

Perceived Usefulness of Team Nutrition Resources as Identified by Team Nutrition Leaders



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National Food Service Management Institute The University of Mississippi

Building the Future Through Child Nutrition

The National Food Service Management Institute was authorized by Congress in 1989 and established in 1990 at The University of Mississippi in Oxford. The Institute operates under a grant agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

PURPOSE

The purpose of NFSMI is to improve the operation of Child Nutrition Programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination. The Administrative Offices and Divisions of Information Services and Education and Training are located in Oxford. The Division of Applied Research is located at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

MISSION

The mission of the NFSMI is to provide information and services that promote the continuous improvement of Child Nutrition Programs.

VISION

The vision of the NFSMI is to be the leader in providing education, research, and resources to promote excellence in Child Nutrition Programs.

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PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF TEAM NUTRITION RESOURCES AS IDENTIFIED BY TEAM NUTRITION LEADERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this project was to assess the usefulness of Team Nutrition (TN) resources (*MyPyramid for Kids*, *Nutrition Essentials*, *Empowering Youth with Nutrition and Physical Activity*, and *Team Up At Home*) by TN school leaders. To accomplish this goal, an online survey was developed to collect information on the distribution and frequency of use of TN resources; the perceived usefulness of the resources; the perceptions of the TN school leaders regarding issues that influenced the curriculum specifics of the TN resources; and the demographics of the TN school leaders and schools. The survey was pilot tested and revised, and the final survey was sent to a national sample of 6,638 TN school leaders. A total of 545 surveys were returned and used in statistical analysis, for a response rate of 8.2%.

Results from the online survey indicated that approximately 60% of TN school leaders were cafeteria managers, and approximately 58% received a high school education or associate's degree. Of 545 TN school leaders, 54.9% received *MyPyramid for Kids*, 22.2% *Nutrition Essentials*, 14.6% *Empowering Youth with Nutrition and Physical Activity*, and 19.7% *Team Up at Home*. Only 10.6% to 17.2% reported frequent use of TN resources in their school.

Approximately two-thirds of the schools used TN resources in health classes, and half used them in physical education classes. Two-thirds or more perceived that the lessons were well organized; that instructional design allowed teachers to customize the lesson to the specific needs of students; that graphics appealed to students; and that information and activities were appropriate for different grade levels and helped engage students in learning. About two-thirds reported they

distributed TN resources to teachers, while nearly 10% did not. TN school leaders suggested that more visual, hands-on, and poster materials are needed. Major barriers for using resources included “having no time” and “lack of interest or cooperation.”

Bivariate analysis was conducted to test the differences in distribution and frequency of use of TN resources by TN school leaders’ job title, TN resources, and school level. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in the proportions of TN school leaders receiving each of the four TN resources. *MyPyramid for Kids* was received by the highest proportion of TN school leaders. However, the frequencies of use among the four TN resources were not significantly different. A higher proportion of TN school leaders in middle and/or junior high school reported that they received *Empowering Youth with Nutrition and Physical Activity*, while a higher proportion of TN school leaders in elementary school received *Team Up at Home*. Few differences were found in channels of obtaining the four TN resources between cafeteria managers and teachers/school administrators. A higher proportion of cafeteria managers than teachers/school administrators reported that they obtained *Team Up at Home* from the TN Web site, while more teachers/school administrators obtained *Team Up at Home* from their colleagues.

In conclusion, a large proportion of TN school leaders did not receive TN resources, and one quarter of those who received the TN resources never or rarely used them. However, a large majority (about two-thirds) of users perceived that the four TN resources were useful. Findings of this study have important implications for future nutrition education and training. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Team Nutrition needs to investigate opportunities to work more closely with state agencies to ensure school districts and TN schools distribute and use the TN resources they received or ordered, and the USDA Team Nutrition needs to routinely

assess the usefulness of these resources to TN school leaders/schools. More visual, hands-on, and poster materials should be included in the future TN resources. Finally, as users highly evaluated the four TN resources, TN schools may consider using some components of TN resources in a nutrition or health class.

The findings of this study suggest a need for additional qualitative research to investigate the fundamental reasons for TN school leaders not receiving and not using the TN resources in their schools, and to develop possible strategies for increasing the distribution and usage of TN resources, as TN school leaders who used these resources perceived that they were useful. In addition, future online surveys need to adopt strategies to increase the response rate. These strategies may include addressing the survey respondents by their name instead of a generic name in the survey invitation letter, and giving participants incentives for completing the online survey.