



# School Nutrition Professionals' Perceptions, Barriers, & Benefits for Supporting **GREEN/ENVIRONMENTAL** Conservation Practices



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## PURPOSE

Conduct a two-phase study examining common green/environmental conservation (GEC) practices in school nutrition (SN) programs and the attitudes and behaviors of school nutrition directors to adopt GEC practices in the United States.

## OBJECTIVES

- To examine SN professionals' attitudes/beliefs about their perceived roles in and responsibility for supporting and contributing to green/environmental conservation efforts in the SN setting and the school district;
- To identify the benefits and barriers for providing green/environmental conservation practices.

## METHODOLOGY

### Phase I

- An expert panel of SN professionals (n=7) met to discuss the objectives of this study
- The information collected from the expert panel, previous GEC research, and GEC literature was used to draft a GEC national survey.
- The survey was reviewed by a panel of 19 SN professionals who provided comments and suggestions to revise the survey for Phase II.

### Phase II

- The instrument was formatted as a scannable paper survey into two major sections that described GEC practices, roles of stakeholders, resources, perceptions, benefits and barriers for implementing and sustaining GEC practices in schools.
- In the perception, benefits, and barrier sections, respondents rated their level of agreement with the statements using a Likert scale of 4 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) or 0 (not applicable).
- The survey was mailed to 700 SN professionals in seven USDA regions.
- Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 17.0 and included descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies).

## RESULTS

- A total of 223 surveys (31.8%) were completed and returned with representation from all USDA regions.
- The majority of respondents were SN directors (89.0%) with SN managers and area supervisors also represented.
- School nutrition professionals:
  - perceived "environmental conservation" as supporting and promoting the protection of the environment ( $3.38 \pm 0.5$ ), and
  - believed that the sustainability of GEC practices depends upon administrative support ( $3.32 \pm 0.6$ ).
- School nutrition directors indicated that their primary roles in GEC efforts were as nutrition educator (56.0%) and role model (49.1%) to other school personnel.
- The top perceived benefits for implementing and sustaining GEC practices were:
  - providing a safe and healthier environment for students ( $3.2 \pm 0.8$ ) and
  - encouraging students to adopt lifelong conservation behaviors ( $3.2 \pm 0.7$ ).
- Perceived barriers that have prevented the sustainability of GEC practices in SN programs/schools included:
  - the lack of equipment and/or resources to support GEC practices ( $2.8 \pm 0.8$ ) and
  - cost ( $2.7 \pm 0.9$ ).

## APPLICATION

The results from this study will be used to

- develop education resources and training to assist SN professionals with the identification of GEC practices in SN programs and the identification of SN roles for implementing and sustaining GEC practices; and
- develop a resource to provide guidance for implementing, evaluating, and sustaining GEC practices in SN programs.