



# Greening the School Nutrition Scene: A National Study Examining Green/Environmental Conservation Practices and Barriers in School Nutrition Programs



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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this project was to identify green/environmental conservation practices (GEC) in school nutrition (SN) settings across the United States

## METHOD

- Six SN professionals involved in GEC approaches in SN programs participated in an expert panel to discuss GEC practices, benefits, and barriers.
- The qualitative information from the expert panel was used to draft a survey that was reviewed and piloted by a panel of 19 SN professionals.
- Surveys were distributed to a random sample of 700 SN directors in the seven USDA regions.

## RESULTS

- A total of 223 surveys (31.8%) were returned.
- 42.9% of respondents reported that their SN department/school district is involved in GEC efforts and 25% are in the process of planning GEC initiatives.

- SN professionals perceive “environmental conservation” as supporting and promoting the protection of the environment ( $3.38 \pm 0.55$ ) and sustainability of GEC practices depends upon administrative support ( $3.32 \pm 0.58$ ). Scale was 4 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).
- SN directors indicated their primary roles as nutrition educator (56.0%) and role model (49.1%) in GEC efforts.
- Perceived benefits of implementing and sustaining GEC practices included:
  - Implementing GEC practices in schools will encourage students to adopt lifelong conservation behaviors ( $3.09 \pm 0.70$ )
  - The SN department/school district’s participation in GEC practices provides a safe and healthier environment for students ( $3.07 \pm 0.79$ )
- Perceived barriers that have prevented the implementation and sustainability of GEC practices included:
  - The SN department/school district does not have the equipment and/or resources to support GEC practices ( $2.62 \pm 0.97$ )
  - Implementing and sustaining GEC practices cost too much ( $2.56 \pm 0.92$ )

## APPLICATION OF RESULTS

Findings from this study will be used to develop a GEC guide for school nutrition professionals.

## TOP GEC PRACTICES

### RECYCLING PRACTICES

- Recycle paper/cardboard boxes (78.0%)
- Place recycling bins and cans in key locations to encourage recycling practices (65.4%)

### ENERGY CONSERVATION PRACTICES

- Turn off excess lights (87.0%)
- Purchase and/or use Energy Star equipment (58.4%)

### AIR AND WATER CONSERVATION PRACTICES

- Turn off water when not in use (84.6%)
- Conduct regular maintenance of ventilation hoods (82.7%)

### RESOURCE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

- Send e-mails instead of paper memos (88.4%)
- Reuse paper (59.1%)

### GEC BUILDING RENOVATIONS AND CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES

- Supports recycling practices (64.6%)
- Install energy and water efficient equipment (42.2%)

### OTHER GEC PRACTICES

- Purchase locally grown foods (not a part of Farm-to-School) (47.6%)
- School garden projects (44.1%)