What are the Attitudes and Opinions of School Personnel in Reference to the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs in Elementary Schools?

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What are the Attitudes and Opinions of School Personnel in Reference to the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs in Elementary Schools?

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the Department of Education and Human Development

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of some school personnel regarding the Breakfast and Lunch Programs in their elementary schools. Also, the purpose of investigating the perceptions of current school personnel was to determine if the findings concur with existing research.

The findings of this study were compared to previous research data, which focuses on the school personnel comments regarding their perceptions of what is considered a quality School Breakfast and Lunch Program in their elementary school.

This study includes a research-designed questionnaire, which was administered to 67 voluntary participants in a city school district in western New York. The respondents in this study were asked to complete the questionnaire by choosing the responses that best reflect their perceptions about the statements provided. Responses ranged from "agree" to "disagree". Additional space for comments was provided.

The findings in this study indicate that some school personnel seem to have a good concept of what constitutes a quality School Breakfast and Lunch Program. In analyzing the data from the questionnaires in this study, 93% of the nurses agreed that the school breakfast and lunches served in their elementary school are healthy sources of nutrition for students.
Another interesting analysis is that a 21% difference in agreement was calculated among nurses and teachers regarding poor nourishment being a problem in their school (Nurses 53% and Teachers 74%). Therefore, though many school personnel seem to understand what constitutes a good School Breakfast and Lunch Program they recognize that their school does not fully meet the nutritional standards.
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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Need for the study

Among the researchers of the School Breakfast and Lunch Program, there are many different attitudes and opinions regarding the nutritional needs of elementary school children. In addition to researching theories of what should be considered as nutritious foods, researchers have rationalized that both programs are linked to learning. There are many schools that participate in the Breakfast and Lunch Programs, and the schools’ personnel have their own attitudes and opinions about the quality of both programs, and how they affect the lives and education of elementary school students.

As a result of the many different trends and patterns the programs have taken over the years, some of the differences in attitudes and opinions have been resolved. One of the major differences that lead to a common ground for federal and state agencies, food service providers, and school personnel was the importance of serving nutritious foods to elementary school students. There have been collaborative efforts made by the government and food service providers to research and formulate a nutritional plan that would provide healthy foods, on a daily basis, for elementary school children. These efforts have made a tremendous improvement in the educational process of elementary school students (Federal Register, June 1995). Yet today, some schools’ personnel perceptions of the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs are not congruent with research data.
Therefore, there are ongoing variances regarding the quality of School Breakfast and Lunch Programs in elementary schools.

This research is to provide elementary school personnel with information that may help them to determine whether or not they share the same views with that of research, regarding the effect school based Breakfast and Lunch Programs have on elementary school children.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of some school personnel regarding the Breakfast and Lunch Programs in their elementary schools. The reason for investigating the perceptions of current school personnel was to determine if the findings concur with existing research.

**Research Questions**

1) What are the perceptions of some school personnel regarding the Breakfast and Lunch Programs in their elementary schools, and the effects the programs have on elementary school children?

2) How do the perceptions of some school personnel regarding the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs compare with research data?
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Undernourished school children are an extremely important issue that continues to hold center stage in our communities and in our nation. Increased public awareness has made our government and society implement the necessary nutritional programs to help eliminate hungry school-age children. The National School Breakfast and Lunch Program in elementary schools was developed as a measure to safeguard the health and well being of our nation’s children.

It is the written opinion of a 1906 author that may help our society reconnect with the reality that today our nation’s elementary school children hunger not only for education, but also for the necessary nourishment which enables them to benefit from such education. John Spargo writes:

The problem of hungry as it affects school children may be stated in a few lines. All the data available tend to show that not less than 2,000,000 children of school age in the United States are the victims of hunger, which denies them common necessities particularly adequate nourishment. With their enfeebled bodies and minds we turn these children adrift unfitted for the struggle of life. This is a problem of awful magnitude in the richest country on earth (p. 2145 – 2146).
Since society has assumed the responsibility of insisting that every child be educated and provided the means of such education, it seems society also has the responsibility of making certain children are fit to receive that education (Spargo, cited in Education in the Unites States, 1974). For our society to do this, it takes on some of the responsibility of parents. It is the opinion of some that the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs alone are a full day supply of sufficient nutrition on a daily basis for elementary school children (Oral communication with local agencies). There are approximately 2 million elementary school children being fed breakfast and lunch while in school. These data do not include the millions of children that are not fed once they return home.

**History of School Lunch Program**

During the early 1930's one of our country's major economic and social changes occurred. The problems of poverty and hunger focused on the most unprotected members of society, our children. The impact of poverty and hunger has been largely responsible for the development of school feeding programs in most nations throughout the world (Agency for International Development, 1968).

A century and a half ago disruption in the economies of England and Western Europe as a result of industrialization, combined with an awakening social conscience, led to the earliest efforts to feed needy school children.
In 1790, the British scientist Benjamin Thompson (Count Rumford) established municipal soup kitchens in Munich; in 1849, the National Guard originated school canteens in France; and in 1866, London established the Destitute Dinner Society.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, most Western European countries had national laws or extensive municipal legislation providing for school meals (Cohen, 1974).

As in Europe, the development of school food programs in the United States, from the first charitable agencies through the gradual assumption of responsibility by school boards, and finally by federal agencies was influenced by economic conditions and social attitudes (Cohen, 1974). In 1853, the Children’s Aid Society of New York served food to all children who attended its industrial schools. The industrial schools were later taken over by the public school system. During this era, food served the dual purpose of feeding the hungry and of acting as an incentive for itinerant children from the city ghettos to attend school.

In later years, 1878 Free Kindergarten was established. It was a Free Kindergarten for the poor; that is, it brought kindergarten education to the poorest class, who was not able to pay for it themselves. Daily, warm lunches were provided for the children in Kindergarten. During this time, the Free Kindergarten for the poor had to look at the bodily wants of its pupils as well as to their minds. The little children often came to school hungry. Teachers found it difficult to give them instruction on an empty stomach.
There was no further progress in school feeding until the growth of cities, the increase in immigration, and a series of economic crises beginning in 1893 that brought the problem of hungry school children to public attention (Cohen, 1974).

Surveys of the last half of the 19th century reveal unfortunate conditions of malnutrition, which caused children to have problems with attendant behavior, symptoms of mental sluggishness, and inattention. It was concluded that these children in such weak physical and mental states learned little or nothing at school (Hunter, 1904 & Spargo, 1906). School lunch programs increased rapidly in the 1920's as new knowledge of nutrition led to greater concern for the health of children. (Todhunter 1968). As a result, the purpose of school feeding broadened from provision for the needy and undernourished to provision for all children who must eat at school.

During the Depression in the early 1930's, millions of school children were unable to pay for their lunch at school, or had little to bring for lunch. Because so many families had such limited resources, the danger of malnutrition among children became a national concern. At the same time, farmers had surplus agricultural commodities they were unable to sell. As a solution to these problems, in 1935 Congress provided that surplus agricultural commodities be donated for the School Lunch Program (Cohen, 1974). By 1942, it became obvious that federal assistance was needed for the development of school feeding on a continuing basis. Increased public pressure lead to passing the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).
The program was an act of Congress, "As a measure of national service to safeguard the health and well being of our nation's children (Food Research & Action Center, 1987 p.1)." The National School Lunch Program was also established to encourage the consumption of nutritious foods (Cohen, 1974).

The program was established under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA), and signed in 1946 by President Harry Truman. In signing the 1946 act, President Truman said, "Nothing is important in our national life than the welfare of our children, and proper nourishment comes first in attaining this welfare" (USDA, 1997, p. 3). By the end of that first year the National School Lunch Program was established about 7.1 million children were participating. Today, The National School Lunch Program operates in approximately 98,000 public and non-public schools and residential child care institutions. The NSLP is a federally-assisted meal program that provides low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.

The NSLP created the modern school lunch program, even though the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) had provided funds and food to schools for many years, prior to the signing of the NSLA. The USDA, through its Food and Nutrition Service administers the program at the federal level. At the state level, the NSLP is usually administered by State Education Agencies that operate the program through agreements with local school districts. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the lunch program receive cash reimbursements and donated commodity assistance from USDA for each meal they serve.
By 1970, an average of 24 million children ate school lunch everyday. In Fiscal Year 1997, more than 26 million children each day got their lunch through the National School Lunch Program. Since the program began, more than 180 billion lunches have been served (USDA, 1997). It was 35 years ago, when the President of the United States proclaimed the first National School Lunch Week. Our nation's current President, Bill Clinton, established a week in October as National School Lunch Week and encouraged school to participate.

The roots of the NSLP began during World War II when young men were showing up for the military service undernourished. Today, our young elementary children are showing up at school hungry, and undernourished. There is a great similarity between the undernourishment of the young military servicemen of World War II, and our present elementary school children. The young military servicemen were undernourished, therefore unfit to properly defend our country. The young children of our society are undernourished. Therefore, they are unfit to equip themselves with the proper education that would help in their defense to function economically and socially among society. It was, and still is vital that our country feed the bodies and minds of its young children, because the power of their minds will largely decide the power of our nation.

History of School Breakfast Program

Congress established the School Breakfast Program (SBP) first as a two-year pilot program through the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 in areas where children had long bus rides to school and where many mothers were in the workforce.
Then, with permanent authorization in 1975 the SBP assisted schools in providing a nutritious morning meal to children. The SBP contributed to the adequate nutritional intake of children and ensured that they did not begin their school day hungry (USDA, 1998).

In the early years the participation rate in the SBP was slow. Partially this was due to parental and community attitudes toward the schools’ role in feeding children. Society considered breakfast provision a family responsibility and viewed school breakfast programs as a threat to the family link. With an increasing population of mothers working, large proportions of meals are consumed outside of the home (Kennedy & Davis, 1998).

Program characteristics also influence participation rates. The most significant impediments to the SBP were the lack of sufficient time to eat before class, timing of the program (too late), and a perceived social stigma. The social stigma attached to the participants of the SBP stemmed from the original focus on the program being geared toward children who were considered to be from low-income families. This stigma has clearly disappeared due to the fact that a morning breakfast is served to children who simply need a meal because of hunger (Kennedy & Davis, 1998).

Breakfast is available in far fewer schools than lunch. Proposals to eliminate the breakfast program were offered in 1995, but denied. The final welfare legislation enacted in August 1996 slightly lowered future reimbursement rate increases, and ended funding for start up and expansion grants that played a major
role in the program's growth. In the fiscal year 1997, the number of schools that offered school breakfast was 68,718 as opposed to 94,714 that offered school lunches. In 1997, school breakfast programs served 1,187,674 breakfasts. Participation nearly doubled in the ten-year period from 1987 – 1997 (Food Research & Action Center, 1998).

It has been noted that this decade has witnessed widespread improvements in the School Breakfast Program. It is the opinion of some school personnel that the growth in the SBP is testimony to the high priority that teachers, parents, and health professionals place in getting children the fuel they need to learn at the start of the school day (Food Research and Action Center, 1998).

**Who is Eligible?**

All public and non-profit private schools and residential childcare institutions are eligible. To participate, a school or school district applies to the State Education Department. If a school does not have a School Breakfast Program, interested parents, teachers, principals or food service managers can encourage the Superintendent and School Board to start one.

In cities such as, New York City, Yonkers, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, every public school is required by state law to offer breakfast. “Severe need” schools and public elementary schools in the School Lunch Program are also required by state law to implement School Breakfast Programs. “Severe need” schools for 1997-98 is those in which 40% or more of the children received fee/reduced price lunches in the 1994 – 95 year.
All students in any school offering the Breakfast Program may eat breakfast. Depending on family income, students are eligible for free, reduced price or full price meals. For free or reduced price meals, families file an application with the school. A single application covers lunches and breakfasts. Families which receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or Food Stamps can put their AFDC or Food Stamp number on the application instead of income information; their children are eligible for free meals. For full price meals, no application is needed. It is against the law to serve or identify differently children who eat free or reduced price meals.

**Research on the Effectiveness of the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs**

Research has reported that School Breakfast and Lunch Programs have the following affects on elementary school children (MASB Journal, 1994, Pgs. 11-13, 29). School feeding is thought likely to increase attendance partly because the program is an incentive for parents to send their children to school. A study was done regarding the effects the School Breakfast Program has on students' attendance, tardiness and scholastic performance. The study consisted of low-income public school children in grades 3–6 who were classified as SBP participants (355) or non-participants (688). Subjects were not randomly assigned to groups. They were classified as a participant if they attended the SBP 60% of the time, and a non-SBP participant if they did not attend SBP on any of the days monitored. A longitudinal study with SBP participants and non-participants was implemented.
School achievement scores were assessed by the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) before the SBP was in place and 3 months after changes in attendance was monitored over 5 months. CTBS included tests in language, reading and math. Participants in the SBP increased the CTBS total scale score and decreased tardiness and absenteeism (Meyer’s et al, United States 1989).

Studies have concluded that children who consume breakfast regularly have a better quality diet than those who omit breakfast. Children who eat breakfast, whether in school or at home are more likely to consume recommended quantities of vitamins and minerals. Thus, it appears that omission of breakfast by children can seriously effect learning (American Journal Clinical Nutrition, 1998).

Breakfast is said to be a means to stimulate the brain and keep children alert throughout the morning. After eight to ten hours without food, the body has been compared to a cold furnace. Teachers have said that children are more alert and perform better in class if they eat breakfast in school or at home (Watkins cited in USA Today, Jan. 1998).

According to researchers inadequately nourished children have been characterised as apathetic, nonresponsive, inactive, and irritable. These children have difficulty tolerating frustration and stress, (Barrett, 1986; Gabr, 1987, Ricciuti, 1984, & McGregor, 1990) in return their behavior becomes erratic and unpredictable, which causes classroom disruptions.
**Attitudes and Opinions of Some School Personnel**

The School Breakfast Program, since its inception in 1966, has been an administrative problem. First, some principals claim there is no money in the budget for hiring staff to accommodate the children during breakfast. Secondly, they complain of having to reschedule the morning buses (Braverman, 1994).

“It’s the parents’ responsibility to see that their kids eat breakfast before they leave for school,” is another common remark made by teachers (Watkins, 1998).

In a survey of teachers more than half of the respondents said, “Poor nourishment among students was a problem at their school” (Carnegie Foundation Survey, 1990).

“Johnny can’t read when he’s hungry. Kristin falls asleep in social studies when she goes without breakfast”, says one elementary school teacher. Some teachers expressed their opinions by stating that, “Feeding our children is a team effort.” These teachers feel that if school personnel nationwide are willing to do more than their share each and every day, the SBP and SLP will be more beneficial to elementary school children (Braverman, 1994)

Breakfast and Lunch Programs should set the right example. These programs should set better and clearer standards for feeding children. Food should be high in fiber, minerals, and protein. There should be less fast food, no donuts, no deep-fat fryers, and less processed foods.
When it comes to the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, some school personnel expressed their opinions regarding the lack of responsibility on the part of the United States Department of Agriculture. They feel the government is not doing a good job of protecting our children's health (Conoscenti, 1994).

Children fill nurses' offices around mid morning complaining of stomachaches or headaches. Often times the children are not sick, but just hungry, and can be treated with a snack and sent back to class. (Carneige Foundation Survey, 1990).

Lunchroom personnel complained of not having enough time to serve breakfast to children. According to lunchroom personnel, some schools allow students to eat at their desks, going through the cafeteria line and bringing their trays back to the classroom. This procedure alleviates the need to open schools much earlier than usual. Some school set up grab-and-go kiosks at the entrance to the school or where the buses discharge their student passengers. The kids can take their pre-packaged breakfasts, usually cereal, milk, juice and fruit right to the classroom (Honson, 1994).

There is another, non-administrative, problem to overcome. Because 86% of students eating breakfast in school receive their meals free or at a reduced price, many administrators, parents and students perceived the school breakfast plan as a low-income program. As a result, some children, both rich and poor, refuse to eat breakfast because they fear being stigmatized as poverty-stricken (USDA, 1998).
Some lunchroom personnel believe that the best school breakfast and lunch meals should be freshly prepared at the school. Cafeteria staff have expressed concerns regarding their lack of knowledge to educate students about eating nutritional foods (Conoscenti, 1994).
CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of some school personnel regarding the Breakfast and Lunch Programs in their elementary schools. The reason for investigating the perceptions of current school personnel was to determine if the findings concur with existing research.

Research Questions

1) What are the perceptions of some school personnel regarding the Breakfast and Lunch Programs in their elementary schools, and the effects the programs have on elementary school children?

2) How do the perceptions of some school personnel regarding the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs compare with research data?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects in this study included 67 school personnel (teachers, school nurses and lunchroom staff). The participants were from several schools within a city school district. The subjects have several years of experience in their particular area of employment. Participation was strictly voluntary, and all respondents were asked no personal information nor were they asked the name of their schools.
Materials

A researcher-developed questionnaire was utilized to obtain the necessary information to complete this study (See appendix A). The questionnaires were designed to obtain the attitudes and opinions of school personnel regarding the school breakfast and lunch programs in their elementary schools.

The questionnaires were color-coded to separate the groups. Yellow paper was used for elementary school teachers; blue paper for school nurses and green paper was used to identify the lunchroom personnel. Attached to each questionnaire was an envelope for the participants/respondents use. A space was provided at the end of each questionnaire for any additional comments or suggestions.

Procedures

A cover letter and all three questionnaires were given to the principals of each participating school for their review and approval. After obtaining the necessary permission from the school principals, the questionnaires were distributed to school personnel. Also, a cover letter was attached to the questionnaires for teachers, nurses and lunchroom personnel requesting their voluntary participation (See Appendix B for both cover letters). According to the principals at each school the questionnaires could either be hand delivered and/or placed in teachers and lunchroom personnel’s mailboxes which are located in the Main Office. The researcher used both methods of distribution.
When the questionnaires were completed, teachers were asked to put them in a box labeled “Questionnaire” which was located on a table in the teacher’s lounge. The lunchroom personnel were asked to do the same, but the box was located on a table in the cafeteria.

The questionnaires for the school nurses were delivered to the Director of School Nurses. The director and the researcher made an agreement that she would distribute the questionnaires and have them returned to her office. Then, upon receipt of all questionnaires the Director of School Nurses would telephone the researcher who would pick them up from her office. This procedure was generated to expedite the completion of the questionnaires since there is only one nurse for each school.

Analysis

All responses were converted to percentages and subjects to a quantitative form of descriptive analysis.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of some school personnel regarding the Breakfast and Lunch Programs in their elementary schools. The reason for investigating the perceptions of current school personnel was to determine if the findings concur with existing research.

Research Questions

3) What are the perceptions of some school personnel regarding the Breakfast and Lunch Programs in their elementary schools, and the effects the programs have on elementary school children?

4) How do the perceptions of some school personnel regarding the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs compare with research data?

Results of the Teacher Questionnaires

The statistical analysis of the Teacher Questionnaire is contained in Table 1 at the end of this chapter. In this table, the percentages computed have been calculated and rounded off to the nearest percent. The same format is used for the descriptive analysis of this chapter. The raw data for this questionnaire are contained in Appendix C.
Statement 1: The administration in your school is supportive of the School Breakfast and Lunch Program.

Table 1 reveals that an overwhelming 95% of elementary teachers agree that their administration is supportive of the School Breakfast and Lunch program in their school, while 5% disagree.

Statement 2: There is sufficient time allowed for students to eat breakfast and lunch.

Table 1 shows that 64% of teachers agree that sufficient time is allowed for students to eat breakfast and lunch. On the other hand, 36% of teachers disagree.

Statement 3: Students who arrived late to school due to bus delays are allowed time to eat breakfast.

Table 1 communicates that 70% of teachers agree that students are allowed to eat breakfast if they arrive late to school, and 30% disagree.

Statement 4: Students who eat breakfast and lunch in school frequently complain of hunger after the lunch periods are over.

Table 1 informs that 24% of teachers agree that students complain of hunger after the lunch periods are over, while 76% disagree.
**Statement 5:** The breakfast and lunch served in school is a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for students on a daily basis.

In Table 1, 33% of teachers agree that the breakfast and lunch served in elementary schools cannot serve as a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for students on a daily basis. Yet, 67% of teacher respondents disagree.

**Statement 6:** Feeding students breakfast should be the responsibility of the parents, not the school.

Table 1 discloses that 74% of teacher respondents agree that feeding student’s breakfast should be the responsibility of the parents, and 26% disagree.

**Statement 7:** Students are alert and ready to learn if they eat the breakfast that is provided by the school.

Table 1 uncovers that an overwhelming 84% of teacher respondents agree that students are alert and ready to learn if they eat the breakfast that is provided by the school, and 16% disagreed.

**Statement 8:** Students who participate in the school breakfast and lunch program have shown improvement in math and reading.

Table 1 indicates that 45% of teachers agree that the school breakfast and lunch programs improve the math and reading skills of students who participate, and 55% disagree.
Statement 9: The school breakfast and lunch program improves attendance and decreases tardiness of students who participate.

Table 1 informs that 87% of teacher respondents agree that the school breakfast and lunch program improves attendance and decreases tardiness of students who participate, and 13% disagree.

Statement 10: There are fewer discipline problems among students that participate in the breakfast and lunch program.

Table 1 indicates that 39% of elementary school teachers agree that fewer discipline problems occur among students who participate in the breakfast and lunch program, and 61% disagree.

Statement 11: Poor nourishment among students is a problem in your school.

Table 1 shows that 74% of teachers agree poor nourishment among students is a problem in their schools and 26% disagree.

Results of School Nurse Questionnaires

The statistical analysis of the Nurse Questionnaire is contained in table two at the end of this chapter. In this table, the percentages computed have been calculated and rounded off to the nearest percent. The same format is used for the descriptive analysis of this chapter. The raw data for this questionnaire are contained in Appendix C.
Statement 1: The breakfast and lunch served in your elementary school are healthy sources of nutrition for students.

In Table 2 the data indicates that 93% of school nurses agree that the breakfast and lunch served to elementary students are healthy sources of nutrition, and 7% disagree.

Statement 2: The school breakfast and lunch alone can serve as a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for elementary school children on a daily basis.

An overwhelming 7% agree that the school breakfast and lunch can serve as a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for elementary school students and 93% disagreed.

Statement 3: Students who participate in the school breakfast and lunch program frequently enter the nurse’s office complaining of stomachaches and/or headaches due to a lack of food.

Table 2 shows that 43% of school nurses agree that students frequently enter their office complaining of stomachaches and/or headaches due to a lack of food and 57% disagree.

Statement 4: The school breakfast is a successful means of keeping students alert and ready to learn.

Table 2 reveals that 87% of school nurses agree that school breakfast is a successful means for keeping students alert and ready to learn, nevertheless 13% disagree.
**Statement 5:** Students who participate in the free or reduced breakfast and lunch more frequently complain of not being fed at home versus students who do not participate.

Table 2 communicates that 47% of school nurses agree with statement 5, and 53% disagree with a narrow margin of 5% between the two responses.

**Statement 6:** School nurses have a means of providing food to students that complain of hunger after breakfast and lunch periods are over.

Table 2 exhibits that 29% of school nurses agree that they are able to provide food to students that complain of hunger after breakfast and lunch periods are over and 71% nurses disagree with this statement.

**Statement 7:** Inadequately nourished students have difficulty tolerating frustration and stress.

In Table 2 an overwhelming 93% agree that inadequately nourished students have difficulty tolerating frustration and stress and 7% disagree.

**Statement 8:** Poor nourishment among students is a problem in your school.

Table 2 reveals that 53% of school nurses agree that poor nourishment among students is a problem in their school and 47% disagree.

**Results of Lunchroom Staff Questionnaires**

The statistical analysis of the Lunchroom Staff Questionnaire is contained in table three at the end of this chapter. In this table, the percentages computed have
been calculated and rounded off to the nearest percent. The same format is used for the descriptive analysis of this chapter. The raw data for this questionnaire are contained in Appendix C.

**Statement 1:** Students are given sufficient time to eat their breakfast and lunch.

Table 3 reveals that 77% of lunchroom staff agree that students are given sufficient time to eat their breakfast and lunch, and 23% disagree.

**Statement 2:** Lunchroom staff is given enough time to serve breakfast and lunch to students.

Table 3 indicates that 70% of lunchroom staff agree that enough time is allowed to serve breakfast and lunch to students, and 30% disagree.

**Statement 3:** Students are allowed to get their breakfast and lunch and carry it to the classroom if buses are late arriving to school.

Table 3 shows that 60% of lunchroom staff agree students are allowed to carry food from the cafeteria to the classroom if buses are late arriving to school, and 40% disagree.

**Statement 4:** Some students do not accept the breakfast and lunch provided by the school, because of fear they may be stigmatized as a low-income family.

Table 3 informs that 17% of lunchroom staff agree students who accept are stigmatized as low-income families, and 83% disagree.
Statement 5: The meals for the school breakfast and lunch should be freshly prepared at the school on a daily basis.

Table 3 shows that 50% of the lunchroom personnel agree with statement 5 and 50% disagree.

Statement 6: Meals prepared at school are healthier than meals that are catered by vendors.

In Table 3 87% agree that meals prepared at school are healthier than meals catered by vendors, and 13% disagree.

Statement 7: The school breakfast and lunch alone can serve as a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for students on a daily basis.

Table 3 indicates that 50% of lunchroom personnel agree that the school breakfast and lunch can serve as a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for students on a daily basis, and 50% disagree.

Statement 8: Lunchroom staff has adequate knowledge of the nutritional guidelines for elementary school students.

Table 3 reveals that 90% of lunchroom staff agree they have adequate knowledge of the nutritional guidelines for elementary school students, and 10% disagree.
**Statement 9:** Lunchroom staff should be able to educate students about eating healthy foods.

Table 2 shows that 69% of lunchroom staff agree that they should be able to educate students about eating healthy foods and 31% disagree.

**Current School Personnel Comments**

At the end of each questionnaire a space was provided for school personnel to express their comments and suggestions regarding the school breakfast and lunch program in their elementary school. The following comments were made:

"Sufficient time is given for students to eat lunch considering the small size of the lunch portions."

"Time is limited. Food is prepared well in advance and refrigerated. It is then reheated beyond recognition or burned. It is tasteless. The lunchroom staff is usually lazy and indifferent so food is never encouraged and quickly disposed of. The fat and sugar levels are high. Children need to go home for lunch."

"Students should be given better meals. For example, hot dogs, cheeseburgers, pizza and chicken. These foods are what the students like."

"Foods served to students for breakfast and lunch contains a large amount of fat. More vegetables and fruits should be provided, also whole grains."

"Sometimes the cafeteria foods in elementary schools are not of quality. Therefore, they should not be served to students especially the fruit!"
"Poor nourishment is a problem in our school, because students tend to throw the cooked vegetables away. Some foods they don't recognize therefore it won't get eaten."

"Poor nourishment usually goes hand-in-hand with others neglected issues that affect students' education. For example, lack of appropriate sleep and often poor hygiene."

"Students enter the school nurses' office complaining of stomachaches or headaches, because the chocolate milk they are served during breakfast and lunch don't mix well with other cheese menus. We now have strawberry milk."

"Students usually come to the nurses' office complaining of a stomach or headache, because they missed breakfast only."

"The cafeteria will sometimes supply nurses with crackers and juice for children who complain of hunger after breakfast and lunch periods are over."

"The discipline problems of students who participate in the School Breakfast and Lunch Program are students whose families are unable to provide adequately. The students are often rude as they are not accustomed to actual sit-down meals."

"The School Breakfast would be a successful means of keeping students alert and ready to learn if they would eat what is served."

"Students who eat breakfast and lunch are better able to focus, therefore learning more. If they are hungry they cannot focus on the work at hand."
"Due to the fact lunchroom staff haven't received a raise in five years, why should we teach children nutritional values. Why teachers aren't teaching them in the classroom?"

"Given the extra time lunchroom staff may accommodate educating kids about eating healthy foods, but there is so little time."

"We do not get paid to educate the students, that is the job of the teachers. We don't get paid enough for the services we give the children. Lunchroom staff is sometimes nurses, mothers and grandmothers."
TABLES OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Table 1: Teacher Responses
Table 2: Nurse Responses
Table 3: Lunchroom Staff Responses
### TABLE 1
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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of some school personnel regarding the Breakfast and Lunch Programs in their elementary schools. The reason for investigating the perceptions of current school personnel was to determine if the findings concur with existing research.

Research Questions

5) What are the perceptions of some school personnel regarding the Breakfast and Lunch Programs in their elementary schools, and the effects the programs have on elementary school children?

6) How do the perceptions of some school personnel regarding the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs compare with research data?

A total of 67 school personnel from several schools within a city school district responded to a researcher-designed questionnaire. A descriptive and a statistical analysis of each statement were done.

Conclusions

This study supports some of the existing research regarding the effects the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs have on elementary school children. Current data from the questionnaires reveal that 87% of teachers agree with previous research that the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs improve attendance and decrease
tardiness of students who participate. On the contrary, if schools implement attractive menus with items students like and integrate nutritional methods of preparing the foods perhaps, there will be significant improvement in attendance and tardiness.

Among teachers who responded to the questionnaire, 45% agree with previous research that the School Breakfast and Lunch Program improves math skill of students who participate. Knowing this, elementary school personnel should implement incentives for students to continue participation in the program on a daily basis. Data from this study also indicate that 84% of teachers and 87% of school nurses agree that the school breakfast is a successful means of keeping students alert and ready to learn. Implementing a school-based kitchen facility with staff that has creativity in preparing meals, by using recipes that will help finds ways to serve students healthy foods, will not only contribute to nutritional diets for students, but also increase their academic performance.

Data from the teacher's questionnaire show that 61% disagree with research that there are fewer discipline problems among students who participate in the School Breakfast and Lunch Program, and 39% agree. In addition to these results, 93% of school nurses agree that inadequately nourished students have difficulty tolerating frustration and stress. For these reasons, schools that will consider implementing a community-based program where parents, school personnel, and administrators come together to discuss the nutritional needs of elementary school children would most likely result in more children eating breakfast either in school or at home. As a result, there will be less distraction during classroom instruction.
Also in this study, some previous school personnel perceptions of the Breakfast and Lunch Program concur with perceptions of current school personnel. In the schools that participated in answering the questionnaires the data suggest they all seem to be headed in the same direction. They all want to implement better nutritional programs whereby students will be served healthy meals.

An overwhelming 93% of current school nurses perceive the School Breakfast and Lunch Program as healthy sources of nutrition for elementary school children. Yet, 7% agree with school personnel from previous research that changes need to be implemented to make certain their school breakfast and lunch program meet nutritional guidelines. Though some school personnel agree that their schools are not serving quality foods, they appear hopeful that new guidelines will soon be implemented.

Also, according to data from the questionnaires 74% of teachers and 53% of school nurses agree that poor nourishment is a problem in their elementary school. Furthermore, the large majority of school personnel agrees that the most important element for a good school breakfast and lunch program is one that serves nutritional foods. Fortunately, according to the results of the questionnaires 90% of the lunchroom staff has adequate knowledge of the nutritional guidelines for elementary school children. Therefore, implementing a school based “Eat Healthy Food” campaign to help promote nutritional diets for students should be less difficult for these schools.
The results of the questionnaires also indicate that 95% of teachers state that school administration supports the breakfast and lunch program in their elementary school. With this in mind, teachers should take the initiative to implement in-house workshops or seminars that will help keep school personnel informed of the constant changes in the nutritional guidelines.

The findings from this study indicate that 74% of teachers agree that feeding children breakfast should be the responsibility of the parents and 26% disagree. From the additional comment section of the questionnaires teachers stated, “The school breakfast is the only way some children get to eat breakfast in the morning.” This comment was among the teachers who disagree that feeding children breakfast is the responsibility of the parents.

Overall, the perceptions and the comments made by school personnel, whether current or previous are considered valid to some degree. One major outcome from this study is that the majority of school personnel agree that the School Breakfast and Lunch Program should not be considered a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for students on a daily basis. This indicates that there is a continuous need of support to help make certain elementary school children are receiving the nutrition they need to survive in an educational environment and in their everyday lives. This support should come from parents, teachers, school nurses, lunchroom staff, school administrators, and the community. Focusing on the value of nutrition and how it affects school children should be a priority in all elementary schools.
REFERENCES


Food Research and Action Center (1996). *A Profile of Food and Nutrition Programs across the Nation*. Washington, D. C.


REFERENCES (continued)


APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR:

TEACHER

SCHOOL NURSE

LUNCHROOM STAFF
QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher

Please complete the questionnaire and put it in the box labeled, “Questionnaire” in the teachers’ lounge. All questionnaires will be picked up on December 9th. The information provided on the questionnaires is kept confidential. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. The administration in your school is supportive of the School Breakfast and Lunch Program.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

2. There is sufficient time allowed for students to eat breakfast and lunch.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

3. Students who arrived late to school due to bus delays are allowed time to eat breakfast.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

4. Students who eat breakfast and lunch in school frequently complain of hunger after the lunch periods are over.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

5. The breakfast and lunch served in school is a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for students on a daily basis.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

6. Feeding students breakfast should be the responsibility of the parents, not the school.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

7. Students are alert and ready to learn if they eat the breakfast that is provided by the school.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

8. Do you agree or disagree that students who participate in the school breakfast and lunch program have shown improvement in math and reading?
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

Over →
QUESTIONNAIRE
Nurse

Please complete the questionnaire and place in the attached envelope. Return the envelope with questionnaire to your supervisor on or before December 9. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. The breakfast and lunch served in your elementary school are healthy sources of nutrition for students.
   ___Agree  ___Disagree

2. The school breakfast and lunch alone can serve as a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for elementary school children on a daily basis.
   ___Agree  ___Disagree

3. Students who participate in the school breakfast and lunch program frequently enter the nurse’s office complaining of stomachaches and/or headaches due to a lack of food.
   ___Agree  ___Disagree

4. The school breakfast is a successful means of keeping students alert and ready to learn.
   ___Agree  ___Disagree

5. Students who participate in the free or reduced breakfast and lunch more frequently complain of not being fed at home versus students who do not participate.
   ___Agree  ___Disagree

6. School nurses have a means of providing food to students that complain of hunger after breakfast and lunch periods are over.
   ___Agree  ___Disagree

7. Inadequately nourished students have difficulty tolerating frustration and stress.
   ___Agree  ___Disagree

Over →
QUESTIONNAIRE
Lunchroom Staff

Please complete the questionnaire and put it in the box labeled Questionnaires. All information is kept confidential. The questionnaires will be picked up on December 9. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. Students are given sufficient time to eat their breakfast and lunch.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

2. Lunchroom staff are given enough time to serve breakfast and lunch to Students.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

3. Students are allowed to get their breakfast or lunch and carry it to the classrooms if buses are late arriving to school.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

4. Some students do not accept the breakfast and lunch provided by the school, because of fear they maybe stigmatized as a low-income family.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

5. The meals for the school breakfast and lunch should be freshly prepared at the school on a daily basis.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

6. Meals prepared at school are healthier than meals that are catered by vendors.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

7. The school breakfast and lunch alone can serve as a full day supply of sufficient nutrition for students on a daily basis.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

8. Lunchroom staff have adequate knowledge of the nutritional guidelines for elementary school students.
   ___Agree   ___Disagree

   Over ➡
APPENDIX B

COVER LETTERS FOR QUESTIONNAIRES:

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

TEACHERS

LUNCHROOM STAFF
MEMO

Telephone No.: (716) 288-5709
Fax No.: (716) 288-4376

TO: SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

FROM: Mae T. Jones,
Student/SUNY Brockport
Substitute Teacher/RCSD

DATE: 1 December 1998

SUBJECT: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THESIS

To complete my Master’s in Elementary Education at SUNY Brockport, it is required that I submit a thesis. The title of my thesis is: “What are the attitudes and opinions of school personnel in reference to the breakfast and lunch programs in elementary schools?” To obtain this information from school personnel, I have generated a questionnaire.

The questionnaires are for teachers, nurses, and lunchroom personnel. For your review, attached are the questionnaires for the three groups. The information received from the questionnaires is kept confidential. The voluntary participants are asked no personal information, nor are they asked the name of their schools.

Please note the approximate date by which the questionnaires are requested to be returned. Before making your decision, if there are any questions or concerns please let me know. If your permission is granted, I will take the responsibility of distributing the questionnaires, and setting up a designated place for school personnel to return the questionnaires. If you have any suggestions, please advise.

Thank you for your support. Have a Great Day!

MTJ/mtj
TO: TEACHERS

FROM: Mae T. Jones
Student/SUNY Brockport
Substitute Teacher/RCSD

DATE: 1 December 1998

SUBJECT: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THESIS

To complete my Master’s in Elementary Education at SUNY Brockport, it is required that I write Thesis. The title of my thesis is, “What are the attitudes and opinions of school personnel in reference to the breakfast and lunch programs in elementary schools? To obtain this information from school personnel, I have generated a questionnaire.

The information from the questionnaires will be used solely for my thesis, and all responses will be kept confidential. Do not write your name or the name of your school on the questionnaire.

Please note the return date for the questionnaire. Your voluntary participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your support.

Have a Great Day!

MTJ/mtj
TO: LUNCHROOM STAFF

FROM: Mae T. Jones
Student/SUNY Brockport
Substitute Teacher/RCSD

DATE: 1 December 1998

SUBJECT: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THESIS

To complete my Master's in Elementary Education at SUNY Brockport, it is required that I write Thesis. The title of my thesis is, "What are the attitudes and opinions of school personnel in reference to the breakfast and lunch programs in elementary schools? To obtain this information from school personnel, I have generated a questionnaire.

The information from the questionnaires will be used solely for my thesis, and all responses will be kept confidential. Do not write your name or the name of your school on the questionnaire.

Please note the return date for the questionnaire. Your voluntary participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your support.

Have a Great Day!

MTJ/mtj
APPENDIX C

RAW DATA FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

TABLE 1: TEACHER RESPONSES

TABLE 2: SCHOOL NURSE RESPONSES

TABLE 3: LUNCHROOM STAFF RESPONSES
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