

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This Spring 2016 issue of *The Journal of Child Nutrition and Management* includes eight Research in Action articles on a wide variety of topics and one Current Issues paper. Many of the papers published in this issue relate in some way to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA), which was passed in 2010. In the current JCNM issue, Katherine Smith and fellow researchers evaluated the quality of school lunches before and after HHFKA using the Healthy Eating Index 2010. Results show that school lunches after HHFKA were improved with fewer empty calories served, more total fruit served and consumed, and less sodium. In a qualitative study, Yon and associates investigated school nutrition directors' perspectives regarding the new USDA school meal regulations. Readiness, challenges, and school nutrition's role in children's health emerged as three major themes.

Beverages selected by students to accompany school lunches may have a great impact on meal quality. In a study completed just prior to HHFKA implementation, Bergman and associates documented how beverage consumption affected meal quality as measured by the Healthy Eating Index for both school lunch meals and lunches brought from home. Although only a minority of students consumed 1% plain milk, this type of beverage resulted in significantly higher meal quality scores.

Two papers in this issue related to plate waste, a topic of concern for many child nutrition directors. Strohbehn and fellow researchers investigated how a change to recess before lunch in three Iowa schools affected student food consumption. Results showed that a change to recess before lunch did not automatically reduce plate waste as there were many other environmental factors that could influence students in selecting and consuming meals. Handforth and associates examined plate waste at elementary, middle, and high school levels at one Pennsylvania school district. Based on their research, the authors make recommendations on what fruit and vegetable menu items may result in less waste.

At many schools, a significant number of parents still send packed lunches from home for students, rather than purchase a school lunch that meets nutritional standards. Farris et al. explored what motivates parents to make this decision and how this may differ based on free and reduced lunch eligibility at the school.

Using scratch cooking to assist in meeting the new USDA nutrition standards may require training for school nutrition staff. Montana researchers (Stephens et al.) have documented how a Cook Fresh Workshop can improve cooking knowledge, confidence, attitudes, and intentions to use skills learned.

Since the passage of HHFKA, legumes (also called pulses) have been a required food group for lunches served under the National School Lunch Program. Pulses served in school meals may include dry beans, dry peas, garbanzo beans, and lentils. Washington State researchers (Diane Smith et al.) have provided two papers on this topic. The first paper in the Research in Action category examined how a school garden-based curriculum could influence student knowledge and preferences for pulses. A second paper in the Current Issues category summarizes school nutrition staff views on serving canned and dry pulses in school meals and frequent ways they

are served. The authors concluded that additional recipes and new product development might possibly increase student preferences and consumption of pulses.

Also included in this JCNM issue is a summary of recently completed and upcoming USDA research that focuses on child nutrition programs. Child nutrition directors should take note and watch for upcoming reports on these projects.

Readers are reminded that *The Journal of Child Nutrition and Management* is an online peer-reviewed journal publishing articles related to school nutrition programs biennially in May and November. Author guidelines for four categories of papers (Research in Action, Commentary, Current Issues, and Practical Solutions) are posted on the School Nutrition Association website at <https://schoolnutrition.org/JCNM/ContributionReprintGuidelines/>

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