

STATE AGENCY-FUNDED RESEARCH [1999-2001]

Annotated Bibliography

Some research is funded by state agencies. The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) staff mailed a letter to all state agencies requesting copies of research that had been funded by the agency, primarily since 1999. This section contains summaries of research that currently is in progress and completed research that was submitted to NFSMI.

We appreciate the response from state directors and their willingness to share the results of their research with others. For more information about these studies, a state agency contact is included with each project summary.

CONNECTICUT

DEVELOPMENT OF A NUTRITION EDUCATION WEBSITE FOR CONNECTICUT

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a nutrition education website for the state of Connecticut to meet the need for more nutrition education resources.

Methodology (July, 1999)

In an effort to have the site accurately reflect the needs of the target audiences, surveys and focus groups were conducted. A one-page survey addressing nutrition education needs of teachers was developed in the fall of 1998 and pilot-tested on 30 health and physical education teachers. In December of 1998, surveys were sent to approximately 5000 teachers in the state.

Major Study Findings

- The website will provide nutrition education resources, training opportunities, hands-on activities, and hyperlinks to relevant sites.
- The target audiences for the website include school food service personnel, teachers, students, and parents.
- By using the technology of the Internet, the website will remain current and users will be able to provide continuous feedback and evaluation.

Research Scientists

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ASSESSING NUTRITION EDUCATION NEEDS OF CONNECTICUT

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess nutrition education needs of the state of Connecticut.

Methodology (October, 1999)

A survey was developed for teachers from kindergarten to twelfth grade to determine nutrition education needs in the state of Connecticut. The survey was given to a teacher at each grade level in elementary school and to the teachers most likely to teach nutrition at the secondary level. The survey was designed to assess the current status of nutrition education in the state, teachers' perceived curricula needs, and Internet access. Over 1,300 teachers responded to the survey, reflecting a 26% response rate.

Major Study Findings

Survey results indicated a strong need for nutrition curricula and resources. With over 95% of respondents having access to the Internet, a nutrition education website is an ideal vehicle for reaching large numbers of teachers and students with current nutrition information.

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PENNSYLVANIA

“BEST PRACTICES” EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL FOR TRAINING SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE PERSONNEL

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this project was to provide training for school food service personnel to improve or enhance their programs through sharing of “Best Practices.”

Methodology (July, 2001)

Project PA team, a collaboration between the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Division of Food and Nutrition, and Penn State University, undertook a two-pronged approach to the documentation and dissemination of “Best Practices” in school food service. Over the course of 1½ years, the Project PA team worked with food service directors and video-documented their efforts to comply with the School Meals Initiative guidelines. Successful, creative practices of other food service directors from throughout the state were also identified and video-documented.

Major Study Findings

- The resulting video-documentary was shared during a 1-day statewide teleconference.
- Following the teleconference, the video footage was edited into a 50-minute training tape.
- The “Best Practices” featured in the video were compiled into a “Best Practices in Pennsylvania School Food Service” manual.
- Practices in the areas of training, community involvement, improved breakfast participation, increasing nutrition awareness, and innovative food service practices are included.
- The edited teleconference video and “Best Practices” manual were distributed to all National School Lunch Program sponsors in Pennsylvania.

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FACTORS RELATED TO CHANGES IN COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES AMONG SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE DIRECTORS FOLLOWING A STATEWIDE COMPUTER TRAINING PROJECT

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this project was to determine factors related to changes in computer knowledge and attitudes among school food service directors following a statewide computer training project.

Methodology (April, 1999)

An audience segmentation strategy was developed for computer training for School Food Service (SFS) personnel in Pennsylvania. A random statewide survey was distributed to 200 SFS directors, using a pretest, one-year intervention, posttest design to assess changes in computer skills and attitudes as well as factors related to these changes. Implications for training include the need for strategies targeted at smaller, private schools and individuals who may have less access to professional development opportunities.

Major Study Findings

- Improvements in respondents' ratings of their general computer knowledge ($p=.02$), as well as their knowledge of computerized nutrient analysis ($p=.0003$) were identified.
- Factors associated with improvements in perceived computer knowledge included number of lunches served per day, attendance at computer workshops, and interest in computer training.
- Factors associated with improvements in perceived knowledge of computerized nutrient analysis included school type (public vs. private) and attendance at computer workshops.
- Age was a predictor of attitude change, with attitudes of younger respondents improving more than those of older respondents.
- Certification by a national professional SFS association was related to confidence with trying a new computer program, perceived value of computers for SFS directors, and perceived usefulness of computers for nutrient analysis.

Research Scientists

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SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE DIRECTORS' KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES RESULTING FROM A TRAINING WORKSHOP

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this project was to measure school food service directors' knowledge, skills and attitudes resulting from a training workshop.

Methodology (April, 1999)

From a needs assessment, two-day computerized nutrient analysis workshops were developed and delivered to 108 Pennsylvania School Food Service Directors (SFSD). A pretest-intervention-posttest design was used to assess knowledge, skills and attitudes towards computers and nutrient analysis software (NAS). Knowledge and attitudes were measured using a Likert scale. Skills were measured by self-reported ability to perform various tasks.

Major Study Findings

- Increases were found in computer knowledge ($p=.0006$) and knowledge of NAS ($p=.0000$).
- Improvements were found in attitudes towards computers ($p=.021$) and using NAS with nervousness decreasing ($p=.0022$) and enjoyment increasing ($p=.0000$).
- No significant difference was found in perceptions of how difficult NAS would be for the subjects ($p=.39$).
- Computer skills did not change, possibly due to the high level of baseline skills.
- After the workshop, perceptions of NAS skills increased by 48.6 percent ($p=.0000$).

- A computerized nutrient analysis training workshop demonstrated significant improvement in SFSD computer knowledge and attitudes as well as NAS knowledge, skills and attitudes.

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PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING, AND EVALUATING A DECENTRALIZED MODEL FOR SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE TRAINING

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this project was to plan, implement, and evaluate a decentralized model for school food service training.

Methodology (April, 1999)

Training for School Food Service (SFS) personnel was precipitated in 1995 by passage of the School Meals Initiative requiring school meals to meet the Dietary Guidelines and Nutrient Standards. Project PA, a collaboration between the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Penn State University, and SFS personnel, was formed as a response to this need and has initiated a variety of training methods. A decentralized model was developed for training SFS personnel in Pennsylvania, based on a series of needs assessments.

Major Study Findings

- Two statewide satellite teleconferences reached over 1,500 SFS employees.
- Local workshops trained more than 3,000 SFS employees.
- Three videos were distributed to all 875 sponsors of the NSLP in Pennsylvania.
- An integral component of the model is the “grass-roots” involvement of the target audience with the recruitment of SFS directors to serve on a project advisory board and as trainers for their colleagues in local areas.
- The SFS audience was involved in a series of needs assessments that shaped the project’s educational efforts.
- Formative evaluation of each component of the program was conducted.

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TEXAS

TEXAS SCHOOLS IMPLEMENT THE DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS 1992-1999

Overview of the Study

The three purposes of this study were to evaluate progress of Texas schools in implementing the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), to determine the availability of competitive foods, and to assess understanding of Children Nutrition (CN) labels by Texas food service directors.

Methodology (1999)

In 1996, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) mandated implementation of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans into National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. Six of the guidelines applied to school meals. This study summarized the results of two surveys in Texas, administered before (1992) and after (1999) the mandate to evaluate progress of Texas schools in implementing the DGA. The questionnaires were administered in 1992 and 1999. Questions regarding the DGA in both surveys were transcribed onto mark-sense computer forms. Forms were checked for accuracy and coded for district size and region prior to scanning. The data for this report were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 8.0, 1998.

Major Study Findings

- School food service directors in Texas reported increased compliance with all guidelines in 1999.
- Menus contained more fiber, including more whole grains and fruits and vegetables.
- School foodservice directors reported a multitude of changes in purchasing, planning, and food preparation techniques that lower the fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol content of foods. The resulting decrease in caloric density of foods was expected to help children meet the challenge of maintaining or improving body weight.
- In 1999, 38% of elementary schools had vending machines containing candy and snacks – up from 27% in 1992. Vending machines containing soft drinks were even more popular. In 1999, almost half of elementary schools (47%) housed soft-drink vending machines, compared to 39% in 1992.
- In general, school food service directors demonstrated a good understanding of the meaning of CN labels. However, they would benefit from more education about the labels.

Research Scientists

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