

Editor's Note

The role and reach of a school nutrition director seems to be growing and getting more complex. These changes are occurring faster than ever and many new responsibilities have come about due to fresh legislation and school district initiatives.

An example of new regulation is The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. Among the enhancements made to school nutrition programs is a mandate that “each school food authority shall implement a school food safety program, in the preparation and service of each meal served to children, that complies with a hazard analysis and critical control point system established by the Secretary [of Agriculture].” Also as part of the Reauthorization Act, by the beginning of the school year that follows June 30, 2006, all districts participating in the school meal programs must have established a local school wellness policy that contains goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other activities that promote wellness. Lastly, the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* provide updated nutrition recommendations, which emphasize a set of guidelines for weight control and physical activity.

These are just a few examples of several significant changes on the horizon for school nutrition operations, and they emphasize the need for school nutrition directors to remain up-to-date on the research literature in their field. Indeed, additional studies are needed to evaluate operations in terms of how they will make changes to achieve these new goals. *The Journal of Child Nutrition & Management* provides one important venue for school nutrition professionals seeking research related to the school environment.

In this issue, there are a number of articles that address current issues in school nutrition programs. You will find a commentary on teaching food safety to teenage foodservice workers in the school environment. The authors make the case for school nutrition directors to become recognized as the food safety experts in their schools and districts. In these competitive times, school nutrition directors always need to know how their customers perceive their programs. This insight becomes even more important as changes are made to meet new program requirements. Meyer’s research, which focuses on the perceptions of upper-elementary school students toward school meals, provides a useful survey instrument in determining student assessment of the school foodservice program.

LeBlanc and Meyer found that foodservice employee and student perception of the school nutrition operation differed significantly, with employees rating satisfaction higher than students. The conclusion is that employee perception is not a good surrogate for student opinion or level of satisfaction and, thus, necessitates that students be surveyed directly to determine their perceptions of the school meals program.

Conklin et al. examine the impact of providing food nutrition information to high school students at the point of selection. These researchers found that students made more healthful food selections when given nutrition information. As we try to change nutrition behaviors, this study offers valuable insight into the success of one strategy for change.

Olds and Sneed examine the efficiency of using the refrigerator, blast chiller, and chill stick for cooling chili. They found that the blast chiller was the only cooling method that met the time and temperature standards designated in the amended 2001 FDA Food Code. These data may serve as an impetus for school nutrition directors to change standard operating procedures for cooling food.

Finally, the FNS Research Corner provides an update of recently completed and current U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA/FNS) research. The government researchers have just completed an evaluation study of the school breakfast program pilot in which a free breakfast was offered to all students in the pilot schools. In addition, the FNS has three research projects in process, including the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment III.

I hope you find all of the articles in this issue of *The Journal of Child Nutrition & Management* useful and applicable to your school nutrition operation. Please feel encouraged to contact the authors if you require more information about their research.

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Editor