



The Time Has Come

Succession Planning for School Nutrition Directors



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PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore succession planning issues for school nutrition (SN) directors.

OBJECTIVES

- Describe current succession planning practices and successful programs
- Identify advantages and barriers to developing and sustaining succession planning programs
- Identify training and resources needed to support succession planning

METHOD

- A literature review was conducted on succession planning issues.
- Two expert panels were conducted:
 - One expert panel focused on succession issues for the SN profession
 - Participants were SN directors representing professional organizations and university educators
 - The second expert panel focused on succession planning at the district level
 - Participants were SN directors representing local SN programs
- Data analysis included a review of transcripts for themes and important points

Succession Planning Defined

A continuous process of identifying future organizational leaders and developing them so they are ready to be promoted to leadership roles. Atwood (2007)

Matching available talent to future needs, thus putting the right people in the right place at the right time. Rowthwell (2010)

Atwood, C. G. (2007). Succession Planning Basics. Baltimore Maryland: American Society for Training and Development.
Rowthwell, W. J. (2010). What is succession planning in management. (4th Ed). Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.

RESULTS

- Literature review revealed that
 - Several factors should be considered when contemplating succession planning for SN directors, such as:
 - supply and demand of talent;
 - values and characteristics associated with each generation of talent;
 - requirements of the position, such as leadership ability, education type and level, knowledge, skills, and credentials; and
 - resources available to implement a succession plan.
 - Succession planning for SN directors should be viewed from two perspectives:
 - that of the SN profession as a whole and
 - that of local school districts.
- Expert panel participants agreed that succession planning was a critical issue for the SN profession.
- Observed themes:
 - District administrators are usually unaware of recommended qualifications for SN directors.
 - Operational experience in SN management is vital for success of SN directors.
 - The School Nutrition Association (SNA) internship is needed to prepare SN professionals.
 - Dietetic programs should consider creating foodservice management tracts for students.
 - Practicums in SN programs could be developed for hospitality management and community health students.
 - State agencies should consider identifying mentors for new SN directors.
 - State agencies, SNA, and the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) are encouraged to coordinate efforts regarding training for SN directors.

APPLICATION

- Approximately 25-33% of SN directors will retire in the next five years.
- Succession planning is critical to identify and develop future leaders so that experienced SN professionals are ready to lead district SN programs.
- Results of the study suggest that succession planning is a multi-faceted issue and USDA, state agencies, SNA, and NFSMI should coordinate efforts to address this emerging issue.

