to be submitted for inclusion in the *Journal*. If you have something interesting that you have tried in your school district, we would love to hear from you! We also continue to look for reviewers for the *Journal*, so please contact me if you have interest in reviewing manuscripts.

Now, back to developing wellness plans, food safety plans, and all those other important tasks that you do. Thanks for taking some time to review research that can be applied in your school district.

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Editor