



Insight

A Publication for Child Nutrition Professionals from the National Food Service Management Institute

A New Resource From NFSMI Created for Sustaining and Strengthening Local Wellness Objectives and Activities

O Local Wellness Policies (LWPs) are required under the Child Nutrition and Reauthorization Act of 2004 to improve student health and to provide more healthful environments on school campuses. Responsibility for developing, implementing and monitoring the LWP initiatives is at the local level in order to address the individual school districts' needs. Though this flexibility is intended to aid professionals in implementing personalized programs that fit their district's unique needs, developing, implementing, and sustaining these programs can be a challenge if no templates or resources are available.

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W The Team Nutrition Local Wellness Policy Demonstration Project documented the development and early implementation phases of LWPs. The National Food Service Management Institute, Applied Research Division (NFSMI, ARD) followed up with two studies. The first was a descriptive case study of school nutrition (SN) directors at four districts to explore LWP sustainability strategies for middle schools. In the second study, researchers surveyed a national sample of SN directors and other school administrators to collect information on school district practices designed to sustain LWP initiatives. Respondents to the survey identified a need for the

following training and resources needed to effectively sustain LWP initiatives:

- Strategies to monitor and evaluate the LWP activities;
- Checklists to monitor progress or observe activities related to the LWP;
- Professional development/training module on LWP monitoring and evaluation; and
- Strategies for reporting results to the school board, media, community.

The purpose of this project was to develop a resource to help school districts evaluate their own wellness initiatives. The objective was to create a free, easy-to-use, Web-based resource for SN professionals that would focus on communication, leadership, and monitoring/evaluation activities that lead to successful sustainability and strengthening of wellness initiatives.



Effective evaluation is an important tool for improving school environments to achieve student wellness.

- Effective evaluation measures improvement in small changes.
- The process of evaluation is integrated into management and curriculum, and the process is continuous and sustainable.

METHOD

Phase I

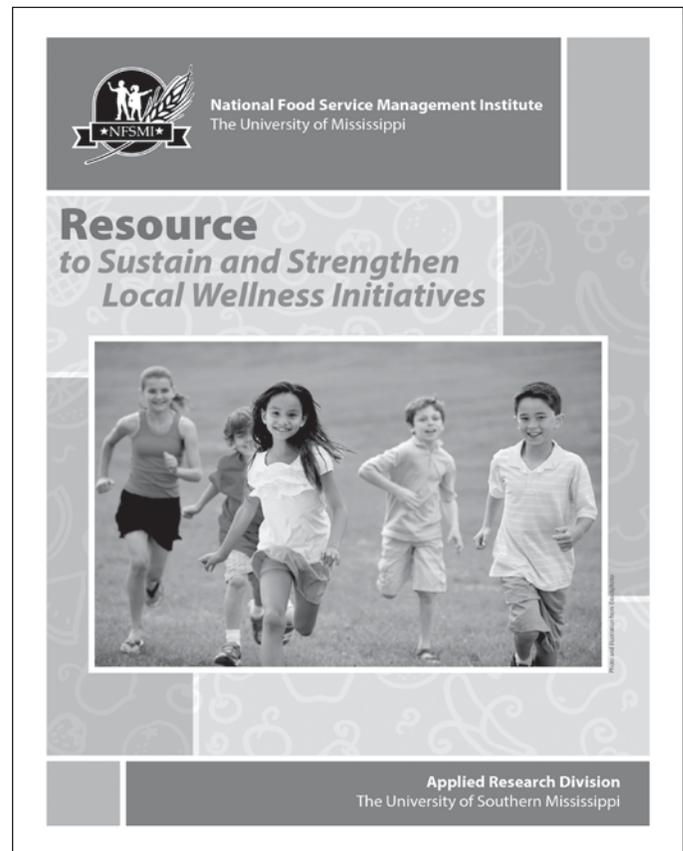
- An expert panel was assembled to establish consensus for a set of statements related to sustainability of LWPs.
- This panel consisted of SN professionals, school personnel, and federal/university researchers with experience in evaluating SN and LWP programs.
- The panel also identified and confirmed potential characteristics for a resource to help school districts monitor and evaluate components of their LWPs.

Phase II

- In the second phase, a convenience sample of 100 SN professionals was created, and included at least one professional from each state.
- Review panel members used an online survey to evaluate the expert panel draft consensus statements and the characteristics of a successful resource. The Phase II review panel largely agreed with the expert panel consensus statements and the characteristics of a successful resource.
- The following is a list of descriptors that both panels agreed were important qualities of a training resource: user-friendly, not labor- or time-intensive, simple-to-use tools, reliable, available online, includes training components, components can be self-delivered, credible and evidence-based, and free for users.

The consensus statements were used to develop both the content and format of the resource to assist school districts and school sites in evaluating objectives and activities in their LWPs. The researchers developed the framework for the resource based largely on the characteristics of a successful resource developed by the expert panel and confirmed by the national panel.

FINDINGS



- The *Resource to Sustain and Strengthen Local Wellness Initiatives*, is a user-friendly workbook designed to engage the district- and school-level monitors/evaluators in the development of an effective evaluation program through a structured step-by-step format.
- The resource is a free PDF document, available for download on the NFSMI Web site: www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20130228111227.pdf.
- The content of the resource describes the evaluation process as a series of eight action steps. Each step includes background information, tips, best practices, and space to develop an action plan. These steps, listed below, are explained in broad detail in the resource:
 - Step 1: Select an objective or activity to evaluate.
 - Step 2: Select your measurement type.
 - Step 3: Determine what you will measure.
 - Step 4: Select a data collection tool.
 - Step 5: Collect your data.
 - Step 6: Analyze the collected data.
 - Step 7: Determine what your results mean.
 - Step 8: Communicate your results.

For More Information

The Child Nutrition and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004, Public Law 108-265, Section 204.

Osowski, J. M. & Nettles, M. F. (2012). Sustainability of School Wellness Policy Initiatives [Abstract]. *The Journal of Child Nutrition & Management*, 36(2). Abstract retrieved from <http://www.schoolnutrition.org/Content.aspx?id=18050>

Osowski, J. M. & Nettles, M. F. (2013). *Exploring the Role of the School Nutrition Program in the Sustainability of School Wellness Policy Initiatives in the Middle School Setting*. University, MS: National Food Service Management Institute.

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