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The School Meals Initiative Implementation Study

Third Year Report

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The School Meals Initiative Implementation Study Third Year Report

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SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY: THIRD YEAR REPORT

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The study was directed by Sameer Abraham of The Gallup Organization with the assistance of Lynn Daft of Promar International. In addition to the overall supervision of the study, The Gallup Organization was chiefly responsible for sample design and selection and data collection. Promar International's principal responsibilities were data analysis and preparation of the final report. Both organizations participated in development of the research plan and instrument development.

Several staff members of these organizations played important roles in the conduct of this study. They include Jason Carr, Manas Chattopadhyay, Margrethe Montgomery, and Darby Miller Steiger of The Gallup Organization and Brooke Wilbraham, Debra White and Lindsay Gibbs of Promar International.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) are key components of a national policy designed to safeguard and promote the nutritional well-being of the Nation's children. The programs are administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), operating through State agencies (SAs) that have agreements with the local school systems in their States.

Despite the progress that has been achieved over the years in enhancing the quality of school meals, results of research conducted in the early 1990s indicated that school meals, on balance, were failing to meet certain key nutritional goals. In light of these findings, the USDA launched a far-reaching reform of the school meals programs, a reform aimed at upgrading the nutritional content of school meals. The reform began in late 1993 with public hearings followed by a proposed rule in 1994 and a final rule in 1995. The several elements of this reform are collectively referred to as the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children (SMI). The status of this initiative, together with an examination of selected operational issues of these programs, are the principal subjects of this report.

Purpose of the Study

In September 1996, FNS contracted with The Gallup Organization, with the support of Promar International, to conduct a national study of USDA's school-based child nutrition programs. This is the third and final report in the series. The first report, *The School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, was published in October 2000. It examined the status of the SMI in SY 1997/98 and the actions taken by State agencies and school districts in implementing the initiative. The second report, *The School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, was published in July 2001. This report built on the findings of the first year report while examining several new topics as well. This, the third report, builds on the findings of the first two reports in documenting the status of the SMI implementation and in assessing other topics of interest to FNS policymakers and program administrators.

Methodology

The findings in this report are based on data collected from a nationally representative sample of public school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the NSLP and from the 50 State child nutrition agencies responsible for administering the program. Data were collected during School Year (SY) 1999/00 through use of self-administered mail surveys, supplemented by telephone interviews where necessary.

The database of public school districts maintained by Quality Education Data (QED) was used in drawing the sample. Two types of school districts represented in the QED database were found to be appropriate for inclusion in the study: (1) regular public school districts and (2) school districts administered by supervisory unions.[1] While regular school districts are coterminous with SFAs, in the case of supervisory unions it was found that more than one district was served by an individual SFA. Given this difference, regular school districts and school districts in supervisory unions were sampled separately. A sample of 2,325 districts (2,225 regular school districts and 100 supervisory union districts) was drawn.

The sample frame for the regular school districts was stratified by two levels of poverty and by the seven FNS administrative regions. The sample of 2,225 regular school districts was allocated to the 14 strata in proportion to the number of school districts in each stratum. The frame for school districts in supervisory unions was stratified by poverty level only; the sample of 100 districts was allocated disproportionately to ensure sufficient representation of high-poverty districts. Within each stratum, the sample was drawn with probability proportional to size (PPS), where size was defined as the square root of the number of students enrolled in a district.

Of the 2,325 districts in the overall sample, 2,241 (97%) qualified for inclusion in the study by their participation in the NSLP. During the first year of the study, completed surveys were collected from 2,038 respondents, a response rate of 91%. During the second year, completed surveys were collected from 1,998 respondents, a response rate of 89%. In this, the third and final year, completed surveys were collected from 2,014 respondents for a response rate of 89%. Completed surveys were collected from all 50 State child nutrition agencies (SAs) in all three years.

Findings

Key findings of the study are summarized here by the following topics, which correspond to chapters in the report:

- overall status of SMI implementation
- procedures followed in implementing SMI

[1] QED defines a supervisory union as "a confederation of school districts, each retaining local autonomy." The districts within a supervisory union are fiscally independent. They generally share a common superintendent and most instructional staff. They may be known by other terms within the school foodservice profession.

- impact of the SMI
- selected operational issues
- State child nutrition agency operations

Overall Status of SMI Implementation

The SMI identifies four menu planning options, as well as a fifth option for "any reasonable approach" that schools can use to meet the nutritional standards established by the USDA and the US Department of Health and Human Services in their *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The four menu planning options are Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP), Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (ANSMP), Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning, and Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning. The purpose of this section is to determine how many school districts are using each of the menu planning systems, how far along they are in putting these systems in place, and their plans for completing the task. Although the SMI began in School Year 1996/97, States were allowed to grant two-year waivers, making School Year 1998/99, the first fully operational year.

Use of Menu Planning Systems

Findings for SY 1999/00 closely parallel those of the previous two years. They indicate that about one-quarter of all districts were using nutrient-based menu planning systems while most of the remaining three-quarters used a food-based system. To the extent districts have shifted in their use of systems over the period of study, they have shifted slightly toward the use of NSMP and, to a lesser extent, toward enhanced food-based and away from traditional food-based.

NSMP is more likely to be used by the largest districts (35.8%) and by districts operated by food service management companies (42.0%). Neither ANSMP nor the catch-all "other" category are extensively used. Together they were used by fewer than 6.0% of all districts in SY 1999/00, up slightly from that reported in SY 1997/98, the first year of the study. About 6.0% of all districts reported use of more than one approach to menu planning. Within those school districts using multiple menu planning systems, NSMP is the most frequently used approach among elementary schools (37.6%) while the food-based systems are used with greatest frequency in middle/secondary and in other schools.

Nutrient-Based Use for Both Meals

Of those school districts using one of the two nutrient-based menu planning systems (NSMP or ANSMP), 90.0% were using them in their lunch programs and 61.2% were using them in

their breakfast programs in SY 1999/00. These share are slightly lower than in the previous two years.

The share of all districts that used these systems for both meals and conducted a combined lunch/breakfast nutrient analysis rose sharply in SY 1999/00, climbing from 31.8% the year before to 41.1%.

Implementation Status

School food directors continue to report significant progress in implementation. In SY 1999/00, nearly two-thirds (63.3%) of all districts said that they had "fully implemented" their chosen approach to menu planning while nearly 85% indicated that they were at least three-quarters implemented. About one-third of all districts reporting full implementation in SY 1999/00 had achieved this status within the previous year.

Larger districts are somewhat ahead of smaller districts in reaching full implementation. The relatively few districts that are lagging behind in the pace of implementation tend to be smaller districts.

Future Intentions of Food-Based Systems

Of those school districts using one of the food-based menu planning systems in SY 1999/00, 35.5% said that they were either working toward implementation of a nutrient-based system (20.7%) or planning to (14.8%). This is down from 39.1% in SY 1998/99 and 51.3% the year before. Coincidentally, the share of all food-based systems reporting that they did not intend to adopt a nutrient-based approach rose from about 50% in SY 1997/98 to around 64% in SY 1999/00.

Although one-fifth to one-quarter of all food-based districts have reportedly been working toward implementation of NSMP between SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00, the share of all districts using NSMP has increased relatively little over this period, climbing from 19.8% to 22.5%. Thus, while some of the decline in the share of districts moving toward adoption of a nutrient-based system probably occurred because some districts completed the transition, most of the decline appears to be due to other factors.

Operational Procedures

Use of Cycle Menus and Weighting

The advantages of cycle menus continue to attract more SFAs to their use, especially among larger districts and those using nutrient-based approaches to menu planning. The share of all districts using cycle menus the year they were surveyed rose from 40.0% in SY 1997/98 to 53.5% in SY 1999/00. This still leaves nearly half of all districts that are not using cycle menus.

Although school districts are not currently required to use weights in conducting nutrient analysis, their value in this purpose is suggested by the finding that 84.6% of all districts used them in SY 1999/00. This is up from 77.6% in SY 1997/98 with the increase attributable to the increased use of the technique among districts using one of the food-based approaches to menu planning.

Steps Taken by Food-Based Menu Planning Districts to Achieve Nutritional Objectives

A large and growing share of all food-based districts conduct nutrient analysis. While these districts are not required to conduct nutrient analysis, they are required to meet nutrient targets. Between SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00, the share of all districts that conduct nutrient analysis climbed from 33.1% to 45.9%. Most districts that use a food-based system (94%) say that they have made changes in the serving or preparation of meals for purposes of achieving the goals of the Dietary Guidelines.

Conduct of ANSMP Analysis

State agencies are the principal source of ANSMP nutrient analysis, accounting for 57.8% in SY 1999/00. The other principal sources were: food service management companies (16.5%), other school districts (9.7%), and consultants (8.8%).

Publicizing the Nutrient Content of Menus

A majority of all school districts (84.5%) say that they do not publicize the nutrient content of their menus. A substantially larger share of NSMP/ANSMP districts publicize the nutrient content, compared to districts using one of the food-based approaches (30.5% versus 11.0%). These shares have remained essentially the same throughout the period of study.

Impact of the School Meals Initiative

Ease of Implementing NSMP

Of 14 key tasks associated with implementation of the nutrient-based approach to menu planning, three have proven to be most difficult for most SFAs. The three tasks - - entering and analyzing recipes, entering and analyzing menus, and obtaining missing nutrient information - - are integral to the NSMP approach. The accomplishment of each of these tasks was viewed as a "major burden" for 45% to 55% of the NSMP/ANSMP districts in SY 1999/00. While these tasks are perceived to have become less onerous between SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00, they remain a challenge to many districts.

Districts that have achieved full implementation of NSMP or are approaching full implementation tend to view these tasks as less burdensome than do districts that are still in the process of implementing their menu planning systems.

Staff Time in Planning Menus

In SY 1999/00, about three-quarters of all districts reported no change from the year before in time spent planning breakfast menus and about two-thirds reported the same for planning lunch menus. For NSMP/ANSMP districts, this represents a sharp turnaround from two years before when 66% said they spent more time planning breakfast menus and 76% spent more time on their lunch menus.

As expected, all districts, whether nutrient-based or food-based, tend to use less time in menu planning as they become fully operational. Nonetheless, about one-quarter of all districts that have fully implemented systems, whether food-based or nutrient-based, still find that they are spending "more time" planning lunch menus.

Menu Changes

A majority of SFAs made changes in their breakfast and lunch menus in SY 1999/00, though for most the magnitude of change was modest and the incidence was somewhat less than two years earlier. About half of all districts described their breakfast menus as "somewhat different" in SY 1999/00 while about two-thirds said the same of their lunch menus. Most remaining districts reported that there had been no change in their menus.

Change in A La Carte Sales

While the share of small and medium-size NSMP/ANSMP districts that offered a la carte sales in their elementary schools fell between SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00, among large districts

(enrollment of 25,000 or more) the share rose. And among NSMP/ANSMP districts that continued to offer a la carte, regardless of size, the share reporting an increase in sales in their elementary schools grew larger. Increased a la carte sales were especially prevalent in the elementary schools of the largest districts during this period. A comparison of a la carte sales across this period for food-based school districts was not possible since information was not collected prior to SY 1999/00.

Among middle/secondary schools in NSMP/ANSMP districts, a la carte offerings were not only substantially more prevalent than in their elementary schools but the share of districts reporting increased sales in SY 1999/00 was also much larger than it had been two years earlier.

Across all districts, whether nutrient-based or food-based, over 80% of all districts offer a la carte sales in their middle/secondary schools. And of those districts offering a la carte in their schools, a majority reported increased sales in SY 1999/00.

Number of A La Carte Items Offered

Of those districts that offer a la carte, a majority indicated no change in SY 1999/00 in the number of a la carte items offered compared to the year before. To the extent there were changes, they were mostly in the direction of offering additional items, led by beverages and snacks. Among those districts serving a la carte, 17.3% reported an increased number of beverage items in their elementary schools while 39.9% reported an increase in their middle/secondary schools. The shares of districts reporting additional snack items in elementary and middle/secondary schools were 32.6% and 51.9%, respectively.

Menu Related Features of the Program

Overall, the findings suggest significant change in how school food directors plan and implement their menus, with most of the changes contributing to the accomplishment of SMI objectives. For example, in SY 1999/00, 77.8% of all districts reported that they had used cycle menus at some time, not necessarily at present (up from 64.3% two years before), 74.9% had increased the number of items added to their menus, and 61.6% had added to the number of fruits and/or vegetables offered.

Food Procurement and Preparation

While the pace of change in food procurement and preparation practices slowed in SY 1999/00, relative to the preceding two years, changes continued to be made by a large number of districts. This includes increased purchases of fresh fruit and vegetables (59.7% of all

districts) and low-fat/reduced-fat foods (49.9%) and requiring additional nutrition information from vendors (57.8%). When compared across the entire period of study, at least 90% of all districts made these changes in at least one of the three years.

About two-thirds of all districts continue to use purchasing cooperatives. Of those using them, 18.7% said that they increased their use of them in SY 1999/00. Just over one-quarter of all districts (25.7%) reported increased use of USDA donated commodities.

Further evidence that the implementation process is beginning to "wind-down" is found in the incidence of changes in the use of standardized recipes and new USDA recipes. About two-thirds of all districts reported that "no change" was required in the use of either in 1999/00. This contrasts with responses two years earlier when 60% of all districts said they had increased their use of both.

Number of Food Choices

The majority of all school districts indicate "no change" in the number of food choices offered across all major food categories, though one-quarter to nearly one-half continue to add choices among some of the categories. The share of all districts reporting "no change" has gradually risen across the period of study, particularly among the fruit, vegetable, and bread/grain categories. These are the food categories that were most directly affected by the SMI.

Portion Sizes

Findings from the first two years of this study generally indicated that districts provided larger servings of fruit, vegetables, and grain-based foods to their students. Findings for SY 1999/00 reveal a continuation of these trends, though the pace of change has slowed as districts appear to have more or less achieved their desired portion sizes.

Plate Waste

A majority of all school food directors report "no change" in food waste for each of seven food groups. To the extent they observe change, by a margin of about 2-to-1 they report "less waste" as opposed to "more waste". Cooked vegetables continue to be the one exception. Of those districts reporting a change in the amount of cooked vegetables wasted, nearly twice as many indicate that more was wasted (27.0%) than that less was wasted (14.4%).

Difficulty in Performing Tasks

As in the first two years of the study, findings for SY 1999/00 indicate that the perceived level of difficulty in performing certain key tasks required for implementation of the SMI fall into

two groups, one of minimal difficulty and one of somewhat greater difficulty. Of ten identified tasks, six appear to pose minimal difficulty for most districts with 70% or more reporting "no difficulty" in performing them.

The other four tasks are described as presenting "some difficulty" by 34% to 48% of the districts and as a "major difficulty" by 6% to 9%. These more challenging tasks, all of which are important to the accomplishment of SMI objectives, are the tasks of adhering to standardized recipes, finding nutritionally-comparable substitutions and documenting them, and maintaining food production records.

Program Acceptance

School food directors report that most of the stakeholders within their districts remain positive-to-neutral in their attitude toward the SMI. However, a comparison of the results from SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00 suggest that stakeholders have become slightly less positive and slightly more neutral-to-negative.

School food directors remain highly supportive of the SMI, though slightly less so than two years ago. Two-thirds of all directors say that they are at least "somewhat positive" toward the initiative.

Selected Operational Issues

Direct Certification

To help reduce the burden of certifying students eligible for free meals, SFAs may "direct certify" students by determining that they live in households already certified to receive assistance through the Food Stamp Program, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

An estimated 62.7% of all districts used direct certification in establishing student eligibility for free meals in SY 1999/00. Nationally, just under one-third (29%) of all students determined eligible for free meals were certified directly.

Nearly half (46%) of all districts that certify students directly use a Statewide system that directly notifies households of their eligibility. Slightly fewer than one-quarter of the districts certify on the basis of a matched database provided by the State while the remaining 30% certify at the district level on the basis of information obtained from local agencies.

Afterschool Care Programs

Snacks were provided to children participating in afterschool care programs in 15.5% of all districts in SY 1999/00. Large school districts and those operating in high-poverty areas are substantially more likely to participate in these programs. Nearly a half million children participated in these programs in SY 1999/00, the equivalent of 2.5% of the total enrollment of the participating districts and 1.1% of the total national enrollment. Nearly two-thirds (64.7%) of the programs were operated by the districts; the remaining third were run by a variety of community-based organizations like the YMCA/YWCA.

Pouring Rights Contracts

Nearly 1-in-3 school districts indicated that they were under an exclusive contract with a carbonated beverage company in SY 1999/00. The share of districts under contract was relatively uniform across all sizes of districts but more prevalent among low-poverty districts than among high-poverty districts (35.0% versus 20.5%). Most districts (92.8%) entered into the contracts on their own rather than as part of a consortium. Of those districts that were under contract, more than one-third reported that their contract applied to products sold in the cafeteria.

Charter Schools

There were an estimated 1,619 charter schools operating in 847 public NSLP school districts in SY 1999/00, up slightly from the number reported a year earlier. Charter schools are far more likely to be found in large districts. The school food authority is responsible for providing food service to charter schools in 58.2% of the districts that host them and in 53.5% of the charter schools in these districts.

Provision 2 and 3 Schools

As a means of reducing the paperwork associated with administering school meals programs, schools operating under Provision 2 or Provision 3 may use alternative means of determining student eligibility for free and reduced price meals and for recording daily meal counts.

An estimated 517 school districts (3.9%) reported that 3,154 schools (3.8%) in their districts were operating under Provision 2 or Provision 3 in SY 1999/00. Most of these schools (89.1%) were operating under Provision 2. Provision 2 in particular is used with greatest frequency in the largest districts and in high-poverty districts.

Use of Food Service Management Companies

On the basis of responses to the SY 1999/00 survey of SFAs, it is estimated that 1,450 districts (11.1%) used Food Service Management Companies that year. This represents a reversal of the past growth trend and is down 20% from the year before. It also contradicts findings from the survey of State CN agencies (reported below) indicating that 1,964 SFAs (14.1%) were being managed by these firms. Absent further confirmation of a downturn, this estimate should be treated with caution.

Internet Access

The access of school food directors to the Internet, whether at work or at home, jumped from 67% in SY 1998/99 to 87% in SY 1999/00. While most directors (72.2%) have access at work, more than half (55.8%) also have access at home.

Views of the State Directors of Child Nutrition Programs

SFA Use of Alternative Menu Planning Systems

State directors report little change in the distribution of SFAs among the alternative approaches to menu planning in their States. On the basis of their records, the two food-based approaches continue to be used by more than 80% of all districts with NSMP used by 16% and ANSMP by fewer than 2%. There remains a tendency for a majority of the SFAs within individual States to use the same menu planning approach, usually a food-based approach.

The number of State agencies providing ANSMP support to SFAs in their States fell to 7 in SY 1999/00, down from 15 two years before.

Training and Technical Assistance

Findings for SY 1998/99 suggest that the role of State agencies in support of the SMI is shifting away from computer support and training sessions and, to a lesser extent, nutritional assistance, and toward more on-site technical assistance. For example, while 45 State agencies provided computer assistance during 1995-97, only 29 reported offering support in this form in SY 1998/99. Despite this shift, a majority of the State agencies continue to provide support in all these forms.

SMI Compliance Reviews

The pace of conducting compliance reviews accelerated in SY 1998/99 with the number of SFAs reviewed jumping 43% from the year before. A handful of State agencies continued to

lag behind in conducting reviews. Of the SFAs that underwent a compliance review in SY 1998/99, 62% required improvement plans. As indicated in earlier reports, the share of SFAs requiring improvement plans varies widely among State agencies, suggesting a lack of uniformity in the standards that are being applied.

Of the 50 State agencies, half said that they "usually" or "always" conduct SMI compliance reviews at the same time they conduct CRE administrative reviews. While a majority of these directors report that the coordination of these reviews is, at worst, a "minor problem," a growing number see it as a "major problem."

Direct Certification

Most State agencies (45 of 50) report that their States assisted in direct certification in SY 1999/00, the same number as the year before. In 38 of the 45 States that provide this help, eligibility is based on information that is effective in June, July, or August immediately preceding the school year.

Prototype Application Forms

To promote greater consistency and accuracy, 27 of the 50 State agencies required their SFAs to use a prototype free/reduced-price meal application form in SY 1999/00.

Food Service Management Companies

State agencies report that food service management companies (FSMCs) were operating in 42 States in SY 1999/00. In contrast to the SFA survey findings described above, State agencies reported a 17% increase in the number of SFAs contracting with FSMCs between SY 1998/99 and SY 1999/00.

State Agency Support for SFA Procurement

Forty of the 50 State agencies periodically review the procurement activities of the SFAs in their States. A majority of States (36) have their own procurement standards that apply to child nutrition programs, though fewer than half (14) of these directors felt that the State standards were more restrictive than the Federal standards. In 19 States, the directors indicated that their State's competitive food policy is more restrictive than Federal policy.

Charter Schools

Of the 50 State agencies, only 21 maintain their records in such a way that they can identify charter schools. As a result, the numbers reported through the State agency survey are incomplete and not comparable to those collected through the SFA survey.

In SY 1999/00, 457 charter schools were participating in the NSLP in 19 States. This represents a 13% increase in the number of schools from the previous year. Most of these schools have been granted SFA status; 17 State agencies said they had granted SFA status to 421 charter schools, up 51% from the number reported by 15 State agencies the year before. The directors from most of the States with charter schools report that their rapid growth has intensified the need for State agency supervision and technical assistance.

Financial Management

State agencies conducted organization-wide financial audits in nearly 10,900 school districts (78%) in SY 1998/99. In 27 of the 49 responding States, these audits were carried out in all SFAs in the State. State directors reported that, only 8.7% of the audits required any follow-up action to resolve problems.

Afterschool Care Programs

All 50 State agencies provided support in some form to the NSLP and CACFP providers of afterschool snacks in their States in SY 1999/00. The types of supporting activities undertaken included: direct mailings (98% of SAs), development of printed material (84%), and training programs and workshops (76%).

State Agency Staffing

The median number of non-clerical professional staff employed by or contracted by State agencies to work on child nutritional programs in SY 1999/00 was 14. The range in size was from 2 to 48. Of the 49 responding SAs, 16 reported the use of consultants. Nearly one-third of all SAs (15) indicated that they administer other programs in addition to the child nutrition programs. The median low annual salary of SA professional staff was $34,500; the median high annual salary was $58,100.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

In late 1993, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) took its initial steps toward launching a major reform of the school meals programs known as the "School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children" (SMI). The central aim of this reform is to upgrade the nutritional content of school lunches and school breakfasts. This is the final report in a series of three reports assessing the status of SMI implementation and other operational features of the school meals programs.

This chapter briefly introduces the school meals programs and the SMI. Following this introduction, it describes the purpose of the study and provides an outline of the remainder of the report.

School Meals Programs

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) are key instruments of a national policy designed to safeguard the nutritional well-being of the Nation's children. They are administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the USDA, operating through State agencies (SAs) that have agreements with the local school systems in their States. The NSLP was authorized in 1946. A pilot SBP began in 1966 with approval of a national program following in 1975. In Fiscal Year 2000, nearly 4.6 billion lunches were served to over 27 million kids in over 96,000 schools and institutions and over 1.3 billion breakfasts were served to nearly 7.6 million kids in more than 72,000 schools and institutions.

To achieve the health and dietary aims of these programs, participating schools are required to serve meals that meet prescribed nutritional standards. Until recently, USDA achieved this exclusively by identifying minimum numbers and amounts of food components (meat/meat alternative, bread/grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk) that were to be incorporated in meals served in participating schools. The meals were designed to achieve nutritional balance. The meal pattern for lunches was designed to provide approximately one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) developed by the National Academy of Sciences.

To help all Americans make better dietary choices, the USDA and the US Department of Health and Human Services jointly developed the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The Dietary Guidelines were first issued in 1980 and have been updated every five years since. Among other recommendations, the Dietary Guidelines call for diets in which fat comprises no more than 30% of caloric intake and saturated fat accounts for less than 10% of total

calories for individuals two years of age and older. Since these Dietary Guidelines were developed for Americans of all ages, they offer a useful standard against which to measure the performance of the NSLP and SBP.

Despite increased attention to the Dietary Guidelines and the development and growth of programs like the NSLP and SBP, nutritional imbalances are increasingly commonplace in the American diet, indicating the need for changes in what we eat if we are to have healthful diets. An excessive intake of fat, saturated fat, and sodium and too little intake of foods containing complex carbohydrates and fiber have been shown by an accumulation of scientific evidence to have harmful health consequences.

Substantial progress has been achieved over the years in enhancing the quality of school meals. Results of USDA research conducted in the early 1990s indicated that school meals, on balance, were not meeting certain key elements of the Dietary Guidelines.[1] School lunches were found to exceed the recommended levels of fat, saturated fat, and sodium by a substantial margin and fell short of the recommended level of carbohydrates. A follow-up study conducted during SY 1998/99 found that school meals had become substantially healthier since the earlier study.[2] Levels of fat and saturated fat were lower and carbohydrate levels were higher, relative to calorie content. Despite these improvements, the study found that there was still work to be done to achieve the goals represented by the Dietary Guidelines.

The School Meals Initiative

The USDA developed the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children to help bring school meals in compliance with the Dietary Guidelines. The SMI has four major missions. They are:

1. *Meeting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Nutritional requirements that help make it possible for school meals to meet the Dietary Guidelines and certain key nutrients are the centerpiece of the SMI. Schools were to begin compliance with the Dietary Guidelines at the beginning of School Year 1996/97 unless granted a waiver to postpone implementation until no later than SY 1998/99. There are five menu planning options that schools can use to meet the new standards:

    - Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP)

[1] USDA, FNS, *The School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study*, prepared by Mathematic Policy Research, Inc., October 1998.
[2] USDA, FNS, *School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study – II*, prepared by Abt Associates, July 2001.

- Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (ANSMP)
- Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning
- Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning
- Alternative Menu Planning

NSMP and ANSMP are both accomplished through use of computer nutrient analysis. The principal distinction between the two is that NSMP is conducted by the school district or "school food authority" (SFA) while a second party, such as the State Child Nutrition Agency or a consultant conducts the nutrient analysis for ANSMP. Both techniques represent a significant departure from the approach that was formerly used. The next two menu planning options – enhanced food-based and traditional food-based – continue to base menu planning on prescribed portion sizes and food components. The principal difference between the two food-based approaches is that the enhanced system calls for increased quantities of vegetables, fruits, breads, and grains while the traditional food-based system leaves the prescribed portion sizes and food components as they were. Despite their different approaches, all menu-planning systems are required to achieve the same result; that is, they are to produce meals that meet the Dietary Guidelines and provide adequate calories and key nutrients for growing children.

2. *Providing nutrition education, training, and technical assistance*. Under the banner of Team Nutrition, the USDA provides an extensive array of nutrition education, training, and technical assistance support for State and local school food professionals. This includes training standards and materials, and the creation of public/private partnerships to promote healthy eating among school children.

3. *Making improvements in donated commodities*. With the guidance of its Commodities Improvement Council, the USDA has made a number of changes in its commodity distribution program. Collectively, these changes have further improved the nutritional profile of the commodities the USDA buys for donation to schools. More recently, the USDA has initiated "Food Distribution 2000," a major review of all aspects of the program that will result in additional reform.

4. *Streamlining program administration*. To free the time of State agency staff for the increased demands of the new menu planning systems, the Department has made changes designed to reduce the administrative burdens and paperwork requirements of the participating school districts. For example, the Department has extended the

length of the coordinated review effort (CRE) cycle from 4 to 5 years. It also eliminated the requirement that school districts conduct daily checks of their meal counts if the district has an established record of accurate meal counts.

Purpose of the Report

This is the third and final report that will be issued as part of this study. The principal focus of the First Year Report was the SMI, its status, how it was being implemented, and its impact, as of School Year (SY) 1997/98.[1] That report marked the first collection of SMI information from a nationally representative sample of school districts since the initiative got underway in SY 1996/97. The only other source of detailed information relating to the SMI was from an evaluation of a USDA-sponsored demonstration of Nutrient Standard Menu Planning that had been conducted in 34 SFAs in SY 1994/95 through SY 1996/97.[2] The Second Year Report extended the first year analysis in assessing the continued progress in implementing the SMI.[3] In addition, this report examined several other program issues of special interest to FNS.

Following initiation of this study, in SY 1998/99 the USDA conducted the second School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study (SNDA-II).[4] This study provided updated information on the nutritional quality of meals served in public NSLP schools.

The objectives of this Third Year Report are two-fold. They are as follows:

- *Implementation of the School Meals Initiative.* This report builds on the findings of the two previous reports in assessing the continued progress in the implementation of the SMI as of SY 1999/00, including comparisons with the previous two school years. The impact of the SMI on a number of operational and performance measures is examined as well.
- *Special issues*. A second objective of this report is to examine several program issues of interest to FNS. This includes the use of food service management companies in school feeding programs, the use of direct certification of eligibility for free school meals, the participation of SFAs in after-school care programs,

[1] FNS, USDA, *SMI Implementation Study: First Year Report*, prepared by The Gallup Organization and Promar International, October 2000.

[2] FNS, USDA, *Evaluation of the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning Demonstration: Final Report*, prepared by Abt Associates, August 1998.

[3] FNS, USDA, *SMI Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, prepared by The Gallup Organization and Promar International, July 2001.

[4] FNS, USDA, *School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study II: Summary of Findings*, prepared by Abt Associates, January 2001.

SFA participation in exclusive "pouring rights" contracts with soft drink companies, and school participation in the so-called "Provision 2 and 3" programs.

Outline of the Report

The report describes and interprets results of the third year surveys of a national sample of public SFAs participating in the NSLP and of the 50 State Child Nutrition Agencies. The data were collected during SY 1999/00. The report begins with a brief description of study methodology, including study design, sample selection, and data collection procedures in Chapter II. This is followed in Chapter III by a description of key characteristics of school districts participating in the school meals programs.

The following three chapters are devoted to the SMI, its current status and impact. In the first of these, Chapter IV, an up-dated assessment of the schools' progress in implementing the menu planning systems spelled out in the SMI is provided. In Chapter V, the experience of the districts in applying the operational procedures required under the SMI is reviewed. This is followed in Chapter VI by an examination of the impact of the SMI on a wide range of factors including staffing requirements, food procurement and preparation, and program acceptance. Throughout these chapters, comparisons are made between the status of the SMI in SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00 and, where appropriate, across all three survey years.

Chapter VII is devoted to an examination of the several operational issues that are of particular interest to FNS. The final chapter, Chapter VIII, is based on information collected from the State Child Nutrition Agencies. Beyond reviewing the status of the SMI as seen from the State level, several operational topics are examined including State Agency activities relating to direct certification, charter schools, support for SFA procurement, organization-wide financial and compliance audits, and after-school care programs.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This report is part of a three-year study of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's school-based child nutrition programs. The study is based on data collected from a nationally representative sample of public school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and from the State agencies responsible for administration of the program. Data for the study were collected through use of self-administered mail surveys, supplemented by computer-assisted telephone interviews, where necessary. The two surveys – one for the SFAs and another for the State agencies – were administered in SY 1999/00.

Survey instruments for SY 1999/00 were developed in the spring of 1999. Both instruments were reviewed by the Education Information Advisory Committee (EIAC) of the Council of Chief State School Officers. The SFA survey used in SY 1997/98, that served as the model for this instrument, as well as the instrument used in SY 1998/99, was pre-tested with six school districts from different parts of the nation, ranging in size from less than 5,000 enrollment to more than 120,000.

Design of the sample and its implementation are discussed in the following section. Once the sample was drawn, State CN Agencies were asked to confirm that the sampled SFAs within their respective States were participating in the NSLP and to provide names, addresses, and telephone numbers for each SFA. This information was collected in early 1998. For the third year surveys, pre-notification letters were mailed in March 2000 to SFAs in the sample, including those that failed to respond to either of the surveys conducted during the first two years, followed by SFA and State survey mailings about one week later. For those SFAs that did not respond to the survey or to the follow-up prompts or that provided incomplete responses, telephone interviews were conducted, as required, during June through October 2000. Data collection for the year three surveys was concluded in October 2000. As indicated in Table II-1, the SFA response rates (number of completed interviews divided by the eligible sample size) varied for the various stratum from 74.9% to 96.5%, with an overall response rate of 89.2%. For the State survey, the response rate was 100%.

Sample Design and Implementation

The universe for the State agencies for the year-one study consisted of the Directors of Child Nutrition Programs in all 50 States. Since a census was conducted of all 50 agencies, a sample was not required. The target population of SFAs was comprised of all public SFAs in

the 50 States and the District of Columbia. In most instances, SFAs are coterminous with school districts; in a few instances they are not. The database of public school districts maintained by Quality Education Data (QED) of Denver, Colorado was determined to be the most complete and accurate frame readily available to the study.

Within this frame, it was determined that there were two types of school districts that were appropriate for inclusion in the study. One was what QED termed "regular public school districts." The other type consisted of fiscally independent districts that were administered by "supervisory unions." Of the 14,104 public school districts in the frame, 13,192 were regular districts and 912 were districts in supervisory unions. And while regular public school districts were identical to SFAs, it was determined through consultation with several State agencies that in some supervisory unions more than one district was served by an individual SFA. In effect, with the supervisory union districts it was not known which district belonged to which SFA and how many SFAs there were among these districts. Given this difference, regular school districts and school districts in supervisory unions were sampled separately. Assuming an eligibility rate of 95% and a response rate of 90%, it was determined that a sample of 2,325 districts – consisting of 2,225 regular school districts and 100 supervisory union districts – was required.

The frame for the regular school districts was first stratified into fourteen strata according to a cross-classification of poverty status and USDA regions. Two levels of poverty (high and low) and FNS's seven administrative regions were used. The Orshansky measure in the QED frame was used to define poverty levels.[1] High poverty districts were defined as those districts where 30% or more of the enrolled students were from families with incomes below the poverty line. According to this definition, 32% of the districts were classified as high poverty, and 68% of the districts were classified as low poverty.

The sample of 2,225 regular school districts was allocated to the 14 strata in proportion to the number of school districts in each stratum. Therefore, the sampling fraction was about 2,225/13,192 = 16.87% in all strata. Table II-1 describes the sample allocation to each stratum. Within each stratum, the sample was drawn with probability proportional to size (PPS), where size was defined as the square root of the number of students enrolled in a district. By using the square root instead of the actual enrollment, the skewness in the size

[1] This measures the number of school-age children in households falling below the Federal poverty guidelines expressed as a percent of all school-age children within the district. If 50% or more of the schools within a district have data on Title I students, the district is assigned the weighted average of the Title I schools. These data are from the National Center for Educational Statistics Common Core of Data. For those districts lacking Title I data for at least half their schools, the measure is based on data from the 1990 Census of Population.

distribution was reduced so that a sufficient number of small districts could be included in the sample.

Since the QED database includes all school districts, including some that do not participate in the NSLP, it was necessary to ask the State agencies to review the list of sampled districts in each of their States to determine if any were ineligible for inclusion in the study. Of the 2,225 regular school districts, 69 districts (3%) were found to be ineligible. This share is consistent with the results of past studies.

Table II-1: Regular public school districts, 1998

Stratum	Poverty (high=1, low=2)	Region	Total population size	Total sample size	Sample size (Eligible)	Completed interviews	Response rates (weighted) (%)
1	1	1	198	33	33	27	74.9
2	1	2	324	55	55	44	87.3
3	1	3	751	127	125	118	94.4
4	1	4	203	34	34	29	87.4
5	1	5	555	94	94	83	88.9
6	1	6	1,411	238	237	216	91.3
7	1	7	800	135	133	111	84.4
8	2	1	1,088	183	175	156	88.4
9	2	2	2,813	474	450	406	89.8
10	2	3	1,781	300	291	270	90.0
11	2	4	1,046	177	169	143	85.3
12	2	5	494	83	83	75	87.1
13	2	6	651	110	109	105	96.5
14	2	7	1,077	182	168	146	87.6
Total			13,192	2,225	2,156	1,929	89.2

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

The frame for school districts in supervisory unions was stratified by poverty level – high poverty and low poverty, using the same Orshansky cutoff. Thus, it contained 145 high poverty districts and 767 low poverty districts. The sample was allocated to the two strata disproportionately, with 32 to high poverty districts and 68 to low poverty, to ensure sufficient representation of high poverty districts. Within each stratum the sample was drawn based on a probability proportional to size sampling scheme, i.e. using the same procedure that was used for sampling the regular school districts. As noted above, more than one of these districts

could be associated with the same SFA. There were instances where both high poverty districts and low poverty districts were being served by the same SFA. Table II-2 below provides the details of the sample of supervisory union districts.

Table II-2: Public school districts in supervisory unions, 1998

Stratum	Poverty	Total population size	Total sample size	Sample size (Eligible)	Completed interviews
1	High	145	32	25	22
2	Low	767	68	60	47
Total		912	100	85	69

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Data Analysis and Reporting

The sample data were weighted so that inferences could be drawn regarding the universe of all public school districts in the 50 States and the District of Columbia that participate in the NSLP. Weights were designed to adjust for differential probabilities of selection and non-response. Since those school districts that are in supervisory unions were selected into the sample through a sampling of supervisory unions rather than the districts themselves, there was no straightforward way to calculate the selection probability for each sampled school district in a supervisory union. Instead, the selection probability for these districts was estimated by simulating the sampling process 1,000 times. The simulation procedure was carried out separately for the high poverty stratum and the low poverty stratum.

At the outset of each chapter, key research questions to be addressed in the remainder of the chapter are identified. Results of the analysis are presented in tables accompanied by interpretive text. Most results are cross-tabulated by district size, program participation, and district poverty level. When appropriate, results are also cross-tabulated by school type and the type of menu planning system being used. These measures and their subgroups are defined as follows:

- *School district enrollment* (as of October 31, 1999):
  - Less than 1,000
  - 1,000 to 4,900
  - 5,000 to 24,900
  - 25,000 or more

- *Program participation* (School Year 1999/00):

  - Both NSLP and SBP
  - NSLP only

- *District poverty level* (share of district enrollment approved for free and reduced price meals as of October 31, 1999):
  - High (>60%)
  - Medium (31-60%)
  - Low ($\leq$ 30%)

- *School type*:
  - Elementary – Schools composed of any span of grades not above Grade 8.
  - Middle/secondary – Schools that have no grade lower than Grade 6 and continue through Grade 12
  - Other schools – Schools that include grade spans other than those defined above, including, for example, schools with a K-12 grade span.

- *Menu planning systems*:
  - Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP)
  - Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (ANSMP)
  - Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning
  - Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning
  - Other menu planning systems

To assess the statistical significance of differences between subgroups of school districts and between school districts across study years, *t*-tests were performed for certain variables. Between group differences and year-to-year differences that were found to be significant at the .01 and the .05 levels are reported.

Research Questions

A series of research questions for each of the two primary objectives of the report provided the overall framework for analysis of the survey data. The objectives and their associated research questions are as follows:

Objective 1 - Implementation of the School Meals Initiative

For School Food Authorities:

- Which menu planning options (or combination of options) are SFAs now using and how has this changed over the past two school years?
- What is the current status of implementation?
- If nutrient analysis of recipes and menus is being conducted, are food items weighted on the basis of their relative importance?
- To what degree has performance of the following tasks required for implementation of NSMP been a burden to the school food directors and staff:
  - Obtaining nutrient data for foods not in the database?
  - Obtaining reimbursable meal serving information for weighted analysis?
  - Standardizing recipes?
  - Meeting all the required nutrient standards?
  - Acceptability of food items, menu items, recipes, and menus?
  - Skill/training requirements?
- Do SFAs publicize nutrition information for their menus?
- Compared to last year, what changes have SFAs made with regard to:
  - The general nature of the meals served?
  - Use of menu cycles?
  - Use of self-serve foods (salad bars/theme bars, etc.)?
  - Availability and sales of a la carte foods?
  - Number of menu choices?
  - Portion sizes offered (including tailoring portion size to age category)?
  - Time devoted to planning menus?
- For those SFAs using food-based menu planning:
  - What steps are being taken to ensure that meals meet the Dietary Guidelines?
  - Are they working toward or planning to work toward implementing NSMP?
- Compared to last year, what changes have SFAs made in recipes and food preparation techniques?
  - Use of standardized recipes?

- Use of new USDA recipes?
- Time devoted to recording food production information?
- Modify recipes to improve nutritional content of meals?
- Change food preparation techniques to improve nutritional content of meals?
- Purchase of new equipment?

- Compared to last year, what changes have SFAs made in food procurement?
  - Purchase of fresh fruits/vegetables?
  - Purchase of prepared, convenience foods?
  - Purchase of pre-plated meals from outside vendors?
  - Use of USDA donated commodities?
  - Purchase of low-fat/reduced-fat foods?
  - Requiring nutrition information from vendors?
  - Use and content of product specifications?
  - Use of purchasing cooperatives?

For State Agencies:

- How many SFAs within each State are using each of the authorized menu planning options (or combinations of options)?
- What role has the State played in assisting public SFAs in the selection and implementation of new menu planning systems?
- Have State agencies offered general training sessions to SFAs to present the various menu planning options? If so, how many sessions were held and how many SFAs have been trained?
- Have State agencies provided public SFAs with nutritional expertise? With computer expertise? With on-site technical assistance?
- Have State agencies developed plans and procedures to provide ANSMP to SFAs in their States? How many SFAs are using ANSMP provided by State agencies?
- How are States monitoring SFA compliance with the School Meals Initiative? How many school sites have been reviewed? Are State Agencies conducting SMI reviews and Coordinated Review Efforts (CRE) Administrative Reviews simultaneously? To what extent has coordination of the reviews been a problem?
- To what extent have improvement plans been required as a result of the SMI reviews?

Objective 2 – Special Issues

For School Food Authorities

- How many SFAs use direct certification of children in Food Stamp (FS), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) households to qualify for free meal eligibility?
- For those SFAs that use direct certification with information provided by the State:
  - What method does the SFA use?
  - What share of all students approved for free lunches are directly certified?

- In how many school districts are afterschool snacks provided under the NSLP or Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)? For those school districts providing afterschool snacks:
  - How many schools are providing these snacks?
  - Who operates these programs?
  - How many children participate in these programs?

- How many "charter schools" are operating in NSLP districts? In how many of those schools is the SFA responsible for providing meals?
- How many school food directors have access to the Internet, at work or at home?
- How many school districts are operating schools under the special assistance alternatives (Provisions II or III) to the normal requirements for annual eligibility determinations and daily meal counts, and for those districts that are, how many schools are participating?
- How many school districts have entered into exclusive "pouring rights" contracts with carbonated beverage companies? For those that have, did they do so alone or as part of a consortium and does the contract apply to any products sold in the cafeteria?

For State Agencies

- How many States generate a listing of children in households in the FS, TANF, and FDPIR and what is the effective month of this certification?

- How many States have SFAs that have contracts with Food Service Management companies (FSMCs) and how many SFAs within these States are operating under contract with FSMCs?
- For those State Agencies that maintain records identifying "charter schools" that are participating in child nutrition programs:
  - How many charter schools are participating in the NSLP?
  - How many of these charter schools have been granted SFA status?
  - To what extent has the rapid growth in the number of charter schools created new administrative issues?
- In providing support for SFA procurement activities:
  - How many States have procurement standards that apply to CN programs? For those that do, how many are more restrictive than Federal standards?
  - How many States conduct periodic oversight of their SFA's procurement activities?
  - In how many States is the State-wide competitive food policy more restrictive than the Federal competitive food policy?
- How many SFAs were the subject of State-conducted organization-wide financial and SMI compliance audits during SY 1998/99? Of those SFAs audited, how many required State agency attention to resolve problems?
- What activities have States undertaken related to the implementation of afterschool snacks in the NSLP and CACFP?
- How many non-clerical, professional (including contracted) staff are employed by State agencies to work on child nutrition programs?
- What are the annual salary ranges for professional staff and consultants/contracted staff working on child nutrition programs?
- How many State CN directors administer programs other than CN programs?

CHAPTER III: SCHOOL DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

In this chapter we examine some key measures of the operations and characteristics of the public schools and school districts participating in the US Department of Agriculture's school meals programs in SY 1999/00.

This background information is provided for a couple of reasons. First, it offers an up-dated snapshot of major dimensions of the program. In several of the tables appearing below, we compare national estimates for SY 1999/00 with estimates for SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99 that appeared in previous reports in this series. For most measures, we compare findings from the first and third survey years to contrast the changes that have occurred. For those indicators that are especially important or where we detect an erratic trend across the period, we display results for all three years.

A second purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a context for interpreting study results. Most of the findings described elsewhere in this report are arrayed by the same breakdown of district characteristics shown in the tables that follow. With this information, it is therefore possible to determine the distribution of key parameters – e.g. number of school districts, schools, and students – among the resulting outcomes.

For this purpose, national estimates are provided for:

- Number of schools and school districts.
- Student enrollment.
- Students approved for free and reduced price meals.
- Number of meals served (free, reduced and full price).
- Student participation in the school meals program.

Schools and School Districts in the NSLP/SBP

Results of the Third Year survey indicate that there were about 13,093 public school districts operating more than 83,000 schools taking part in the NSLP in the 50 States and the District of Columbia in SY 1999/00. The estimated number of schools differs from the number reported by FNS on the basis of its administrative records by less than 0.05%.

As indicated in Table III-2, school districts of less than 5,000 enrollment account for more than 85% of the total number of districts but only 45% of the number of schools and 32.5% of total enrollment. At the other extreme, there are around 230 school districts with an enrollment of 25,000 or more. While these districts account for less than 2% of the total number of districts, they operate nearly one-quarter (24.3%) of all schools and enroll one-third (33.0%) of all students.

Table III-1: Comparison of NSLP School District Characteristics in SYs 1997/98, 1998/99 and 1999/00

District characteristics	SY 1997/98	SY 1998/99	SY 1999/00
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
District size[1/]			
Less than 1,000	43.1	42.4	44.3
1,000 – 4,999	41.6	43.3	41.3
5,000 – 24,999	13.5	12.6	12.6
25,000 or more	1.8	1.8	1.8
Program participation			
NSLP and SBP	74.9	74.9	76.9
NSLP only	25.1	25.1	23.1
District poverty level[2/]			
High (>60% f&r)	15.5	17.3	14.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	38.9	37.0	40.8
Low (≤30% f&r)	45.6	45.6	45.2
	(number)	(number)	(number)
Total number of districts	13,503	13,115	13,093

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31 in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by the share of total enrollment in the respective school years approved for free and reduced-price (f&r) meals.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; and *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

The distribution of school districts by district characteristics (Table III-1) changed very little across the three years. The share of districts in the smallest size class (less than 1,000 enrollment) fell slightly in the second year and then reversed direction and rose slightly in the third year. Compared against the long-term trend of fewer and larger districts, the slightly larger share of very small districts would appear to be a temporary aberration.

Table III-2: Number of Public NSLP Schools and School Districts by Selected District Characteristics and School Type, SY 1999/00

District characteristics	Schools		School districts	
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total
All districts	83,274	100.0	13,093	100.0
District size [1/]				
Less than 1,000	11,018	13.2	5,783	44.3
1,000 – 4,999	26,753	32.1	5,394	41.3
5,000 – 24,999	25,242	30.3	1,641	12.6
25,000 or more	20,219	24.3	231	1.8
Program participation				
NSLP and SBP	62,618	75.0	9,943	76.9
NSLP only	19,681	23.6	2,993	23.1
SBP only	468	0.6	--	--
Neither NSLP nor SBP	709	0.8	--	--
District poverty level [2/]				
High (>60% f&r)	15,915	19.1	1,832	14.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	34,998	42.0	5,319	40.8
Low (≤30% f&r)	32,318	38.8	5,898	45.2
School type [3/]				
Elementary	50,140	60.3	11,640	88.9
Middle/secondary	27,104	32.6	10,139	77.4
Other	5,954	7.2	3,506	26.8

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

[3/] For school districts, number of school districts and percent of all school districts that include schools of the respective type. For example, 11,640 school districts (88.9 % of the total) include elementary schools.

Source*: School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

There was also a slight shift in the distribution of districts by poverty level (as represented by the share of enrollment qualifying for free and reduced price meals). Around 430 districts moved from high to medium poverty. Consistent with this, Third Year survey results indicated a decline between SY 1998/99 and SY 1999/00 in the share of overall enrollment approved for free meals. This contrasts with FNS administrative records for public and private schools combined that register a small increase between these years.

Over three-quarters (76.9%) of all districts offer their students both lunch and breakfast. The remaining districts participate only in the NSLP. Between SY 1998/99 and SY 1999/00, the number of districts offering breakfasts grew by about 260. Of the total number of schools in districts that take part in the NSLP, a very small share participates exclusively in the SBP (0.6%) or in neither the NSLP nor the SBP (0.8%).

The distribution of school districts, schools, and students among the three poverty levels (low, medium, and high) is roughly 40/40/20 for all three measures. To the extent there is any deviation, from this relationship it is the slightly larger share of districts (45.2%) in the low poverty category and the somewhat smaller share (14.0%) in the high poverty category.

A three-part system of classifying schools by grade level was used in this study. They were classified as "elementary," "middle/secondary," or "other." The "other" schools are those that include grade spans other than those defined as elementary (any span not above Grade 8) or middle/secondary (no grade lower than Grade 6 and through Grade 12). A school with Kindergarten through Grade 12 would be classified as an "other" school, for example.

As indicated in Table III-2, 88.9% of all school districts include at least one elementary school and 77.4% include one or more middle/secondary schools. There are nearly twice as many elementary schools as middle/secondary schools (50,000 versus 27,000, approximately) though elementary schools have an average enrollment that is only about 62% that of the average enrollment of middle/secondary schools (468 versus 760). As a result, total enrollment is divided somewhat more evenly with elementary schools accounting for 51%, middle/secondary schools for 45%, and "other" schools for the remaining 4%.

Table III-3: Student Enrollment in Public NSLP School Districts by Selected District Characteristics and School Type, SY 1999/00

District characteristics	Student enrollment	
	Total	Share of total
	(thousand)	(percent)
All districts	46,005	100.0
District size[1/]		
Less than 1,000	2,518	5.5
1,000 – 4,999	12,439	27.0
5,000 – 24,999	15,870	34.5
25,000 or more	15,178	33.0
Program participation		
NSLP and SBP	39,922	86.9
NSLP only	6,000	13.1
District poverty level[2/]		
High (>60% f&r)	9,204	20.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	18,719	40.7
Low (≤30% f&r)	18,082	39.3
School type		
Elementary	23,481	51.0
Middle/secondary	20,608	44.8
Other	1,916	4.2

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

The cross-classification of districts appearing in Table III-4 is revealing in a couple of respects. As might be expected, since participation in the breakfast program has been proportionately higher in high poverty areas, the vast majority (71%) of all districts that limit their participation to the lunch program are in low poverty areas. Furthermore, nearly all of these districts are in the smaller size categories with over 93% in districts of less than 5,000 students. In the Second Year Report, it was noted that high poverty (i.e. > 60% f&r) occurred nearly as often among the smallest districts (23%) as among the largest districts (24%) in SY 1998/99. In SY 1999/00, the occurrence of poverty among the smallest districts appears to have diminished somewhat (to 17%) while the incidence among the largest districts remained essentially unchanged.

Table III-4: Number of Public NSLP School Districts by Key District Characteristics SY 1999/00

District size[1/]	Program participation				District poverty level[2/]					
	NSLP & SBP		NSLP only		High (>60% f&r)		Medium (31-60% f&r)		Low (≤30% f&r)	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Less than 1,000	4,092	41.2	1,559	52.3	968	52.8	2,638	49.6	2,177	36.9
1,000 - 4,999	4,158	41.9	1,222	41.0	623	34.0	1,898	35.7	2,873	48.7
5,000 – 24,999	1,446	14.6	195	6.5	186	10.2	666	12.5	789	13.4
25,000 or more	225	2.3	6	0.2	54	3.0	118	2.2	59	1.0
Total	9,922	100.0	2,982	100.0	1,832	100.0	5,319	100.0	5,898	100.0
Program participation										
NSLP and SBP					1,686	92.7	4,517	86.3	3,719	63.6
NSLP only					133	7.3	718	13.7	2,132	36.4
Total					1,819	100.0	5,235	100.0	5,851	100.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source*: School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report,* June 2002.

Student Participation

Lunches

An estimated 4.2 billion lunches were served to students attending public schools participating in the NSLP in SY 1998/99. This is about 2% less than the number of lunches measured by FNS through its administrative records.[1] Of the total number, 43.2% were served free while 47.2% were full price and 9.6% were reduced price. Compared to findings for the past two years, this represents a shift away from free meals in favor of more full-price meals.

As in the past two years, results from the Third Year survey indicate that free lunches account for a larger share of the total among the largest districts, among those districts that participate in both the NSLP and the SBP, and in the poorest districts. Conversely, the incidence of full-price lunches is greatest among the smaller districts, those that provide lunch only, and those with the lowest level of poverty.[2]

A comparison of the distribution of lunches by type of meal (i.e. free, reduced-price, and full price) in SYs 1996/97 and 1998/99 reveals comparatively little change. As noted, the share of meals served free has fallen somewhat while the share served at full or reduced price has increased. This is most pronounced in the 1,000-4,999 size class though it is evident in some degree among all size classes.

It should be noted that some school districts do not charge any of their students for meals, regardless of whether they meet the eligibility criteria for free or reduced-priced meals. This includes school districts participating in the so-called "Provision 2 and 3" alternatives to annual determinations of eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. These alternatives are provided as a means of streamlining program administration at the State and district levels. The incidence of use of Provision 2 and 3 is examined in Chapter VII.

A few States are also experimenting on a pilot basis with free "universal" breakfast programs. But even in those schools, Federal reimbursement is still based on the free/reduced-price/paid categories, though the child is not paying for the meal. A Congressionally mandated 3-year pilot project for universal school breakfasts also began in six school districts in SY 2000/01. In this pilot, all breakfasts served in the "treatment" schools are reimbursed at the free rate.

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[1] After excluding lunches served to children participating in the NSLP outside the United States and in private schools, USDA's administrative records indicate that about 4.3 billion lunches were served in SY 1998/99.

[2] Poverty is measured in the report in terms of the share of total enrollment that is approved for free and reduced price meals. This measure is frequently used as a proxy for income in studies of primary and secondary education.

Table III-5: Number of NSLP Lunches Served in Public NSLP School Districts by Type of Meal and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	Full-price		Reduced-price		Free		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	(million)		(million)		(million)		(million)	
All districts	1,984	47.2	406	9.6	1,815	43.2	4,204	100.0
District size [1/]								
Less than 1,000	142	54.9	28	10.9	88	34.2	259	100.0
1,000 – 4,999	777	59.3**	136	10.4**	398	30.4**	1,311	100.0
5,000 – 24,999	657	47.7**	122	8.8**	600	43.5**	1,379	100.0
25,000 or more	408	32.5**	120	9.5**	728	58.0**	1,255	100.0
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	1,680	45.0	373	10.0	1,682	45.0	3,734	100.0
NSLP only	301	64.8**	33	7.0**	131	28.2**	465	100.0
District poverty level [2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	154	18.2	80	9.4	614	72.4	848	100.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	853	43.6**	218	11.1	885	45.2**	1,956	100.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	976	69.7**	108	7.7**	316	22.6**	1,401	100.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 1, 1999.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; program participation – NSLP and SBP; poverty level – high.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table III-6: Comparison of the Distribution of Lunches Served by Type of Meal and by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1996/97 and 1998/99

District characteristics	Full-Price		Reduced-Price		Free		Total Number	
	1996/9	1998/99	1996/9	1998/99	1996/9	1998/99	1996/9	1998/99
	----------(percent)----------						----(million)----	
All districts	43.2	47.2^{++}	8.4	9.6^{++}	48.4	43.2	4,167	4,204
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	54.4	54.9	10.0	10.9^{++}	35.7	34.2^{++}	269	259
1,000 – 4,999	52.5**	59.3**$^{++}$	8.5**	10.4**$^{++}$	39.0**	30.4**$^{++}$	1,136	1,311
5,000 – 24,999	46.0**	47.7**$^{++}$	8.2**	8.8**$^{++}$	45.8**	43.5**	1,486	1,379
25,000 or more	29.5**	32.5**	8.0**	9.5**	62.5**	58.0**	1,277	1,255
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	40.6	45.0	8.5	10.0^{+}	50.9	45.0	3,797	3,734
NSLP only	70.2**	64.8**$^{++}$	7.0**	7.0**$^{++}$	22.8**	28.2**	370	465
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	16.8	18.2	7.5	9.4	75.7	72.4	1,093	848
Medium (31-60% f&r)	40.2**	43.6**$^{+}$	9.6	11.1^{++}	50.2**	45.2**	1,701	1,956
Low (≤30% f&r)	68.0**	69.7**$^{+}$	7.6**	7.7**	24.5**	22.6**	1,373	1,401

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; program participation – NSLP and SBP; poverty level – high.

$^{++}$ Between group (year to year) differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: full-price – 1996/97; reduced-price – 1996/97; free – 1996/97.

$^{+}$ Between group (year to year) differences significant at the .05 level. Reference groups used: full-price – 1996/97; reduced-price – 1996/97; free – 1996/97.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Breakfasts

On the basis of this survey, it is estimated that about 1 billion breakfasts were served in SY 1998/99 to students attending public NSLP school districts nationwide. Of the total number of breakfasts served, about three-quarters (76.1%) were served free and 8.1% reduced-price.

As we found in the earlier surveys, the share of breakfasts served free is positively associated with district size and poverty level while the share of full-price breakfasts is inversely related to these measures. In the high poverty districts (which are defined on the basis of the share of enrollment qualifying for free and reduced-price meals), 86% of all breakfasts are served free. In low poverty districts, the share served free falls to 58%, which the number of full-price breakfasts climbs to 30% of the total.

A comparison of the distribution of breakfasts served by type of meal across the 3-year period reveals a slight trend away from free meals in favor of full-price and reduced-price. This is consistent with USDA's national estimates based on administrative records. Aside from this trend, no other changes of significance are noted.

Students Approved for Free and Reduced Price Meals

Of the 46 million children enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in SY 1999/00, 14.7 million or 31.9% of the total were approved to receive free meals. Another 3.4 million (7.5% of the total) were approved to receive reduced-price meals. These compare to USDA estimates of 34.5% and 7.4%, respectively, based on administrative records for October 1999.

Table III-7: Number of SBP Breakfasts Served in Public NSLP School Districts by Type of Meal and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1998/99

District characteristics	Full-price		Reduced-price		Free		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	(million)		(million)		(million)		(million)	
All districts	158	15.8	81	8.1	764	76.1	1,003	100.0
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	15	25.0	7	11.4	38	63.5	59	100.0
1,000 – 4,999	48	18.9**	21	8.2**	185	72.8**	254	100.0
5,000 – 24,999	56	17.4**	29	8.9**	237	73.7**	322	100.0
25,000 or more	39	10.7**	25	6.8**	304	82.5**	368	100.0
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	26	7.9	20	6.1	279	86.1	325	100.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	84	16.2	43	8.4	390	75.4**	517	100.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	49	30.2	18	11.4**	94	58.4**	161	100.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; poverty level – high.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table III-8: Comparison of the Distribution of Breakfasts Served by Type of Meal and by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1996/97 and 1998/99

District characteristics	Full-price		Reduced-price		Free		Total Number	
	1996/97	1998/99	1996/97	1998/99	1996/97	1998/99	1996/97	1998/99
	----------(percent)----------						------(million)-----	
All districts	14.6	15.8^{++}	7.0	8.1^{++}	78.4	76.1	1,059	1,003
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	23.7	25.0^{++}	10.6	11.4^{++}	65.7	63.5^{++}	57	159
1,000 – 4,999	18.7**	18.9**$^{++}$	8.1**	8.2**$^{++}$	73.2**	72.8**$^{+}$	248	254
5,000 – 24,999	15.8**	17.4*$^{++}$	7.0**	8.9**$^{++}$	77.2**	73.7**	363	322
25,000 or more	9.6**	10.7*	5.6**	6.8**	84.8**	82.5**	390	368
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	6.7	7.9	5.0	6.1	88.4	86.1	407	325
Medium (31-60% f&r)	16.3	16.2	7.6*	8.4**$^{++}$	76.0**	75.4**	480	517
Low (<30% f&r)	28.9	30.2	9.8**	11.4**$^{+}$	62.3**	58.4**	171	161

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; poverty level – high.

$^{++}$ Between group (year to year) differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: full-price – 1996/97; reduced-price – 1996/97; free – 1996/97.

$^{+}$ Between group (year to year) differences significant at the .05 level. Reference groups used: full-price – 1996/97; reduced-price – 1996/97; free – 1996/97.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table III-9: Share of Total Enrollment in Public NSLP School Districts Approved to Receive Free and Reduced Price Meals by Selected District Characteristics and School Type, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	1997/98			1999/00		
	Free approvals	Reduced-price approvals	Total Enrollment	Free approvals	Reduced-price approvals	Total Enrollment
	(percent of enrollment)		(thousand)	(percent of enrollment)		(thousand)
All districts	32.6	6.9	48,227	31.9	7.5	46,005
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	28.8	9.0	2,525	27.8	9.3	2,518
1,000 – 4,999	25.8**	6.7**	13,028	25.8**	7.2**	12,439
5,000 – 24,999	29.7**	6.6**	17,491	28.0**	7.2**	15,870
25,000 or more	42.4**	7.1**	15,183	41.7**	7.6**	15,178
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	34.9	7.2	43,031	33.8	7.8	39,922
NSLP only	13.4**	4.6**	5,196	19.8**	5.1**	6,000
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	63.1	8.2	10,132	62.5	8.6	9,204
Medium (31-60% f&r)	36.4**	8.3*	18,134	35.4**	9.1**	18,717
Low (≤30% f&r)	13.7**	5.0**	19,961	12.8**	5.2**	18,082
School type						
Elementary	39.4	8.0	24,105	38.5	8.5	23,481
Middle/secondary	25.1**	5.7**	21,728	24.9**	6.3**	20,608
Other	32.2**	7.2**	2,394	27.2**	6.6**	1,916

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

** Between group differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: district size – <1,000; program participation – NSLP and SBP; poverty level – high; school type - elementary.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

CHAPTER IV: OVERALL STATUS OF THE SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

The School Meals Initiative (SMI), for the first 3 or 4 years following its start-up in SY 1996/97, remained a "work in progress." Key provisions were amended through changes in the legislative authority on several occasions. During the early years and with the approval of their State-administering agency, school districts could be granted waivers to postpone implementation as late as SY 1998/99. As a result, the survey data that serves as the basis of this report represents the first full year of SMI implementation for all schools. Our focus in this chapter, therefore, is on assessing the continuing progress made by school districts in implementing the changes required by the SMI and in comparing findings across the 3 years of study.

The SMI represents a major change in the school meals program, probably the most far-reaching change since the program's enactment in 1946. The changes that have accompanied the SMI have affected nearly every part of the system from the kids who eat the meals to the school food service staff who prepare them, from the school food service professionals who plan the menus and buy the food to the State and Federal agencies that administer the programs.

Origin of the SMI

When the NSLP began shortly after World War II, it was designed to ensure that children got enough to eat, including a balanced diet of nutritious foods. Schools participating in the NSLP were required to meet specified "meal patterns" that included minimum amounts of four principal meal components: meat or meat alternate, bread/grains, vegetables/fruits, and milk. Different size servings of each component were specified for each of five age/grade categories.

The prescribed foods and serving sizes for a school lunch for grades 4 to 12 using the traditional food based menu planning system are shown in Table IV-1.[1] Comparable tables are available for other grades and for school breakfasts.[2]

[1] The pattern shown in Table IV-1 is also optional for all grades, including pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade.

[2] USDA, FNS, *A Menu Planner for Health School Meals*, FNS-303, 1998; also available from the FNS website at: www.fns.usda.gov.

In the early 1990's, it was found that Americans, including children, were generally eating too much of certain foods and that this was unhealthy. An assessment of the nutritional content of school meals conducted in early 1992 concluded that, on balance, they were not meeting the Federally-established Dietary Guidelines. So over the next few years, the USDA and Congress cooperatively worked to develop what is now the SMI.

Table IV-1: Traditional Meal Pattern Requirements for the National School Lunch Program, Grades 4-12

Meal Components	Minimum Required Serving
Meat or meat alternate	*1 serving per meal*
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	2 oz.
Cheese	2 oz.
Large egg(s)	1 medium egg
Cooked dry beans or peas	½ cup
Peanut butter	4 tbsp.
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds	1 oz. = ½ the requirement
Yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.	8 oz. or 1 cup
Vegetables, fruits and/or full-strength juices[1/]	*2 or more servings per meal, ¾ cup total portion*
Bread/Grains	*1 or more servings per meal/8 servings per week*
Enriched or whole-grain bread	1 slice
Enriched or whole-grain biscuit, muffin, roll, cooked enriched or whole grain rice, macaroni, noodles, or other cereal grains such as bulgur or corn grits or equivalent	1 serving
Milk	*1 serving per meal*
Fluid milk	½ pint (8 fluid oz.)

[1/] No more than one-half of the total requirements may be met with full-strength fruit or vegetable juice.
Source: USDA

Elements of the School Meals Initiative

At its core, the SMI does two things:

1) It establishes a set of dietary standards against which the performance of school meals can be objectively measured, and

2) It identifies alternative menu planning systems that schools can use in meeting these standards.

In establishing its dietary standards, the Department adopted a subset of both the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) and the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The RDAs served as a basis for design of the meal requirements for the traditional school meals programs. As such, they have helped shape the composition of school meals for many years. And school meals have been largely successful in meeting the nutrient targets of the RDAs.

Adoption of the Dietary Guidelines as an objective of school meals brought a significant new dimension to bear on the program, one that spoke directly to the programs' past nutritional shortcomings. The Dietary Guidelines were developed jointly by the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services as a means of providing general guidance to Americans on the essential components of a healthy diet. They are based on the best available scientific and medical knowledge. By law, they must be reviewed by a panel of experts every five years and amended as necessary. As a result, the guidelines have been updated every five years beginning in 1985 and extending through 2000.[1]

The Dietary Guidelines issued in 2000 recommend that Americans:

- Aim for a healthy weight
- Be physically active each day
- Let the Food Pyramid guide their food choices
- Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily
- Keep food safe to eat
- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat (less than 10% of calories) and cholesterol and moderate in total fat (no more than 30% of calories)
- Choose beverages and foods to moderate their intake of sugars
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt
- If they drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation

[1] The SMI standards are based on the Dietary Guidelines adopted in 1990. They are slightly different, primarily in wording, from those adopted in 2000.

New Approaches to Menu Planning

Through a combination of USDA proposals and Congressional mandates, four alternative approaches to menu planning were available to schools participating in the NSLP in SY 1998/99. Three are new while the fourth, as required by law, is the system that has been in use since the beginning of the program. A final rule on a fifth alternative described in the Healthy Meals for Children Act as "any reasonable approach" became effective June 8, 2000. The development of these options was driven by several principles, including the following:

- to apply a uniform set of upgraded nutritional objectives to all the menu planning options;
- to provide for increased flexibility in the choice and combination of foods;
- to focus on the nutritional composition of meals rather than on meal components and food items;
- to provide meals that adhere more closely to the nutritional differences of different student age groups;
- to take advantage of computer technology while recognizing the diversity of technical capability that exists among school districts;
- recognition that nutritional objectives need not be met by individual foods or even in a given meal, but by the combination of several foods over a period time;
- recognition that changes in menu planning of this complexity were not to be accomplished "over night," but were to be phased-in over time.

The two approaches that represent the most significant departure from the old system are Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) and Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (ANSMP). These systems are dependent on the use of computerized nutrient analysis and the use of USDA-approved software and nutrient database in conducting this analysis. The only difference between these approaches is that under NSMP, the school district itself is responsible for conducting its own nutrient analysis while under ANSMP, this analysis is conducted by another entity (e.g. the State Child Nutrition Agency or another school district) on behalf of the school district.

The other two specified menu planning options – Traditional Food-Based and Enhanced Food-Based – are food-based in the sense that meals are defined in terms of specific types and quantities of food, as in the old system. The fifth option can go in any one of several

directions. It can be patterned after one of the other four approaches with only slight changes. Alternatively, it can take an entirely different approach. It is not possible to generalize about this category.

The first four menu planning options are compared in Table IV-2. It will be noted that some features are the same regardless of which option the district chooses to follow. These common requirements apply to the fifth, "any reasonable approach" as well. All districts must satisfy the same nutrition goals. Also, all districts must maintain records on the processed foods they use, their food production, and menus. These records are for use by the State agencies when they periodically review each district's menu planning procedures. State agencies are required to do nutritional analysis whenever it is not being done by the district or by someone else for the district using approved software and other analysis procedures. Thus, for many of those districts that use a food-based system, the State agency is dependent on these records for conducting nutritional analysis. For NSMP and ANSMP districts and other districts that conduct their own nutrient analysis, the records are used by the State agency in reviewing the district's analytic procedures and confirming their results.

The principal differences among the menu planning approaches for the NSLP (those for the SBP are different) are in the age/grade groups that are used, the structure and definition of a reimbursable meal, and, of course, responsibility for conducting nutrient analysis. With the exception of the Traditional Food-Based system, the age/grade groupings have been updated to better reflect the nutritional requirements of children of different ages.[1] Under NSMP and ANSMP, grades K-6 and 7-12 are grouped with an option to split grades K-6 between the third and fourth grades. As an option to using grades, schools using these menu planning systems may use ages instead. The suggested age breaks are: 3-6, 7-10, 11-13, and 14 and older. Alternatively, NSMP and ANSMP schools may also customize their age groups. The enhanced food-based system uses the same grade breaks as NSMP and ANSMP, though no breakdown by age is provided. Schools using the traditional food-based system continue to use the same grade groupings that were used in the past, i.e. K-3 and 4-12 with an option to divide the latter between the 6^{th} and 7^{th} grades.

The structure of the meal and the way in which reimbursable meals are defined are still tied to the quantities and types of food under the two food-based systems. The composition of the meal in the Enhanced Food-Based system has been modified ("enhanced") to enable districts to more readily meet the nutritional goals of the program. More specifically, the Enhanced

[1] Nutrient requirements based on 1989 RDAs undergo an especially large jump between the ages of 10 and 11 (Grades 5 and 6). This dividing line is better reflected in the new groupings.

system requires more and/or larger servings of breads, grains, vegetables, and fruits. Under NSMP and ANSMP, a reimbursable meal offered to the student must include at least three menu items with an entrée, fluid milk, and at least one side dish.

Research Questions

The central purpose of this chapter, as indicated, is to describe the overall status of the SMI as of SY 1999/00. This is accomplished by addressing the following research questions:

- How many schools and how many school districts have adopted each of the menu planning options and how did this change between SY 1997/98 and 1999/00? To what extent are school districts using more than one system among the schools in their districts? Are there significant differences in the use of menu planning systems on the basis of district characteristics?
- How far have school districts progressed toward full implementation of their chosen menu planning option and how has this changed since SY 1997/98? Are there significant differences in the level of progress by district characteristics, including the menu planning system that is being used?
- What are the intentions of those school districts that are now using food-based menu planning systems with regard to the adoption of nutrient standard menu planning? Do they have different plans for elementary schools and middle/secondary schools? To what extent were there changes in expectations between SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00? Are there significant differences in intentions on the basis of district characteristics?

Table IV-2: Major Features of Alternative Menu Planning Systems for Lunches

Topic	Traditional	Enhanced	NSMP	ANSMP
Nutrition goals	----------One-third of RDAs; dietary guidelines (averaged over school week)----------			
Age/grade groups	Grades K-3 and 4-12 Option: Grades 7-12	Grades K-6 and 7-12 Option: K-3	Grades K-6 and 7-12 Option: K-3 Option: ages 3-6, 7-10, 11-13, 14 and older Option: customized age groups	Grades K-6 and 7-12 Option: K-3 Option: ages 3-6, 7-10, 11-13, 14 and older Option: customized age groups
Reimbursable meal	Four food components/five food items	Four food components/five food items	At least three menu items	At least three menu items
Meal structure	Specified quantities for each grade category for each of four meal components	Specified quantities for each grade category for each of four meal components	Entrée, fluid milk, and at least one side dish	Entrée, fluid milk, and at least one side dish
Offer versus serve	Required for high school; high school students must choose no fewer than three of five food items		Required for high school; must select at least two of three menu items, one of them the entrée; if more than three menu items offered, may decline no more than two	Required for high school; must select at least two of three menu items, one of them the entrée; if more than three menu items offered, may decline no more than two
Standardized recipes	Record and copy of recipes used must be available during review		Required for all new menu items with two or more ingredients or that require preparation	Required for all new menu items with two or more ingredients or that require preparation
Processed foods	----------Record of products used to be kept on file----------			
Production records	----------Food production and menu records kept on file----------			
Computerized nutrient analysis	Not required		Conducted by district using USDA approved software	Conducted by another entity on behalf of district using USDA approved software

Source: USDA, FNS, *A Menu Planner for Healthy School Meals*, FNS 303, 1998

Use of Menu Planning Systems

As indicated, the SMI describes five approaches to menu planning options that school districts can follow. Though it is expected that most school districts will select one of the five and use it in all schools throughout the district, some districts might choose to use more than one menu planning system, at least temporarily. For example, a district might choose to use one system in its elementary schools and another in its middle/secondary schools. Alternatively, some districts might choose to gradually phase in nutrient standard menu planning, leaving some schools in the traditional food-based system for the time being. Some districts might also wish to experiment with two or more of the options before deciding which one better serves their needs.

Findings for SY 1999/00 closely parallel those of the previous two years. They indicate that about one-quarter of all districts were using nutrient-based menu planning systems while the remaining three-quarters used a food-based system. To the extent districts have shifted in their use of systems over the period of study, they have shifted slightly toward NSMP and, to a lesser extent, toward enhanced food-based while shifting away from the traditional food-based.

As we have observed in earlier reports, NSMP is more likely to be used by the largest districts (35.8%) and by those districts under the direction of food service management companies (42.0%). While the share of the largest school districts using NSMP fell from 40.1% in 1998/99 to 35.8% in 1999/00, part of this decline could be due to the changing composition of the districts that responded to the survey.

The traditional food-based menu planning system is found with greater frequency among the smallest districts (54.5%), high poverty districts (63.5%), and those districts not employing the services of food management companies (52.7%).

Neither ANSMP nor the catch-all "other" category are extensively used. Together they were used by fewer than 6.0% of all districts in SY 1999/00, up slightly from the share reported in SY 1997/98. ANSMP is used more frequently by the smallest districts (5.0%) and by those with high poverty (5.2%). The "other" approach to menu planning is found in greatest frequency among the largest districts (6.4%), districts that are more likely to have the technical capability required to develop a tailored approach. Although the "other" approach is infrequently used, it is noted that its use among districts in the largest size category (25,000 or more) nearly doubled between SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00, increasing from 3.3% to 6.4% of all districts in this size class.

Table IV-3: Share of Public NSLP School Districts by Type of Menu Planning System and by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00[1/]

District characteristics	NSMP		ANSMP		Enhanced food-based		Traditional Food-based		*Other*		Total	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	----------(percent)----------										----(number)----	
All districts	19.8	22.5^{++}	3.4	3.7	26.5	28.7^{++}	54.9	50.0^{++}	1.2	1.8^{++}	13,503	12,908
District size[2/]												
Less than 1,000	18.6	21.4^{++}	4.2	5.0^{+}	22.6	25.2^{++}	57.7	54.5^{++}	0.9	1.3^{+}	5,820	5,671
1,000 – 4,999	19.0	22.2^{++}	2.9	3.1**	28.4	30.8**$^{++}$	55.2	48.1**$^{++}$	1.3	1.7	5,623	5,357
5,000 – 24,999	24.7	25.9**	2.4	1.4**$^{+}$	33.4	34.4**	45.9	41.8**$^{+}$	1.4	3.0**$^{++}$	1,820	1,638
25,000 or more	31.3	35.8**	0.8	1.7	24.6	27.1	47.1	40.3**	3.3	6.4**	240	231
Program participation												
NSLP and SBP	21.1	23.1^{++}	2.9	3.7^{++}	24.5	26.7^{++}	56.0	51.6^{++}	1.4	1.9^{++}	10,107	9,820
NSLP only	16.0	19.7**$^{++}$	4.7	3.8	32.5	35.8**$^{++}$	51.6	43.7**$^{++}$	0.5	1.4^{++}	3,396	2,943
District poverty level[3/]												
High (>60% f&r)	18.7	19.6	5.1	5.2	19.6	16.9^{+}	60.4	63.5^{+}	2.9	1.6^{++}	2,099	1,795
Medium (31-60% f&r)	22.4	24.0**	3.4	4.3	26.5	25.2**	52.9	51.0**	1.0	2.0^{++}	5,252	5,281
Low (≤30% f&r)	18.0	22.2*$^{++}$	2.7	2.6**	28.9	35.6**$^{++}$	54.6	44.9**$^{++}$	0.8	1.6^{++}	6,152	5,821
Under direction of food service management company												
Yes	39.2	42.0	4.6	3.2	24.2	30.3^{++}	37.4	28.9^{++}	1.4	2.2	1,588	1,434
No	17.3	20.0**$^{++}$	3.2	3.7^{+}	26.8	28.5^{++}	57.2	52.7**$^{++}$	1.2	1.7^{++}	11,915	11,474

[1/] Row percentages do not sum to 100.0% because some school districts report using more than one menu planning system.
[2/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.
[3/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.
** Difference in proportions (within group) is significant at the .01 level. Reference group used: District size – Less than 1,000; Program Participation – NSLP and SBP; District Poverty Level – High; Under direction of food service management company – Yes.
* Difference in proportions (within group) is significant at the .05 level. Reference group used: District size – Less than 1,000; Program Participation – NSLP and SBP; District Poverty Level – High; Under direction of food service management company – Yes.
$^{++}$ Difference in proportions (year to year) is significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: NSMP, ANSMP, Enhanced, Traditional, Other.
$^{+}$ Difference in proportions (year to year) is significant at the .05 level. Reference groups used: NSMP, ANSMP, Enhanced, Traditional, Other.
Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

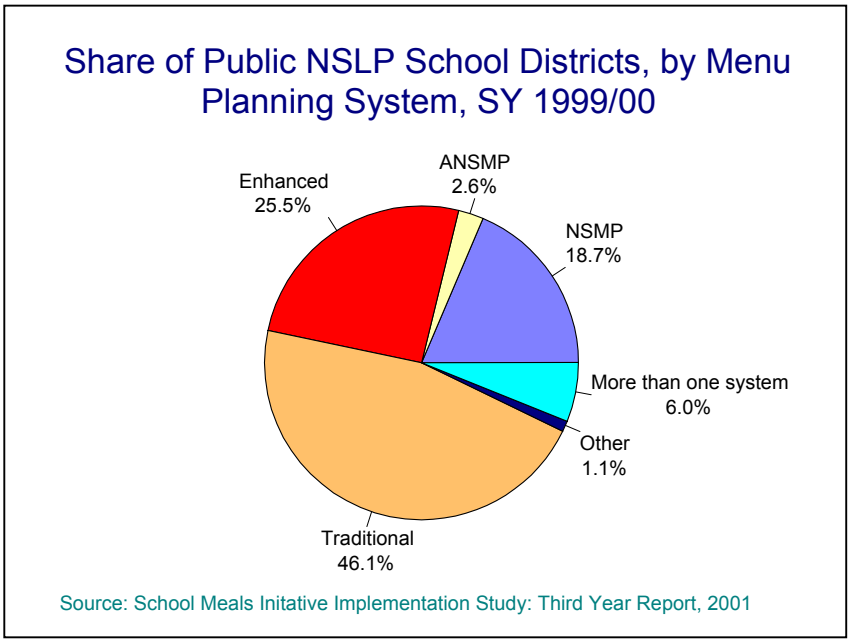
About 6% of all districts reported using more than one menu planning system in their schools in SY 1999/00. A few school districts (80) reported using more than two approaches to menu planning. These findings are comparable to those of the first two years of the study. All combinations of systems can be found among school districts using multiple menu planning systems. For example, over 3.0% of all districts are using NSMP at the same time they are using one of the food-based approaches in some of their schools.

Within those school districts using multiple menu planning systems, NSMP is used with greater frequency in elementary schools than in other school types and among elementary schools in these districts it is the most frequently used system. Of the total number of elementary schools in districts using more than one approach to menu planning, 37.6% were using NSMP in SY 1999/00. This compares to 26.1% of all elementary schools.

Public NSLP School District Use of Menu Planning Systems, SY 1999/00

	NSMP	ANSMP	Enhanced	Traditional	Other
	----------percent----------				
NSMP	18.7				
ANSMP	0.9	2.6			
Enhanced	1.4	0.5	25.5		
Traditional	1.9	0.2	1.8	46.1	
Other	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.4	1.1

Note: The sum of percentages for a given menu planning system might exceed the total percentage shown in Table IV-3 for that system due to double counting. A few school districts (80) reported using more than two menu planning systems in their districts.
Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.



When the distribution of approaches to menu planning is examined at the level of the individual school (as opposed to the school district), a slightly different picture emerges. Since large districts account for a large share of all schools and they are more likely to use NSMP, the share of all schools using NSMP (25.4%) is higher than the share of all districts using it (22.5%). Likewise, the share of all schools using the traditional food-based and ANSMP approaches is smaller than the corresponding shares of all districts using them.

To the extent there have been changes in the use of menu planning systems among schools across the three study years, they are consistent with the shifts that occurred among school districts. Most notably, between SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00 there has been a slight increase in the share of all schools using NSMP (22.8% vs. 25.4%) and a slight decrease in the share using the traditional food-based system (48.4% vs. 42.4%).

Comparison of information on the use of menu planning systems as reported by SFAs with the same information reported by State agencies continues to yield significantly different results that defy explanation. While some differences are to be expected, those displayed in Table IV-5 are greater than would be expected due to reporting or measurement error. As can be seen, State agencies report that a substantially larger share of their districts use the enhanced food-based system and a correspondingly smaller share use the traditional food-based system and NSMP.

It is believed that these differences are due in part to the way in which this information is reported by the State agencies. Since the information provided by some State agencies had to be estimated, it is possible that errors resulted from the methods used. It is also possible that failure to distinguish between public and private schools might have been partially responsible. We note that another survey of NSLP schools conducted in SY 1998/99 resulted in estimates of the share of schools by menu planning system that are very close to those reported for the same school year by the SFAs responding to the Second Year survey in this study.[1] This reinforces our confidence that the numbers reported for the same school year by the school districts offer a more accurate basis for estimating the relative use of the menu planning options.

[1] FNS, USDA, *School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study – II: Summary of Findings*, prepared by Abt Associates, July 2001.

Table IV-4: Share of Schools in Public NSLP School Districts by Type of Menu Planning System and by Selected District Characteristics, and School Type, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	NSMP		ANSMP		Enhanced Food-based		Traditional Food-based		Other		Total	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)										(number)	
All districts	22.8	25.4	1.9	2.0	25.8	28.2	48.4	42.4	1.2	2.0	86,130	80,449
District size[1/]												
Less than 1,000	20.1	19.9^{+}	4.0	4.2	20.7	24.1^{++}	54.5	50.9^{++}	0.7	0.8^{++}	10,675	11,023
1,000 – 4,999	17.9	20.2	2.3	2.7	26.9	30.3	51.6	45.5	1.3	1.3	27,622	25,681
5,000 – 24,999	24.7	25.9	1.6	1.3^{+}	30.2	32.2	42.5	38.0	1.0	2.6	28,009	24,508
25,000 or more	28.3	33.1	0.5	0.7	20.7	23.2	48.8	40.0	1.7	3.0	19,825	18,683
Program participation												
NSLP and SBP	23.4	26.4	1.7	1.9	25.0	26.7	48.5	42.8	1.3	2.2	74,910	68,449
NSLP only	18.3	19.7	3.0	2.7^{+}	30.9	37.0^{++}	47.1	39.5^{++}	0.7	1.0^{+}	11,219	11,681
District poverty level[2/]												
High (>60% f&r)	20.7	21.8	1.2	2.3^{+}	17.4	20.6	59.4	54.1	1.4	1.2	17,522	15,187
Medium (31-60% f&r)	23.5	25.8	1.9	2.1^{+}	26.7	26.4	46.2	42.5	1.6	3.2	34,526	33,872
Low (≤30% f&r)	23.1	26.7	2.1	1.8	29.2	33.9	44.8	36.5	0.8	1.1	34,086	31,375
School type												
Elementary	24.0	26.1	1.8	2.0	26.3	28.6	46.5	41.0	1.3	2.3	52,381	49,374
Middle/secondary	21.1	23.6	2.1	2.1	25.8	28.1	50.1	44.7	1.0	1.5	27,559	26,053
Other	19.7	28.8	1.1	1.0	21.3	25.4	56.6	43.3	1.3	1.5	6,188	4,928

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

[++] Between group (year to year) differences significant at the .01 level. Reference groups used: NSMP, ANSMP, Enhanced, Traditional, Other.

[+] Between group (year to year) differences significant at the .05 level. Reference groups used: NSMP, ANSMP, Enhanced, Traditional, Other.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table IV-5: Comparison of the Share of School Districts Using Alternative Menu Planning Options, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00 [1/]

Menu planning system	State Agency Survey SY 1997/98	School District Survey SY 1997/98	State Agency Survey SY 1999/00	School District Survey SY 1999/00
	----------(percent)----------			
NSMP	16.2	19.8	15.9	22.5
ANSMP	1.9	3.4	1.3	3.7
Enhanced Food-Based	46.5	26.5	42.5	28.7
Traditional Food-Based	35.3	54.9	40.2	50.0
Other	0.9	1.2	0.9	1.8

[1/] Column percentages might not sum to 100% because some school districts use more than one menu planning system.
Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Nutrient-Based Menu Planning for Both Lunch and Breakfast

School food directors in districts using nutrient-based menu planning systems (i.e. NSMP or ANSMP) were asked which meals they used these systems to plan. Of all districts using them, 90% were using it in their lunch programs, while 61.2% were using them in their breakfast programs (Table IV-6). Under USDA guidelines, school districts conducting nutrient analysis have the option of analyzing lunch and breakfast menus separately or analyzing them together using a combined analysis.

In SY 1998/99, nearly one-third (31.8%) of all districts implementing NSMP/ANSMP in both their lunch and breakfast programs reported conducting combined analysis. In SY 1999/00, the share rose to 41.1%.[1] Interestingly, the share is highest among smaller districts and among those in high poverty areas, suggesting that this method of conducting analysis might be viewed as a more efficient use of limited resources.

[1] It is noted that the response rate to this question might have been influenced by question wording in that; 'NSMP' was used to represent both NSMP and ANSMP systems, while respondents could have read the question as referring only to NSMP. The same wording was used in both years the question was asked.

Table IV-6: Number of Public NSLP School Districts Implementing Nutrient Standard Menu Planning or Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning in Lunch and/or Breakfast Programs, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1999/00

District characteristics	NSMP/ANSMP used in lunch program		NSMP/ANSMP used in breakfast program		Nutrient analysis of lunch and breakfast combined	
	Number of districts	Percent of all NSMP/ANSMP districts	Number of districts	Percent of all NSMP/ANSMP districts	Number of Districts	Percent of all NSMP/ANSMP districts serving lunch & breakfast
All districts	3,134	90.0	2,132	61.2	816	41.1
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	1,331	85.5	827	53.1	346	45.9
1,000 – 4,999	1,254	91.5	854	62.3	317	39.5
5,000 – 24,999	460	98.5	371	79.4	131	37.5
25,000 or more	89	100.0	80	89.9	22	28.1
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	360	85.3	312	73.9	128	47.7
Medium (31-60% f&r)	1,497	92.8	1,110	68.8	464	43.9
Low (≤30% f&r)	1,277	88.3	710	49.1	224	34.1

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study*: *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Implementation Status

Survey respondents were asked each year the survey was administered to assess their progress in implementation of the menu planning system they had chosen. They were asked to characterize their progress ranging from "have not started" to "fully implemented." Respondents were left to determine the meaning of "full implementation" as well as to estimate their state of progress in reaching that goal. It is to be expected that there is some variation in how the terms were interpreted. While some directors might have interpreted "full implementation" to mean that the necessary procedures were in place, others might have defined it in terms of the attainment of the nutrient standards. For this reason, the results are to be taken as a rough indication of how school food directors viewed their progress at the time of the survey.

When first surveyed in SY 1997/98, only about one-third of all school districts indicated their menu planning systems were fully implemented. One year later, in SY 1998/99, over half (55.4%) said they had achieved full implementation. By SY 1999/00, nearly two-thirds (63.3%) were fully implemented while nearly 85% indicated that they were at least three-quarters implemented.

Larger districts are somewhat ahead of smaller districts in terms of the share reaching full implementation. The relatively few districts that are lagging behind in implementation tend to be smaller districts.

A comparison of the rate of progress in achieving implementation between SYs 1998/99 and 1999/00 (Table IV-8) reveals a continuing, though slower graduation of districts to a more fully implemented status. About one-third of all districts reporting full implementation in SY 1999/00 had achieved that status within the past year. As was evident in results from the survey conducted in SY 1998/99, some districts are finding full implementation an illusive goal, in some cases to the point of slipping back to a less fully implemented status from the year before. This is most evident among districts using the "other" menu planning approach. As indicated in Table IV-7, the share of these districts reporting full implementation fell from 59.5% in SY 1997/98 to 50.4% in SY 1999/00, suggesting that design of alternative systems might have proven more difficult than anticipated.

Table IV-7: Share of Public NSLP School Districts by Implementation Status for Chosen Menu Planning Method by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	Have not started		At least one-quarter Implemented		At least half implemented		At least three-quarters implemented		Fully implemented		All districts	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)										(number)	
All districts	6.7	3.2	12.3	3.5	19.9	8.5	26.3	21.5	34.8	63.3	13,503	13,092
District size[1/]												
Less than 1,000	8.5	4.4	13.4	3.5	19.2	9.8	25.0	19.6	33.9	62.7	5,820	5,783
1,000 – 4,999	6.4	2.8	12.0	3.9	20.5	8.3	27.2	24.4	33.8	60.7	5,623	5,394
5,000 – 24,999	2.9	1.2	10.0	2.4	20.9	4.8	28.1	19.3	38.1	72.3	1,819	1,641
25,000 or more	0.8	0.0	7.1	0.9	14.6	4.3	24.6	16.5	52.9	78.4	240	231
Program participation												
NSLP and SBP	6.4	3.3	13.0	3.2	19.9	8.5	25.6	21.3	35.2	63.7	10,107	9,944
NSLP only	7.8	1.8	10.1	4.2	20.0	8.7	28.6	22.8	33.5	62.6	3,396	2,994
District poverty level[2/]												
High (>60% f&r)	4.0	4.4	15.1	2.6	15.7	9.0	26.7	14.7	38.5	69.3	2,099	1,832
Medium (31-60% f&r)	6.0	3.6	13.2	3.7	20.7	8.4	26.2	22.7	33.9	61.6	5,252	5,319
Low (≤30% f&r)	8.3	2.5	10.5	3.5	20.7	8.4	26.3	22.4	34.2	63.1	6,152	5,898
Menu planning method chosen												
NSMP	2.8	2.4	14.6	2.5	19.5	9.2	34.4	24.9	28.8	61.0	2,679	2,911
ANSMP	0.0	0.0	5.5	8.2	28.2	18.7	28.9	19.8	37.2	53.3	454	475
Enhanced food-based	3.2	2.2	10.0	2.8	22.7	7.4	29.1	24.6	35.0	63.0	3,580	3,706
Traditional food-based	10.3	4.7	12.8	4.2	19.2	8.3	23.5	18.9	34.3	64.0	7,409	6,459
Other	2.5	1.3	10.4	0.0	6.7	0.0	21.5	48.2	59.5	50.4	163	228

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table IV-8: Share of Public NSLP School Districts by Implementation Status Reported in SY 1998/99 and SY 1999/00

Status reported in SY 1998/99	Status reported in SY 1999/00				
	Have not started	At least one-quarter implemented	At least half implemented	At least three-quarter Implemented	Fully implemented
	(percent of all districts) [1/]				
Have not started	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	1.5
At least one-quarter implemented	0.2	1.5	1.7	1.3	1.2
At least half implemented	0.4	0.8	3.5	4.7	3.8
At least three-quarter implemented	0.3	0.7	1.4	9.3	12.3
Fully implemented	2.0	0.5	2.1	6.2	43.5
Total	3.2	3.9	8.8	21.7	62.4

[1/] Represents the 13,083 districts in the sample all three years.
Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Future Intentions of Districts Using Food-Based Systems

Since the nutrient-based approaches to menu planning authorized under the SMI represented a greater departure from past practices than did the food-based approaches, the rate of adoption of the NSMP/ANSMP options has been difficult to forecast. To better gauge SFA intentions and thereby better understand the changes underway, respondents from districts not using one of the nutrient-based systems were asked if they were:

- working toward implementation of NSMP
- planning to work toward implementation of NSMP
- not planning to work toward implementation of NSMP.

In responding to the question, respondents were asked to indicate their intentions separately for elementary schools and middle/secondary schools.

When this question was first asked in SY 1997/98, about half of all districts using food-based systems said that they were either working toward or planning to work toward implementation of NSMP (Tables IV-9 and IV-10). By the following year, this share had fallen below 40% where it remained in SY 1999/00. Coincidentally, the share of all food-based systems that did not intend to adopt the nutrient-based approach rose from about 50% in SY 1997/98 to around 64% in SY 1999/00.

A comparison of Tables IV-9 and IV-10 reveals very little difference in intention to shift to NSMP for elementary schools versus middle/secondary schools.

It is not possible to judge the level of commitment implied by the responses to this question. While one-fifth to one-quarter of all food-based districts have reported that they were working toward implementation of NSMP between SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00, the share of all districts using NSMP increased relatively little, by less than 3% of all districts. Absent further evidence that districts are completing the shift from food-based to nutrient-based system, the degree of follow-through would appear to be low. The increasing share of food-based districts that say they are not planning to work toward implementation of a nutrient-based approach (up from about half in 1997/98 to nearly two-thirds in 1999/00) suggests that an increasingly larger share of these districts are satisfied with their food-based approach.

Table IV-9: Intentions of Public NSLP School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems to Work Toward Implementation of Nutrient Standard Menu Planning for Elementary Schools by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	Working toward implementation		Planning to work toward implementation		Not planning to work toward implementation		Total number of districts	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	----------(percent)----------						----(number)----	
All districts	26.6	20.7	24.7	14.8	48.7	64.4	10,728	9,807
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	23.9	20.9	23.3	13.5	52.8	65.5	4,647	4,066
1,000 – 4,999	28.5	21.1	26.0	15.6	45.5	63.4	4,518	4,308
5,000 – 24,999	29.7	19.1	25.6	16.2	44.5	64.7	1,392	1,268
25,000 or more	25.6	19.3	19.2	15.9	55.2	64.8	172	165
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	26.9	21.3	24.8	15.0	48.3	63.6	7,969	7,504
NSLP only	25.8	19.0	24.4	13.5	49.8	67.5	2,759	2,183
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	22.0	19.2	24.9	14.8	53.1	66.0	1,668	1,452
Medium (31-60% f&r)	26.3	21.4	23.8	13.9	49.9	64.7	4,132	3,846
Low (≤30% f&r)	28.4	20.7	25.3	15.6	46.3	63.8	4,928	4,509

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table IV-10: Intentions of Public NSLP School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems to Work Toward Implementation of Nutrient Standard Menu Planning for Middle/Secondary Schools by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	Working toward implementation		Planning to work toward implementation		Not planning to work toward implementation		Total number of districts	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	----------(percent)----------						----(number)----	
All districts	23.9	20.6	24.2	15.1	51.9	64.2	9,603	8,682
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	21.4	22.6	23.2	13.3	55.4	64.1	3,464	2,932
1,000 – 4,999	25.6	20.8	25.1	15.9	49.2	63.3	4,585	4,318
5,000 – 24,999	25.6	16.6	24.7	16.6	49.6	66.8	1,382	1,267
25,000 or more	15.7	14.5	16.3	13.2	68.6	72.2	172	165
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	24.4	21.1	24.4	15.2	51.2	63.7	7,281	6,797
NSLP only	22.4	18.6	23.6	13.7	54.0	67.6	2,322	1,820
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	24.3	20.1	27.1	13.5	48.7	66.4	1,344	1,157
Medium (31-60% f&r)	24.3	21.2	22.1	14.1	53.6	64.7	3,705	3,378
Low (≤30% f&r)	23.5	20.3	25.1	16.4	51.4	63.3	4,554	4,146

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

CHAPTER V: OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES USED IN IMPLEMENTING THE SMI MENU PLANNING OPTIONS

Introduction

As we have noted in past reports in this series, implementation of the SMI has required numerous changes in food service operating procedures. While changes in menu planning have generally been greatest for NSMP and ANSMP schools, those schools that have continued to use food-based menu planning techniques have had to make numerous changes as well. In this chapter, we assess school district use of a few key operating procedures and how use of these procedures has changed over the period of this study.

Research Questions

More specifically, we address the following questions in the remainder of this chapter.

- To what extent did school districts use cycle menus in SY 1999/00 and how has this changed from the previous two school years? Are there differences in the use of cycle menus by district characteristics?
- How many school districts applied weights on the basis of actual or planned servings in conducting nutritional analysis in SY 1999/00 and how has this changed since SY 1997/98? Are there differences in the use of weights between NSMP/ANSMP districts and those using food-based menu planning systems? Of the NSMP/ANSMP districts, how many exclude a la carte sales? Are there significant differences in the use of weights or the exclusion of a la carte sales among districts with differing characteristics?
- How many food-based menu planning school districts are conducting nutrient analysis and how did this change between SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00?
- For those school districts that are using a food-based approach to menu planning and do not conduct nutrient analysis, what steps are being taken to achieve the nutritional aims of the SMI? Were there any changes between SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00?
- For school districts using ANSMP in SY 1999/00, what organizations are conducting the analysis and how has this changed since SY 1997/98?

- To what extent have school districts publicized the nutrient content of their meals? What differences are there between food-based and nutrient-based districts? Were there any changes between SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00?

Use of Cycle Menus

Cycle menus are standard sets of menus that are repeated over specified periods of time. By establishing a set of menus that can be repeated on a set schedule, say every 4 or 5 weeks, it becomes possible for SFAs to standardize major elements of the process. By using cycle menus, they can more effectively plan their food and labor requirements. The requirements of the SMI have added another incentive for school districts to use cycle menus. In the absence of cycle menus, school food directors must maintain more elaborate records and NSMP/ANSMP schools must conduct nutrient analyses more frequently.

Results of the most recent survey indicate that the share of all districts using cycle menus continues to rise, though at a slower pace than the year before. In SY 1999/00, 53.5% of all districts said they used cycle menus, up from 50.1% the year before and from 40% in SY 1997/98.

Larger districts are more likely to use cycle menus than are smaller districts. Of those districts with an enrollment of 25,000 or more, 77.9% used cycle menus in SY 1999/00 compared to 50.8% of districts with an enrollment of less than 1,000. Despite this, it is among districts of less than 25,000 that there has been the greatest shift toward use of cycle menus.

When compared by the menu planning system in use, NSMP/ANSMP districts are found to use cycle menus with greatest frequency, though a high share of districts using "other" systems use cycle menus too. Regardless of which menu planning system is used, however, all districts have shifted toward the increased use of cycle menus.

Table V-1: Use of Cycle Menus by Public NSLP School Districts by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99 and 1999/00

District Characteristics	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
All districts	40.0	50.1	53.5
District size[1/]			
Less than 1,000	38.8	46.9	50.8
1,000 – 4,999	35.2	47.9	50.7
5,000 – 24,999	54.4	66.1	68.2
25,000 or more	73.3	77.6	77.9
Program participation			
NSLP and SBP	42.3	52.4	56.7
NSLP only	33.2	43.7	42.1
District poverty level[2/]			
High (>60% f&r)	50.5	56.2	65.6
Medium (31-60% f&r)	41.9	56.3	58.0
Low (≤30% f&r)	34.9	43.1	45.6
Menu planning system			
NSMP	43.5	60.6	66.0
ANSMP	58.9	70.5	69.2
Enhanced	39.1	41.8	44.4
Traditional	32.3	48.6	51.6
Other	55.9	57.1	64.9

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Use of Weighting

Since children eating reimbursable meals often have the option of choosing from among different meal components, analysis of the nutrient content of the overall menu requires that the relative importance of each component be determined. This is done by assigning weights reflecting each item's relative importance in actual servings. If there are twice as many servings of french fried potatoes as of green beans selected as part of a reimbursable lunch, for example, french fries should be assigned twice as much weight as green beans in calculating the nutrient content of the menu. Also, for any menu item in a reimbursable meal that is also offered for sale a la carte, the portion that is sold a la carte (including portions sold as part of

an adult meal) must be excluded from the calculation of these weights since it is the reimbursable meals that are being analyzed.

The initial SMI regulations required NSMP and ANSMP schools to assign weights in conducting nutrient analyses. Due to the burden of obtaining the menu production information required to assign weights, the USDA authorized the State child nutrition agencies to grant temporary waivers of this requirement. This was followed by a Congressional requirement in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998 that prohibited the USDA from requiring the use of weighted analysis through FY 2002/03. Thus, although school districts are not required to use weights in conducting nutrient analysis, it is difficult for them to achieve an accurate estimate of the nutritional content of their menus without doing so.

The share of all districts that reported the use of weights in the first year of this study was high at 77.6% and moved slightly higher (84.6%) by SY 1999/00. Increased use of the technique occurred mainly among the food-based districts. As a result, a slightly larger share of food-based districts than nutrient-based districts now say they use weighting (87.8% vs. 80.2%).

Use of weighting is consistently high among districts of all sizes and poverty levels, with one exception. Food-based districts of 25,000 or more use weighting less frequently than do other districts, for some unexplained reason.

Of the 80.2% of all NSMP/ANSMP districts that assign weights to meal components, only two-thirds (66.5%) excluded a la carte sales in conducting nutrient analysis in SY 1999/00, although it is required. This is down slightly from the 73.9% reported in SY 1997/98. The decline in the share of districts excluding a la carte sales over this period was most pronounced among the smallest districts and the largest districts. For the former, the share fell from 69.8% to 54.3% while for the latter it slid from 82.5% to 70.8%.

Table V-2: Share of Public NSLP School Districts that Weight Foods on the Basis of Actual or Planned Servings in Conducting Nutritional Analysis, by Menu Planning System and by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	Food-Based Districts		NSMP/ANSMP Districts		All districts	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)					
All districts	74.9	87.8	80.8	80.2	77.6	84.6
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	80.6	91.6	77.2	80.0	78.9	86.7
1,000 – 4,999	77.4	87.4	85.3	81.8	80.7	85.1
5,000 – 24,999	60.9	81.6	79.5	76.2	69.6	79.4
25,000 or more	46.0	58.3	81.8	80.9	59.6	68.5
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	74.2	87.5	82.5	79.5	78.0	84.2
NSLP only	77.5	88.3	75.3	80.9	76.5	85.2
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	70.4	84.1	71.1	71.6	70.8	79.7
Medium (31-60% f&r)	74.9	93.2	82.2	83.1	78.4	88.6
Low (≤30% f&r)	76.4	84.4	83.2	79.5	79.3	82.4

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table V-3: Share of Public NSLP School Districts Using NSMP/ANSMP Planning Systems that Weight Foods on the Basis of their Relative Importance and that Exclude A La Carte Sales, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	School districts that weight foods on basis of relative importance			
	1997/98		1999/00	
	Percent of total	School districts that exclude a la carte sales	Percent of total	School districts that exclude a la carte sales
		(percent)		(percent)
All districts	80.8	73.9	80.2	66.5
District size[1/]				
Less than 1,000	77.2	69.8	80.0	54.3
1,000 – 4,999	85.3	73.8	81.8	76.3
5,000 – 24,999	79.5	83.5	76.2	77.5
25,000 or more	81.8	82.5	80.9	70.8
Program participation				
NSLP and SBP	82.5	74.2	79.5	66.1
NSLP only	75.3	72.7	80.9	71.1
District poverty level[2/]				
High (>60% f&r)	71.1	73.1	71.6	64.6
Medium (31-60% f&r)	82.2	72.9	83.1	62.5
Low (≤30% f&r)	83.2	75.2	79.5	71.7

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Steps Taken by Food-Based Menu Planning Districts to Achieve Nutritional Objectives

A good first step toward the achievement of a district's nutritional objectives is for the district to conduct nutritional analysis on a systematic basis. While school districts that use a food-based menu planning system are not required to conduct nutritional analysis, they are encouraged to do so. In the absence of nutritional analysis, it is not possible to verify whether the meals that are served meet the Dietary Guidelines, as required by the SMI.

A significant and growing share of all food-based districts conduct nutrient analysis. Between SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00, the share of all districts that conduct nutrient analysis rose from 33.1% to 45.9%.

The share of districts conducting analysis increases with district size though it is the smallest districts (less than 1,000) that have adopted the approach most aggressively since SY 1997/98. The share of districts in the 25,000 or more size category that conduct nutrient analysis has actually fallen slightly over part of this period, going from 73.3% in SY 1997/98 to 59.4% the following year and then reversing direction to 65.5% in SY 1990/00. The sharp drop between the first and second year could have been due to a combination of factors. First, there was a slight change in the composition of districts of this size responding to the survey. Second, a few districts in this size category shifted from food-based to nutrient-based systems over this period. It would not be surprising if those that shifted were already among the number conducting nutrient analysis. Third, many SFAs could have been doing nutrient analysis in the first year to establish a baseline analysis of meeting the nutrient targets. Once the baseline was established and cycle menus were in place, it is possible they discontinued the analysis, at least temporarily.

The other side of the coin is that, despite the increased use of nutrient analysis by food-based districts, over half their number (54.1%) still did not make use of nutrient analysis in SY 1999/00. For these districts the question remains as to what steps they are taking to ensure that their meals meet the Dietary Guidelines. Districts using the enhanced food-based system have some advantage in this regard in that the prescribed meal patterns have been designed around achievement of the Dietary Guidelines.

Most SFAs using one of the food-based systems (94%) report that they have made various types of changes for purposes of meeting the Dietary Guidelines. Larger districts are somewhat more likely to have made changes than smaller districts. Around two-thirds of these SFAs indicate that they have taken one or more of the following steps:

- offering additional servings of more nutritious foods
- substituting more nutritious foods and ingredients
- using more nutritious preparation techniques

While the share of districts reporting that they have made multiple types of changes has fallen slightly over the period of study, this could be due to changes made early in the SMI implementation that are now viewed as established procedures. At the time of this survey, changes made at the outset of the SMI had been in place for 3 years in many districts. The share that say they have made no changes at all has remained constant at 6%. It is noted that the share reporting no changes was highest among the high poverty districts (10.4%) and that this represents an increase since SY 1997/98.

Table V-4: Food-based Menu Planning School Districts that are Conducting Nutrient Analysis, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	Number of districts		Share of all food-based districts	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	---(number)---		-----(percent)-----	
All districts	3,615	4,863	33.1	45.9
District size[1/]				
Less than 1,000	1,278	2,098	27.2	44.6
1,000 – 4,999	1,663	1,990	35.9	45.1
5,000 – 24,999	548	667	38.7	51.6
25,000 or more	126	108	73.3	65.5
Program participation				
NSLP and SBP	2,793	3,855	34.6	48.2
NSLP only	822	949	28.9	38.7
District poverty level[2/]				
High (>60% f&r)	521	785	31.2	53.1
Medium (31-60% f&r)	1,418	1,894	34.1	45.1
Low (≤30% f&r)	1,676	2,184	32.9	44.6
Menu planning system[3/]				
Enhanced food-based	1,041	1,604	29.1	43.3
Traditional food-based	2,560	2,907	34.6	45.0
Other	80	117	52.3	52.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

[3/] Some school districts use more than one menu planning system.

Source*: School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table V-5: Steps Taken by Public NSLP School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems that Do Not Conduct Nutritional Analysis to Achieve Dietary Guidelines, by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District Characteristics	Offer additional servings of more nutritious foods		Substitute more nutritious foods and ingredients		Use more nutritious preparation techniques		No changes made		Total number of school districts	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	----------(percent)----------								----(number)----	
All districts	77.3	66.9	77.0	65.1	81.1	66.6	6.4	6.2	6,891	5,733
District size[1/]										
Less than 1,000	73.6	65.5	76.7	68.9	80.3	64.4	7.1	7.8	3,221	2,601
1,000 – 4,999	79.5	70.6	76.4	60.2	81.1	67.6	6.0	5.5	2,803	2,427
5,000 – 24,999	83.1	70.4	79.8	67.0	84.4	68.8	4.8	2.7	826	625
25,000 or more	90.6	65.2	93.0	88.1	80.8	86.3	4.9	1.8	41	57
Program participation										
NSLP and SBP	79.4	69.3	76.1	66.1	81.8	68.2	5.9	6.1	4,963	4,148
NSLP only	71.7	64.0	79.6	62.3	79.2	61.8	7.5	6.9	1,928	1,501
District poverty level[2/]										
High (>60% f&r)	81.1	61.0	73.9	56.6	80.6	66.6	6.6	10.4	1,060	694
Medium (31-60% f&r)	76.6	66.0	82.5	66.7	85.9	71.5	3.6	4.9	2,578	2,305
Low (≤30% f&r)	76.5	71.9	73.7	66.0	77.4	62.2	8.5	6.3	3,253	2,711

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Source of ANSMP Analysis

As reported in Chapter IV, the Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (ANSMP) option remains the least used of the major specified options. In SY 1999/00, only 3.7% of all districts indicated that they were using ANSMP, about the same share that reported using it the two previous years.

School districts that use ANSMP can obtain their analytic support from a variety of sources, -- including their State Child nutrition agency, other school districts, food service management companies, and consultants - - as long as these sources are recognized by FNS as having the technical capacity to conduct nutrient analysis. In SY 1997/98, as the SMI was first getting underway, 15 State agencies offered analytic support to school districts in their States. However, given the limited interest in this option, the number of State agencies providing support to ANSMP districts in SY 1999/00 had dropped to 7.

Despite the pullback, State agencies are the principal source of ANSMP nutrient analysis. The share of ANSMP districts that have looked to their State agencies for this support has steadily risen from just over one-third (34.7%) in SY 1997/98 to 57.8% in SY 1999/00. The other principal sources of analytic support for these districts are: food service management companies (16.5%), other school districts (9.7%), and consultants (8.8%).

Smaller districts are more likely to get their support from their State agency or, in some cases, from another school district. In comparison, larger districts appear more likely to receive assistance from consultants or food service management companies. However, the number of districts of 5,000 or more that is using ANSMP is too small to provide a basis for meaningful comparison.

Table V-6: Sources of Analysis of Public NSLP School Districts Using Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	Number		Analysis conducted by:									
			State agency		Another school district		Consultant		Food service mgt. company		Other	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(number)		(percent)									
All districts	426	412	34.7	57.8	13.6	9.7	14.2	8.8	17.6	16.5	19.8	7.2
District size[1/]												
Less than 1,000	235	210	45.9	55.3	11.6	16.6	9.3	6.6	6.4	12.6	26.7	8.9
1,000 – 4,999	152	191	19.5	63.2	20.3	2.0	17.8	10.9	33.1	19.2	9.3	4.6
5,000 – 24,999	35	10	22.6	37.0	0.0	0.0	32.3	14.8	25.8	40.7	19.4	7.4
25,000 or more	5	2	60.0	28.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	28.6	0.0	28.6	40.0	14.3
Program participation												
NSLP and SBP	336	328	31.0	61.4	10.5	7.9	16.7	11.2	17.4	13.7	24.4	5.8
NSLP only	90	83	49.2	50.6	26.2	16.5	4.6	1.8	18.5	18.9	1.5	12.2
District poverty level[2/]												
High (>60% f&r)	97	69	38.5	57.0	0.0	0.0	59.6	8.3	1.9	13.2	0.0	21.5
Medium (31-60% f&r)	161	192	63.8	62.3	5.5	8.4	6.3	14.3	11.0	8.8	13.4	6.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	169	151	7.6	53.0	25.5	15.1	4.8	3.2	29.7	26.3	32.4	2.5

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Publicizing the Nutrient Content of Menus

An underlying goal of the SMI is to increase the nutritional awareness of children and their parents. One means of heightening this awareness and preparing children and their parents to make better-informed dietary decisions is to publicize the nutrient content of school meals.

A majority of all school districts (84.5%) say that they do not publicize the nutrient content of their menus. The share has remained near this level throughout the three years of the study. A substantially larger share of NSMP/ANSMP districts than food-based districts say that they publicize the nutritional composition of their menus (30.5% vs. 11.0%).

Table V-7: Share of Public NSLP School Districts that Publicize the Nutrient Content of Meals Served by Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Responses	Districts using food-based menu planning systems		Districts using NSMP/ANSMP		All districts [1/]	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	----------(percent)----------				----(percent)----	
Publicize nutrient content:						
Yes	12.4	11.0	36.3	30.5	17.5	15.5
No	87.6	89.0	63.7	69.5	82.5	84.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of districts	10,926	10,596	3,065	3,484	13,639	13,239

[1/] Since some school districts report using both food-based and nutrient standard menu planning techniques, there is some duplication in the "all districts" column.

[2/] Percentages based on the number of school districts having at least some schools that publicize the nutrient content of their meals.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

CHAPTER VI:
IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE

Introduction

Having reviewed the status of the SMI implementation and the operating procedures being used, we now turn to an examination of the impact of the SMI on school food operations, as of SY 1999/00. This is the third consecutive year we have collected information on most of these topics. In comparing responses across this period, we look for evidence that the pace of change brought on by the SMI is moderating and that the new operating measures are becoming established features of most school food programs.

In the third year survey, some questions that had been asked only of NSMP/ANSMP districts during the first two years of the study were also asked of districts using food-based menu planning systems. This includes questions regarding time requirements in planning menus, menu changes, and trends in a la carte sales.

Research Questions

The performance of a wide range of relatively detailed operational tasks is examined as before. In summary, the research questions addressed are as follows:

- How do school districts using NSMP or ANSMP view the level of burden associated with specific implementation tasks? Were there changes in the perceived level of burden over the period between SYs 1998/98 and 1999/00?
- To what extent have there been menu changes? Have there been changes in the amount of time spent on menu planning? Have there been changes in a la carte food sales? How do the changes measured in SY 1997/98 compare to those for SY 1999/00 for those districts implementing NSMP or ANSMP?
- To what extent have there been changes in specified menu-related features of district programs? To what extent have there been changes in specified food preparation and procurement practices?
- To what extent do food service directors believe that there have been changes in food waste, program acceptance, number of food choices, portion size, and the number of a la carte items offered in SY 1999/00 compared to the previous school year? How do these changes compare to those reported the previous two years?

- To what extent have school districts experienced difficulty in performing specific tasks associated with implementation of the SMI? How did this perception change over the period of the study?
- What is the attitude of major stakeholders in the school food program toward the SMI? What is the attitude of school food directors toward the SMI? Have these attitudes changed between SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00?

Ease of Implementing NSMP

As in the first year survey, school food service directors using NSMP and ANSMP were asked whether they considered the performance of 14 specified tasks associated with implementation of these menu planning systems a "significant burden," a "minor burden," or "not a burden." In looking across all districts, it would appear that a majority of the SFAs consider most of these tasks only a "minor burden." This overall picture has not changed much over the three years of the study. Although some differences in the perception of burden are evident among different size districts, the differences are small and there is no consistent pattern.

Again looking across all districts, four tasks stand out as providing the greatest challenge. Although a smaller share of districts now describe them as a major burden, the same four tasks topped the list in terms of difficulty each year. The tasks, including the share of respondents describing them as a "major burden" in the first and third study years, are as follows:

	1997/98	**1999/00**
entering/analyzing recipes	64.5%	55.4%
obtaining missing nutrient information	63.2	44.7
entering/analyzing menus	59.6	48.8
obtaining information for weighted analysis	50.4	30.0

These results suggest that while the more demanding tasks have become less onerous over this period, they remain a challenge to a significant share of the districts using nutrient-based menu planning.

Table VI-1: Extent to Which Tasks Required in Implementing Nutrient Standard Menu Planning Have Been a Burden to Participating Public NSLP School Districts, by Size of District, SY 1999/00

Task	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden	Major burden	Minor burden	No burden
	(percent)														
Developing standardized recipes	31.8	51.6	16.6	23.1	60.0	16.9	28.7	53.3	18.0	22.5	47.2	30.3	27.7	55.0	17.3
Entering/analyzing recipes	61.7	27.3	11.0	47.5	37.5	15.0	60.0	28.9	11.1	44.4	38.9	16.7	55.4	31.8	12.7
Planning menus	16.0	59.6	24.3	15.8	56.7	27.6	24.4	57.5	18.2	10.1	40.4	49.4	16.9	57.6	25.4
Obtaining information for weighted analysis	34.1	51.1	14.8	24.9	55.6	19.5	31.4	57.2	11.4	31.0	48.3	20.7	30.0	53.6	16.4
Entering/analyzing menus	47.7	42.6	9.6	49.3	37.1	13.6	52.7	39.2	8.1	40.4	38.2	21.3	48.8	39.9	11.3
Obtaining missing nutrient information	49.6	41.6	8.8	40.1	43.7	16.2	46.5	47.1	6.4	233	66.7	10.0	44.7	43.8	11.5
Providing specifications for purchased foods	19.8	62.6	17.6	16.4	54.5	29.1	23.0	58.1	18.9	2.3	60.2	37.5	18.4	58.7	22.9
Monitoring to ensure that specifications are met	19.3	55.7	25.0	19.0	42.7	38.3	17.2	57.7	25.1	10.3	59.8	29.9	18.7	50.9	30.4
Training food service staff	23.7	55.8	20.6	19.6	61.2	19.2	29.2	58.9	11.8	23.9	55.7	20.5	22.8	58.4	18.8
Entering product information	23.6	53.0	23.4	23.7	51.2	25.1	40.0	48.8	11.1	27.0	50.6	22.5	26.0	51.7	22.4
Selecting appropriate items from database	14.4	61.3	24.4	15.3	59.7	25.0	24.9	59.4	15.7	9.2	50.6	40.2	16.1	60.1	23.8
Retraining staff to identify reimbursable meals	11.0	59.4	29.6	8.7	62.8	28.5	18.1	63.4	18.5	11.4	58.0	30.7	11.1	61.3	27.6
Persuading students to select reimbursable meals	12.5	60.9	26.6	12.2	66.5	21.3	23.6	58.6	17.8	8.0	58.6	33.3	13.8	62.8	23.4
Marketing healthier food choices	12.7	55.6	31.8	13.2	50.2	36.6	25.3	46.4	28.3	13.8	58.6	27.6	14.7	52.2	33.1

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-2: Extent to Which Tasks Required in Implementing Nutrient Standard Menu Planning Have Been a Major Burden to Participating Public NSLP School Districts, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Task	District Size								All districts	
	Less than 1,000		1,000-4,999		5,000-24,999		25,000 or more			
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)									
Developing standardized recipes	32.4	31.8	21.7	23.1	21.3	28.7	39.0	22.5	26.7	27.7
Entering/analyzing recipes	69.8	61.7	60.6	47.5	59.5	60.0	62.3	44.4	64.5	55.4
Planning menus	30.6	16.0	23.6	15.8	26.9	24.4	20.5	10.1	27.1	16.9
Obtaining information for weighted analysis	60.7	34.1	39.9	24.9	47.5	31.4	53.2	31.0	50.4	30.0
Entering/analyzing menus	60.6	47.7	59.0	49.3	60.5	52.7	43.6	40.4	59.6	48.8
Obtaining missing nutrient information	68.2	49.6	61.2	40.1	59.2	46.5	33.8	233	63.2	44.7
Providing specifications for purchased foods	30.5	19.8	19.7	16.4	18.2	23.0	14.5	2.3	24.0	18.4
Monitoring to ensure that specifications are met	14.2	19.3	15.8	19.0	18.2	17.2	13.0	10.3	15.4	18.7
Training food service staff	16.3	23.7	21.2	19.6	24.6	29.2	28.6	23.9	19.8	22.8
Entering product information	21.5	23.6	32.0	23.7	33.4	40.0	35.9	27.0	27.8	26.0
Selecting appropriate items from database	8.9	14.4	14.0	15.3	11.3	24.9	10.3	9.2	11.3	16.1
Retraining staff to identify reimbursable meals	9.5	11.0	13.2	8.7	16.3	18.1	27.3	11.4	12.4	11.1
Persuading students to select reimbursable meals	13.0	12.5	19.3	12.2	16.7	23.6	14.1	8.0	16.1	13.8
Marketing healthier food choices	13.6	12.7	12.0	13.2	19.4	25.3	17.9	13.8	14.0	14.7
	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)
Total number of districts	1,323	1,557	1,186	1,370	479	467	77	89	3,065	3,483

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report* June 2002.

Table VI-3: Extent to Which Tasks Required in Implementing Nutrient Standard Menu Planning have been a Major Burden to Participating Public NSLP School Districts, by Status of Implementation, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Task	Status of Implementation										All Districts	
	Fully implemented		At least 75% implemented		At least 50% implemented		At least 25% implemented		Not started			
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)											
Developing standardized recipes	17.8	22.2	30.8	27.0	26.6	44.5	39.5	40.7	14.2	94.3	26.7	27.7
Entering/analyzing recipes	56.6	49.0	59.2	58.6	69.7	69.1	83.9	78.0	84.0	100.0	64.4	55.4
Planning menus	25.9	16.8	24.3	18.4	25.5	13.5	42.0	27.9	12.3	0.0	27.1	16.9
Obtaining information for weighted analysis	45.6	26.5	50.5	32.5	47.4	35.5	65.1	57.9	55.8	20.6	50.4	30.0
Entering/analyzing menus	52.4	41.3	54.2	56.4	62.8	66.7	79.2	40.9	87.9	100.0	59.6	48.8
Obtaining missing nutrient information	55.5	42.6	58.8	44.7	67.2	58.1	81.4	47.7	86.0	36.6	63.2	44.8
Providing specifications for purchased foods	17.2	16.7	20.7	22.1	30.1	20.7	40.1	19.6	16.2	0.0	24.0	18.4
Monitoring to ensure that specifications are met	12.5	15.4	14.2	22.1	14.0	27.9	27.9	27.9	12.3	0.0	15.4	18.7
Training food service staff	16.4	21.2	18.5	25.1	17.9	23.9	34.7	37.7	16.2	0.0	19.8	22.8
Entering product information	21.5	21.8	25.0	26.6	31.3	33.4	41.2	48.0	44.4	66.4	27.8	26.0
Selecting appropriate items from database	8.7	15.7	11.8	14.2	9.0	19.4	19.3	30.0	12.3	0.0	11.3	16.1
Retraining staff to identify reimbursable meals	10.6	9.9	11.4	15.6	13.4	5.0	17.0	19.4	16.2	0.0	12.4	11.1
Persuading students to select reimbursable meals	17.5	11.6	14.3	20.2	15.5	12.2	18.1	13.9	16.2	0.0	16.1	13.8
Marketing healthier food choices	10.9	12.8	14.6	19.2	17.0	15.1	15.1	18.1	12.3	0.0	14.0	14.7
	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)	(number)
Total number of districts	935	2,083	1,008	858	644	354	403	118	75	70	3,065	3,483

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

A comparison of the share of NSMP and ANSMP districts indicating that a given task is a "major burden" by their status of menu planning implementation suggest that most of the tasks are viewed as less burdensome by those districts that have achieved full implementation or are approaching it. In fact, the highest share of directors indicating that the task is a major burden is usually found among those who have either not started to implement their chosen system or remain in the early stages of implementation, i.e. they report their system is "at least 25% implemented." Whether they are being held back in getting their systems up and running by the perceived burdensomeness of these tasks or they are slow in making progress due to the difficulties encountered cannot be determined. It is noteworthy that fewer than 200 districts (5.4%) remained at this early stage of implementation in SY 1999/00 compared to 59.8% of all NSMP/ANSMP districts that had achieved full implementation, about double the share that were fully implemented two years earlier.

Staff Time in Planning Menus

For those school districts adopting NSMP or ANSMP, it was anticipated that menu planning during start-up could be especially time consuming. Once these new systems are fully operational, however, it was thought that this task would require substantially less time.

To determine how much time district staff were spending planning menus, school food directors were asked whether they were spending "more time," "less time," or the "same amount of time" as last year in planning breakfast and lunch menus. In the first two study years, this question was only asked of districts using NSMP or ANSMP since implementing these systems requires somewhat more attention to the development and planning of new menus than does implementation of the food-based systems. In the third year of the study, these questions were asked of all districts, regardless of the menu planning system in use. These findings offer an opportunity to compare perceptions of the time requirements for planning menus for nutrient-based versus food-based systems.

As anticipated, the incremental time requirements for menu planning among the NSMP and ANSMP districts have dropped rather sharply in each of the three survey years. Looking first at breakfast menu planning, the share of districts saying that more time was required went from 65.5% in SY 1997/98 to 33.2% in SY 1998/99 to 19.8% in SY 1999/00.

It would appear that the amount of time spent in planning breakfast menus is also a function of the status of implementation of the menu planning system. The share of districts reporting that they spent "more time" planning breakfast menus falls from 31.4% to 17.8% as you move down the table from those districts that were "at least half implemented" to those that were "fully implemented." Coincidentally, the share reporting they spent "less time" rises from 0.0% to 8.5%.

Table VI-4: Change in Time Spent Planning Breakfast Menus Compared to the Previous School Year for School Districts Using NSMP or ANSMP, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	1997/98			1999/00		
	More time	Same	Less time	More time	Same	Less time
	(percent)			(percent)		
All districts	65.5	27.3	7.3	19.8	72.8	7.4
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	68.2	21.4	10.4	11.3	84.6	4.1
1,000 – 4,999	64.2	30.7	5.1	24.8	63.8	11.4
5,000 – 24,999	63.7	31.5	4.8	26.7	68.1	5.2
25,000 or more	56.6	34.2	9.2	24.4	68.3	7.3
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	65.5	27.3	7.3	19.9	72.3	7.8
NSLP only	--	--	--	--	--	--
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	65.5	25.9	8.6	13.9	78.3	7.8
Medium (31-60% f&r)	65.8	27.1	7.1	18.9	74.5	6.6
Low (≤30% f&r)	64.9	28.3	6.8	23.4	67.9	8.7
Status of implementation						
Have not started	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
At least one-quarter implemented	79.2	12.2	8.7	0.0	78.5	21.5
At least half implemented	59.6	35.0	5.3	31.4	68.6	0.0
At least three-quarters implemented	65.5	28.2	6.3	24.6	68.6	6.8
Fully implemented	61.2	29.4	9.4	17.8	73.7	8.5

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

While we do not have information on this topic for the food-based districts for previous years, comparison of SY 1999/00 responses indicates that the overall change in time requirements for food-based districts was about the same as that for nutrient-based systems. Three-quarters of all food-based districts said that they spent the same amount of time planning breakfast menus in SY 1999/00 as the year before while 20.6% spent more time and 4.2% spent less time. Comparable shares for nutrient-based systems are 72.8%, 19.8%, and 7.4%.

No major differences are evident among the food-based systems when responses are compared by district size or poverty level. As for the NSMP/ANSMP districts, it would appear that menu planning time requirements are greatest around the mid-point of system implementation, gradually declining as the district moves to full implementation.

Table VI-5: Change in Time Spent Planning Breakfast Menus Compared to the Previous School Year by School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems, SY 1999/00

District characteristics	More time	Same	Less time
	----------(percent)----------		
All districts	20.6	75.1	4.2
District size[1/]			
Less than 1,000	19.3	78.7	2.1
1,000 – 4,999	21.0	72.8	6.1
5,000 – 24,999	24.0	71.3	4.8
25,000 or more	17.9	76.5	5.6
Program participation			
NSLP and SBP	20.9	75.0	4.1
NSLP only	--	--	--
District poverty level[2/]			
High (>60% f&r)	17.3	75.3	7.4
Medium (31-60% f&r)	23.4	72.4	4.3
Low (≤30% f&r)	18.9	78.4	2.7
Status of implementation			
Have not started	6.2	90.3	3.5
At least one-quarter implemented	9.3	90.7	0.0
At least half implemented	31.7	64.7	3.6
At least three-quarters implemented	29.0	65.4	5.6
Fully implemented	18.0	77.8	4.1

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

A pattern of change similar to that described for planning breakfast menus is also evident in the responses to questions relating to lunch menus. While in SY 1997/98, 75.8% of the NSMP/ANSMP districts had said they were spending "more time" planning lunch menus, by SY 1999/00 the share giving this response had fallen to 32.4%. Clearly, as menu planning systems (at least, nutrient-based systems) become more fully implemented, less time is spent in menu planning. Still, about one-quarter of all districts that have fully implemented systems,

whether food-based or nutrient-based, said that they were spending "more time" planning lunch menus.

Table VI-6: Change in Time Spent Planning Lunch Menus Compared to the Previous School Year by School Districts Using NSMP or ANSMP, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	1997/98			1999/00		
	More time	Same	Less time	More time	Same	Less time
	----------(percent)----------			----------(percent)----------		
All districts	75.8	18.0	6.1	32.4	62.6	5.0
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	77.6	13.7	8.7	29.8	69.0	1.2
1,000 – 4,999	77.5	19.4	3.1	34.5	55.9	9.6
5,000 – 24,999	69.1	24.6	6.3	35.1	61.4	3.5
25,000 or more	64.1	26.9	9.0	29.8	64.3	6.0
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	74.2	19.4	6.4	29.8	64.1	6.0
NSLP only	81.5	13.5	5.0	41.0	57.9	1.0
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	73.0	19.1	7.9	29.9	62.7	7.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	73.2	19.8	7.0	30.5	65.7	3.8
Low (≤30% f&r)	79.8	15.7	4.5	35.4	58.9	5.7
Status of implementation						
Have not started	100.0	0.0	0.0	85.7	14.3	0.0
At least one-quarter implemented	84.7	8.5	6.8	48.2	51.8	0.0
At least half implemented	80.5	15.7	3.7	39.0	61.0	0.0
At least three-quarters implemented	74.5	20.8	4.8	38.5	56.0	5.5
Fully implemented	69.3	21.6	9.1	25.6	68.2	6.2

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-7: Change in Time Spent Planning Lunch Menus Compared to the Previous School Year by School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems, SY 1999/00

District characteristics	More time	Same	Less time
	----------(percent)----------		
All districts	27.0	69.8	3.2
District size[1/]			
Less than 1,000	24.1	73.7	2.1
1,000 – 4,999	28.5	67.3	4.2
5,000 – 24,999	31.8	64.4	3.8
25,000 or more	23.8	70.7	5.5
Program participation			
NSLP and SBP	25.9	70.4	3.7
NSLP only	29.7	68.4	1.9
District poverty level[2/]			
High (>60% f&r)	20.8	71.1	8.1
Medium (31-60% f&r)	28.0	69.1	2.8
Low (≤30% f&r)	27.8	70.2	2.1
Status of implementation			
Have not started	16.5	74.2	9.3
At least one-quarter implemented	30.1	69.9	0.0
At least half implemented	36.4	60.8	2.8
At least three-quarters implemented	37.3	59.0	3.7
Fully implemented	22.7	74.4	3.0

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Menu Changes

It is assumed that most school districts had to make at least some menu changes to achieve the SMI nutritional objectives. While those districts adopting NSMP and ANSMP probably had to make the most extensive changes, some degree of menu change was considered likely in most districts.

The surveys conducted during the first two years of the study asked school food directors in NSMP and ANSMP districts if their menus were "very different," "somewhat different," or if there was "no difference" from the year before. During the final survey, conducted during SY

1999/00, all districts, regardless of the menu planning system in use, were asked the same question.

Among the NSMP/ANSMP districts, about half said that their breakfast menus in SY 1999/00 were "somewhat different" while just under two-thirds described their lunch menus this way. Most of the remaining districts indicate "no difference" in their menus while a small minority (less than 5%) indicate that their menus are "very different" from the year before. Measures of the degree of difference in menus for elementary and middle/secondary schools were very similar.

Comparisons across the three study years indicate that while most SFAs have reported some year-to-year change in their menus, the share reporting change has gradually fallen. For example, in SY 1997/98 81.6% of all NSMP/ANSMP districts said the lunch menus in their elementary schools were "somewhat different" than the year before. In SY 1998/99, this share fell to 70.0% and in the final survey year, SY 1999/00, it dropped to 63.1%.

Menu changes for foods served on special menus (e.g. deli and salad bars) followed a similar pattern as the share reporting "no difference" rose sharply between SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00. Though the share of NSMP/ANSMP districts that said their special menus were "very different" from the year before remained relatively small in SY 1999/00 (5% for elementary schools and 8% for middle/secondary schools), this represented an increase from SY 1997/98.

School districts using food-based menu planning systems reported almost identical results in terms of the share indicating menu changes in SY 1999/00 by degree of change. As with the NSMP/ANSMP districts, about half of the food-based districts say that their breakfast menus are "somewhat different" while nearly two-thirds say the same of their lunch menus.

Table VI-8: Menu Changes From the Previous School Year Made by Public NSLP School Districts Using NSMP or ANSMP, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Menu/school type	1997/98				1999/00			
	Degree of difference in menus			Total	Degree of difference in menus			Total
	Very different	Somewhat different	No difference		Very different	Somewhat different	No difference	
	(percent)				(percent)			
Breakfast								
Elementary	3.8	73.0	23.1	100.0	1.3	54.1	44.6	100.0
Middle/secondary	3.9	73.2	22.8	100.0	2.5	53.5	44.0	100.0
Lunch								
Elementary	4.1	81.6	14.4	100.0	3.0	63.1	33.9	100.0
Middle/secondary	6.7	80.0	13.3	100.0	4.5	65.3	30.2	100.0
Special menus (deli, salad bars, etc.)								
Elementary	3.8	68.6	27.7	100.0	5.0	40.0	55.0	100.0
Middle/secondary	4.7	67.1	28.2	100.0	8.0	51.8	40.1	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-9: Menu Changes From the Previous School Year Made by Public NSLP School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems, SY 1999/00

Menu/school type	1999/00			
	Degree of difference in menus			Total
	Very different	Somewhat different	No difference	
	(percent)			
Breakfast				
Elementary	2.5	52.2	45.3	100.0
Middle/secondary	2.4	55.9	41.8	100.0
Lunch				
Elementary	2.8	65.1	32.1	100.0
Middle/secondary	3.3	65.3	31.4	100.0
Special menus (deli, salad bars, etc.)				
Elementary	5.5	34.8	59.6	100.0
Middle/secondary	7.6	54.2	38.2	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Change in A La Carte Sales

For children eating lunch at school, food sold a la carte represents one of the two principal alternatives to reimbursable meals. While not all schools offer a la carte sales, most middle/secondary schools and many elementary schools do. The other option is to bring packed lunches from home. Trends in a la carte sales therefore offer an indirect way of gauging the relative acceptability of reimbursable meals.

Since Federal reimbursement payments are limited to the reimbursable meal, a la carte sales are beyond the direct influence of the SMI and, with the exception of the competitive foods regulations, outside the scope of Federal regulations. Where a la carte food sales are offered, they compete directly with reimbursable meals and, therefore, with the accomplishment of SMI's nutritional objectives.

Since the menu changes required by the SMI are greatest among NSMP/ANSMP school districts, examination of this topic during the first two years of this study was limited to districts using these menu planning systems. In SY 1999/00, the final year of the study, all districts regardless of the menu planning system in use were asked how their a la carte sales

compared to the previous year. School food directors were asked to distinguish between elementary and middle/secondary schools in making this comparison.

It should be noted that since it was left to survey respondents to define what they considered "a la carte sales," there was room for varying interpretations. Many schools make milk available as an a la carte item but do not offer other foods. It is therefore likely that the findings reported have underestimated the availability of milk as a la carte item. [1]

Looking first at elementary schools in NSMP/ANSMP districts, a comparison of survey results across the three years indicates that many small and medium-size districts (less than 25,000) stopped offering a la carte sales during this period. This change is most striking among the very smallest districts (less than 1,000). While about half these districts (51.9%) did not offer a la carte sales in their elementary schools in SY 1997/98, within two years the share not offering a la carte had grown to nearly three-quarters (73.7%).

Among those districts with an enrollment of 1,000 to 24,999 that continued to offer a la carte sales in their elementary schools in 1999/00, 30% or more reported increased a la carte sales that year. This is somewhat higher than the share in SY 1997/98. Thus, while fewer schools are offering a la carte, those that do so appear to be selling more.

The picture for the largest NSMP/ANSMP districts (25,000 or more) is strikingly different. Among these districts, the share offering a la carte in their elementary schools increased from about 65% to 78% between SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00. And for those districts offering a la carte, the share reporting increased sales rose from 14% in the first year to 50% in the third year.

The changes in a la carte sales reported by all food-based districts for their elementary schools conform closely to those reported by the NSMP/ANSMP districts. About half of these districts (50.6%) offer a la carte and of these about two-thirds (65.4%) indicate "no change" in a la carte sales in SY 1999/00. As with the NSMP/ANSMP districts, the larger enrollment food-based districts are much more likely to offer a la carte in their elementary schools. Those larger districts that offered a la carte were also more likely to have experienced increased a la carte sales in SY 1999/00, compared to the smaller districts.

[1] For comparisons, see USDA, FNS, *School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study – II:* prepared by Abt Associates, July 2001. This study finds that 90% of all elementary schools offer milk a la carte while only 34% meat and meat alternatives/entrees, for example.

Among middle/secondary schools, a la carte offerings are not only substantially more prevalent but the share of districts reporting increased sales is also much higher. Across all districts, whether nutrient-based or food-based, over 80% offer a la carte in their middle/secondary schools. And of those districts offering a la carte in their schools, a majority report increased sales in SY 1999/00.

Comparing survey results in SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00 for the NSMP and ANSMP districts, two things are evident. First, as with their elementary schools, the very smallest districts (less than 1,000) appear to be pulling back from offering a la carte. The share reporting that they did not offer a la carte in their middle/secondary schools rose from 22.2% in SY 1997/98 to 36.0% in SY 1999/00. (A comparable share of the smallest food-based districts reported that they did not offer a la carte in their middle/secondary schools in SY 1999/00.)

Table VI-10: Change in A La Carte Sales From the Previous School Year in Elementary Schools in School Districts Using NSMP or ANSMP, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	1997/98				1999/00			
	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered
	----------(percent)----------				----------(percent)----------			
All districts	9.6	51.0	0.3	39.1	14.2	33.9	2.4	49.5
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	5.9	42.2	0.0	51.9	3.3	22.7	0.3	73.7
1,000 – 4,999	10.8	57.3	0.7	31.3	18.1	39.1	4.1	38.7
5,000 – 24,999	17.7	59.4	0.0	22.8	25.5	46.7	1.6	26.2
25,000 or more	9.0	56.4	0.0	34.6	39.0	29.9	9.1	22.1
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	10.4	54.2	0.3	35.0	15.4	36.6	2.3	45.7
NSLP only	6.8	39.6	0.0	53.6	9.9	24.7	3.1	62.2
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	3.7	47.5	0.0	48.9	7.7	33.1	3.4	55.7
Medium (31-60% f&r)	6.7	53.7	0.6	39.0	10.9	34.0	1.6	53.4
Low (≤30% f&r)	15.3	49.6	0.0	35.1	19.7	34.0	2.9	43.3

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-11: Change in A La Carte Sales From the Previous Year in Elementary Schools in School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems, SY 1999/00

District characteristics	1999/00			
	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered
	(percent)			
All districts	14.8	33.1	2.7	49.4
District size[1/]				
Less than 1,000	7.6	23.9	2.3	66.2
1,000 – 4,999	16.5	38.4	2.7	42.4
5,000 – 24,999	30.0	42.5	3.6	23.9
25,000 or more	30.5	48.2	6.7	14.6
Program participation				
NSLP and SBP	15.7	36.2	2.9	45.2
NSLP only	12.0	23.2	2.3	62.4
District poverty level[2/]				
High (>60% f&r)	12.8	34.8	5.3	47.0
Medium (31-60% f&r)	13.0	33.0	1.8	52.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	16.9	32.5	2.7	47.8

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

The second observation regarding the NSMP/ANSMP districts is that the share reporting increased a la carte sales in middle/secondary schools is markedly higher in SY 1999/00 than it was two years earlier. Of those NSMP/ANSMP districts offering a la carte in their middle/secondary schools (excluding those not offering a la carte), the share that reported increased sales rose from 35% in the first year to 53% in the third year.

The distribution of changes in a la carte sales among food-based districts and their middle/secondary schools in SY 1999/00 was very similar to the distribution for nutrient-based districts. The one noteworthy difference was the somewhat larger share of food-based districts that reported increased sales (53.9% versus 43.7%).

Table VI-12: Change in A La Carte Sales From the Previous School Year in Middle/Secondary Schools in School Districts Using NSMP or ANSMP, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

District characteristics	1997/98				1999/00			
	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered
	(percent)				(percent)			
All districts	30.6	54.9	1.2	13.3	43.7	33.0	5.6	17.6
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	18.2	58.4	1.1	22.2	32.4	29.1	2.5	36.0
1,000 – 4,999	36.1	52.5	1.7	9.7	44.0	36.1	7.8	12.1
5,000 – 24,999	39.6	54.7	0.2	5.5	58.4	32.1	4.5	5.0
25,000 or more	49.4	49.4	1.3	0.0	63.2	28.9	7.9	0.0
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	28.5	57.7	1.2	12.7	43.2	32.9	6.1	17.8
NSLP only	40.1	42.6	1.4	15.9	47.5	34.2	3.0	15.3
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	18.0	53.0	0.0	29.0	35.8	40.4	6.5	17.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	27.5	57.9	2.1	12.6	38.4	29.7	4.1	27.8
Low (≤30% f&r)	37.5	52.4	0.7	9.4	51.1	34.7	6.9	7.4

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-13: Change in A La Carte Sales From the Previous Year in Middle/Secondary Schools in School Districts Using Food-Based Menu Planning Systems, SY 1999/00

District characteristics	1999/00			
	Increased sales	No change	Decreased sales	A la carte not offered
	----------(percent)----------			
All districts	53.9	24.2	4.9	17.0
District size[1/]				
Less than 1,000	36.5	23.3	4.1	36.2
1,000 – 4,999	60.7	25.5	5.5	8.3
5,000 – 24,999	69.2	22.1	4.5	4.2
25,000 or more	67.9	24.2	5.5	2.4
Program participation				
NSLP and SBP	53.3	25.6	4.9	16.2
NSLP only	57.2	18.4	4.8	19.6
District poverty level[2/]				
High (>60% f&r)	40.4	25.3	4.8	29.4
Medium (31-60% f&r)	48.0	26.7	4.6	20.7
Low (≤30% f&r)	62.5	21.9	5.1	10.5

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Number of A La Carte Items Offered

As in the first two surveys, school food directors were asked if a la carte was offered and if so, whether the number of a la carte items offered at lunch had increased, remained the same, or decreased compared to last school year. They were asked this question separately for elementary and middle/secondary schools and for each of five major food categories.

Of those districts that offer a la carte, a majority indicated in SY 1999/00 that there had been no change in the number of a la carte items offered compared to the previous year. For elementary schools, the share indicating "no change" was close to 80% for most food categories. Among middle/secondary schools, the share reporting "no change" generally varied between 50% and 80%, depending on the food category and the size of the districts.

Very few districts, generally fewer than 5% of those offering a la carte, reduced the number of a la carte items they offered at lunch. To the extent there were changes, they were mostly in the direction of offering additional items. Overall, about 15% of all districts providing a la carte increased the number of items in their elementary schools while 25% to 40% added to their middle/secondary school a la carte menus.

Among the food categories examined, beverages and snacks are unique in a couple of respects. While beverages (which includes milk) is the category that is most frequently offered a la carte, the share of districts that offer it varies markedly by district size. For example, while fewer than 40% of the smallest districts (less than 1,000) offer a la carte beverages in their elementary schools, more than 92% of the largest districts (25,000 or more) offer them.

Beverages are also being added to lunch menus by more districts than are most other foods. Among those districts serving a la carte, 17.3% reported an increased number of beverage items in their elementary schools while 39.9% reported an increase in their middle/secondary schools.

Snack foods evidence an even higher rate of growth in terms of the number of items offered at lunch. For districts with a la carte in their elementary schools, 32.6% reported additional snack items while more than half (51.9%) reported additional snack items offered in the middle/secondary schools.

Menu Related Features of the Program

In anticipation that school districts would have to make numerous changes in how they planned and implemented their menus, school food directors were asked to comment on what changes they had made in particular program features from the previous school year. Since most of the changes would be one-time changes, it is anticipated that the pace of change would slow as SMI implementation proceeds and districts make those changes required to improve program performance.

Overall, the results suggest a significant element of change on the part of SFAs with most of the changes contributing to the accomplishment of SMI objectives. For example, results from the third year survey indicate that over three-quarters of all districts (77.3%) were using cycle menus, up from 63.6% two years before. A large share of all districts (74.9%) are increasing the number of items added to their menus and a majority (61.6%) are adding to the number of fruits and/or vegetables offered.

As expected, a comparison of the responses for SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00 shows that the pace of change in many program features has slowed, though it remains significant. For example, while fewer districts are changing portion sizes and variation in the menu items by age/grade categories, one-fifth or more of all districts continue to report increases.

Food Procurement and Preparation

The types of food procured as well as the methods used to prepare menu items are closely related to the accomplishment of SMI objectives. It was anticipated that districts would make changes in both as they implemented the SMI. Results from the first two surveys confirmed that many districts were making numerous changes in both food procurement and food preparation.

Results from the survey conducted during SY 1999/00 indicate that while many districts continue to make changes in these practices, the pace of change is slowing. For many districts, the newly adopted practices appear to have become an established feature of their operations. As a result, fewer districts are indicating that they have made a change since last year.

In SY 1999/00, the highest incidence of change was among those districts that reported that they:

- increased their purchases of fresh fruit and vegetables (59.7%);
- required additional nutrition information from vendors (57.8%);
- increased their purchases of low-fat/reduced-fat foods (49.9%).

While the share of districts reporting these actions has fallen in each of the past two years, it is clear that changes continue to be made by a large number of districts.

As indicated in earlier reports, relatively few districts (16.1%) say that they purchase pre-plated meals. The relative share of districts indicating positive and negative changes would suggest a slight shift away from the purchase of these meals, though the numbers are too small to support a general conclusion to that effect.

The share of districts using purchasing cooperatives remains near two-thirds with 18.7% of those districts that buy from them saying that they increased their use of them in SY 1999/00.

Table VI-14: Changes in Menu Related Features of Programs From the Previous Year in Public NSLP School Districts, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Program feature	Increase		No change		Decrease		Eliminated		Never had	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)									
Use of cycle menus	22.1	16.0	40.3	60.0	1.2	1.3	0.7	0.6	35.7	22.2
Use of centralized menu planning	15.9	8.0	64.7	72.0	1.1	0.9	1.1	0.3	17.2	18.8
Use of decentralized menu planning	2.8	1.0	35.5	31.2	4.9	3.7	2.7	2.7	52.7	61.4
Availability of self-serve foods/food bars	20.7	18.8	48.0	53.4	3.6	2.9	2.7	1.5	25.1	23.5
Availability of *a la carte* in elementary schools	10.6	11.4	43.1	33.1	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.3	42.5	52.6
Availability of *a la carte* in middle/secondary schools	23.9	27.6	52.0	47.5	2.1	1.7	0.8	0.8	21.2	22.4
Number of menu choices for reimbursable meals	36.2	30.2	53.0	60.6	2.8	2.2	0.5	0.3	7.5	6.7
Number of new menu items	71.4	74.9	23.9	22.4	2.3	1.9	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.8
Portion sizes by age/grade level	53.6	19.9	42.0	78.1	2.2	1.4	0.3	0.0	1.9	0.7
Opportunity for local cafeteria options	12.7	8.2	61.4	62.8	3.7	2.2	0.7	0.5	21.5	26.3
Number of fruits and/or vegetables offered	76.2	61.6	22.0	37.5	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.4
Variation of menu items among age/grade categories	42.3	28.1	50.3	66.0	1.6	0.6	0.2	0.1	5.7	5.3
Marketing of menus	21.1	16.3	66.7	75.6	1.0	0.3	0.2	0.0	11.1	7.7
Availability of offer vs. serve in elementary schools	16.8	11.1	71.5	78.1	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.5	10.1	9.8
Physical layout of cafeteria	10.3	8.9	84.8	87.5	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.0	4.1	3.4

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-15: Changes in Food Procurement Practices From the Previous Year in Public NSLP School Districts, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Practice	Increase		No change		Decrease		Eliminated		Never had	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)									
Purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables	74.7	59.7	23.1	39.1	0.7	0.8	0.0	0.1	1.5	0.3
Purchase of prepared foods	16.9	18.2	70.4	72.7	10.2	7.9	0.2	0.1	2.4	1.2
Purchase of pre-plated meals from outside vendors	1.1	0.7	14.4	13.7	1.6	1.7	2.5	1.5	80.5	82.4
Use of USDA donated commodities	25.0	25.7	68.8	67.7	2.8	4.8	1.0	0.1	2.4	1.9
Purchase of low-fat/reduced-fat foods	81.2	49.9	16.3	48.0	0.8	1.0	0.1	0.1	1.6	1.0
Requiring nutrition information from vendors	84.2	57.8	13.1	39.5	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.0	2.4	2.5
Use and content of product specification	70.4	29.4	27.5	69.6	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.9
Use of purchasing cooperatives	17.1	12.2	50.1	51.9	0.7	1.1	0.3	1.1	31.8	33.7

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

About one-quarter of all districts (25.7%) indicate that they made increased use of USDA donated commodities in SY 1999/00. This is substantially larger than the share (4.8%) that said they made less use of them. These results are consistent with survey results from the first two years and suggest that SFAs were able to make more effective use of donated commodities in SY 1999/00 than they have in the past.

A comparison of changes in food procurement practices across the period of study reveals that at least 90% of all districts increased the purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables and low-fat/reduced-fat foods and required additional nutrition information from vendors in at least one of the three years (Table VI-16).

The attainment by many districts of a steady or near-steady state in their food preparation practices is evident in the third year survey results. About two-thirds of all districts reported that "no change" was required in the use of standardized recipes or in the use of new USDA recipes. This contrasts with responses in SY 1997/98 when 60% of all districts reported increased use of both.

While the share of SFAs saying that they are modifying recipes and production practices with increased frequency has declined somewhat from SY 1997/98, it remains high with more than half of all districts continuing to make changes in their recipes and how the food is prepared.

The share of districts reporting no change in the time devoted to recording food production information rose to nearly half. Although SFAs are not required to use weights in their nutritional analysis – one of the main reasons for maintaining food production records – it would appear that about 85% of all districts continue to apply weights in conducting this analysis. This finding would therefore suggest that many districts have now reached an equilibrium in the time required to record this information.

Table VI-16: Percent of Public NSLP School Districts Indicating an Increase in Food Procurement Practices From the Previous Year, SYs 1997/89, 1998/99 and 1999/00

Practice	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	In at least one report year
Purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables	74.7	68.8	59.7	91.4
Purchase of prepared foods	16.9	16.5	18.2	37.2
Purchase of pre-plated meals from outside vendors	1.1	0.7	0.7	1.9
Use of USDA donated commodities	25.0	31.6	25.7	52.6
Purchase of low-fat/reduced-fat foods	81.2	69.4	49.9	91.6
Requiring nutrition information from vendors	84.2	71.2	57.8	94.4
Use and content of product specification	70.4	48.8	29.4	83.0
Use of purchasing cooperatives	17.1	13.2	12.2	30.5

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-17: Changes in Food Preparation Practices From the Previous Year in Public NSLP School Districts, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Practice	Increase		No change		Decrease		Eliminated		Never had	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	----------(percent)----------									
Use of standardized recipes	60.3	33.8	35.9	64.2	0.8	0.8	0.3	0.1	2.7	1.1
Use of new USDA recipes	60.4	28.9	35.0	66.6	1.5	2.5	0.5	0.4	2.7	1.5
Time devoted to recording food production information	68.1	48.4	28.2	49.6	2.0	1.7	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.2
Frequency with which recipes modified to improve nutritional content of meals	80.2	61.3	17.4	37.7	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	2.1	0.8
Frequency with which preparation methods modified to improve nutritional content of meals	77.2	53.8	20.7	45.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.0	1.7	0.6
Purchase of new equipment	22.2	24.4	73.1	70.7	1.1	2.6	0.5	0.5	3.0	1.7

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Number of Food Choices

To gain further insight into changes in the composition of menus and the choice of foods being provided, SFAs were asked how the number of food choices offered in their reimbursable meals had changed since last school year. The same question was asked in both of the two earlier surveys as well. Respondents were asked to report changes in the number of choices for each of the following: entrees, fruit, vegetables, grain/bread, milk, and desserts. Separate responses were collected for elementary schools and for middle/secondary schools.

A comparison of the results for all three years appears in Table VI-17 through Table VI-20. While some districts continue to add to the number of choices offered in their reimbursable meals, the majority indicate "no change" across all major food categories. The share of all districts reporting "no change" has gradually risen across the three year period, a further indication that districts are moving toward an equilibrium.

To the extent districts are making changes in the number of food choices, nearly all are expanding the number of foods students have to choose from. Very few districts have reduced the number of choices. For those that do, desserts are the most frequent candidate.

From the beginning, fruit has been the category for which most districts have increased the number of choices. The only exception is among those districts that are using the enhanced food-based menu planning system. Consistent with the requirements of this system, many of these districts have expanded the number of choices of grain/bread as well as fruit and vegetables.

In general, more districts have added choices in their middle/secondary schools than in their elementary schools. This is especially true for entrees offered but applies to a lesser degree across the other food categories too.

Medium-size districts (1,000-24,999) were found to increase the number of choices somewhat more frequently than either the very largest or the very smallest districts.

Comparing districts by type of menu planning system suggests that a slightly larger share of NSMP districts have achieved equilibrium in the number of food choices offered.

Table VI-18: Percent of Public NSLP School Districts Indicating an Increase in Food Preparation Practices From the Previous Year, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99 and 1999/00

Practice	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	In at least one report year
Use of standardized recipes	60.3	47.8	33.8	78.4
Use of new USDA recipes	60.4	44.4	28.9	74.6
Time devoted to recording food production information	68.1	63.0	48.4	86.9
Frequency with which recipes modified to improve nutritional content of meals	80.2	71.1	61.3	92.8
Frequency with which preparation methods modified to improve nutritional content of meals	77.2	70.9	53.8	92.2
Purchase of new equipment	22.2	27.4	24.4	50.1

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-19: Changes in the Number of Food Choices Offered in Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / food category	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	20.4	77.6	2.0	27.7	69.7	2.6	36.7	60.2	3.1	28.3	67.5	4.2	25.8	71.8	2.4
Fruit	56.7	43.0	0.3	64.1	35.4	0.5	65.9	32.8	1.3	56.3	43.8	0.0	61.0	38.5	0.5
Vegetables	36.0	62.3	1.7	44.4	54.7	0.8	51.4	46.9	1.7	38.8	60.8	0.0	41.6	57.1	1.3
Grain/Bread	44.7	54.9	0.4	61.2	37.9	0.9	67.8	30.9	1.4	60.4	38.3	1.7	54.9	44.4	0.7
Milk	12.7	86.8	0.4	12.4	85.2	2.3	9.5	87.1	3.4	6.7	90.4	2.5	12.1	86.3	1.6
Desserts	12.4	79.7	7.9	20.7	68.0	11.3	24.7	59.9	15.4	27.5	65.4	6.7	17.8	72.0	10.3
1998/99															
Entrees	21.4	76.8	1.9	32.7	65.1	2.2	36.4	61.4	2.1	24.0	74.2	1.3	28.4	69.6	2.0
Fruit	40.5	58.7	0.9	55.5	44.0	0.5	53.7	45.6	0.7	32.8	67.2	0.0	48.7	50.6	0.7
Vegetables	29.7	67.6	2.7	37.8	61.4	0.8	37.7	61.3	1.0	26.6	72.1	1.3	34.1	64.3	1.6
Grain/Bread	36.8	62.2	1.0	45.1	54.2	0.8	48.1	51.5	0.4	31.4	68.1	0.4	41.9	57.3	0.8
Milk	10.7	88.5	0.9	9.3	89.6	1.1	7.3	91.8	0.9	8.7	88.2	3.1	9.5	89.4	1.0
Desserts	13.0	78.3	8.7	17.4	72.9	9.6	21.4	68.2	10.4	16.2	76.9	7.0	16.1	74.7	9.2
1999/00															
Entrees	17.1	81.1	1.8	29.8	68.3	1.9	32.1	64.4	3.6	29.4	67.5	3.0	24.9	73.0	2.1
Fruit	31.2	68.5	0.3	38.4	61.2	0.3	39.0	60.6	0.4	27.3	72.3	0.4	35.3	64.3	0.3
Vegetables	25.4	72.8	1.8	29.9	69.7	0.4	33.8	65.3	0.9	21.6	77.9	0.4	28.4	70.6	1.0
Grain/Bread	20.7	77.5	1.8	31.7	68.0	0.4	34.6	63.8	1.6	23.8	75.3	0.9	27.4	71.5	1.1
Milk	7.5	92.1	0.4	6.8	92.5	0.7	8.3	90.1	1.6	5.2	91.8	3.0	7.3	92.0	0.7
Desserts	9.4	84.1	6.5	14.1	79.0	6.9	17.1	71.6	11.3	14.7	77.9	7.4	12.6	80.1	7.3

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-20: Changes in the Number of Food Choices Offered in Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / food category	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	26.9	70.8	2.3	42.2	54.2	3.6	43.5	52.5	3.9	38.3	60.0	1.7	36.8	60.0	3.2
Fruit	65.4	33.3	1.3	69.2	29.9	0.9	66.2	32.7	1.2	56.3	42.9	0.8	67.1	31.8	1.1
Vegetables	52.4	45.2	2.4	59.3	39.0	1.7	58.3	40.1	1.5	48.3	50.4	1.3	56.5	41.6	1.9
Grain/Bread	47.7	51.7	0.6	62.3	36.9	0.8	67.6	31.4	0.9	60.0	38.3	1.7	57.8	41.4	0.8
Milk	14.9	83.9	1.1	12.2	85.0	2.8	9.0	87.6	3.4	5.8	91.7	2.5	12.6	85.1	2.3
Desserts	14.6	78.1	7.4	24.0	64.9	11.1	24.1	61.7	14.2	29.6	65.4	5.0	20.7	69.2	10.1
1998/99															
Entrees	35.6	61.9	2.5	59.6	38.5	1.9	56.9	41.0	2.1	45.0	53.7	1.3	51.2	46.7	2.1
Fruit	47.5	50.7	1.8	58.4	40.9	0.7	58.8	40.8	0.4	38.5	61.5	0.0	54.5	44.5	1.0
Vegetables	41.1	55.9	3.0	47.7	51.1	1.2	45.1	53.8	1.1	33.3	65.8	0.9	44.9	53.4	1.7
Grain/Bread	38.3	60.5	1.2	49.3	50.0	0.7	52.2	47.5	0.4	39.4	60.2	0.4	46.2	52.9	0.8
Milk	14.7	83.7	1.6	10.9	87.7	1.3	8.6	90.7	0.7	9.1	88.7	2.2	11.7	87.0	1.3
Desserts	13.1	77.8	9.1	21.0	70.6	8.4	22.4	68.3	9.4	20.3	72.3	6.9	18.6	72.7	8.7
1999/00															
Entrees	29.8	67.7	2.4	53.7	44.6	1.7	54.4	42.7	2.9	41.1	56.3	2.6	45.7	52.2	2.1
Fruit	45.0	53.6	1.4	50.7	48.9	0.4	48.4	51.6	0.1	29.4	70.6	0.0	48.0	51.3	0.7
Vegetables	28.4	69.6	2.0	36.2	63.2	0.6	37.8	61.9	0.4	21.6	77.2	1.3	33.6	65.4	1.0
Grain/Bread	30.9	67.5	1.6	39.6	60.0	0.4	39.5	59.4	1.1	25.1	74.0	0.9	36.4	62.7	0.9
Milk	9.8	88.3	1.8	9.3	90.0	0.8	7.8	90.7	1.4	4.3	92.7	3.0	9.2	89.5	1.3
Desserts	13.4	81.1	5.5	16.9	76.4	6.8	18.1	70.9	11.0	13.8	78.9	7.3	15.8	77.1	7.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-21: Changes in the Number of Food Choices Offered in Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / food category	Type of Menu Planning														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	27.1	69.1	3.8	27.1	69.5	3.4	28.5	68.9	2.5	24.2	74.1	1.7	29.3	64.8	5.8
Fruit	53.4	45.4	1.2	62.5	37.5	--	59.8	39.3	0.9	62.7	37.0	0.3	62.3	37.7	--
Vegetables	39.5	58.9	1.6	30.4	68.7	0.9	45.3	53.8	0.9	40.8	57.8	1.4	54.1	45.9	--
Grain/Bread	47.3	50.8	2.0	55.1	44.9	--	68.6	30.7	0.7	51.7	47.9	0.3	52.5	47.5	--
Milk	12.0	85.8	2.2	12.6	86.5	0.9	12.2	86.0	1.8	12.3	86.4	1.3	8.6	91.4	--
Desserts	20.2	69.6	10.2	20.0	68.1	11.8	26.1	64.8	9.0	13.2	75.5	11.3	17.9	79.9	2.3
1998/99															
Entrees	31.3	65.8	3.0	21.0	68.9	10.1	27.1	71.7	1.2	28.2	70.2	1.6	25.5	74.5	--
Fruit	46.0	52.8	1.2	47.9	44.5	7.6	50.4	49.5	0.1	48.1	51.4	0.4	54.9	45.1	--
Vegetables	34.2	64.3	1.4	38.7	53.7	7.6	34.1	65.0	0.9	33.1	65.2	1.7	31.9	68.6	--
Grain/Bread	34.4	64.2	1.3	34.8	57.4	7.6	55.2	44.6	0.2	38.3	61.3	0.4	28.4	71.6	--
Milk	8.8	89.6	1.6	9.2	83.6	7.1	8.1	91.3	0.6	10.6	88.8	0.6	6.9	88.2	5.4
Desserts	21.2	72.9	5.9	11.5	69.8	18.7	17.5	73.4	9.1	14.6	76.0	9.4	17.2	75.5	7.4
1999/00															
Entrees	20.3	76.6	3.1	23.3	73.9	2.8	26.7	70.9	2.4	25.7	72.9	1.4	26.6	72.4	1.0
Fruit	31.0	68.3	0.7	34.8	65.2	0.0	38.4	61.5	0.1	35.4	64.3	0.3	43.2	56.8	0.0
Vegetables	25.6	73.2	1.2	27.8	72.2	0.0	30.8	67.5	1.7	28.7	70.7	0.6	38.0	62.0	0.0
Grain/Bread	17.6	80.1	2.2	25.9	72.8	1.3	38.8	59.6	1.6	24.1	75.4	0.4	28.6	71.4	0.0
Milk	4.7	93.9	1.4	7.9	92.1	0.0	8.1	91.6	0.3	7.5	91.8	0.8	7.3	92.7	0.0
Desserts	12.5	81.8	5.7	15.4	78.2	6.4	13.7	78.9	7.3	12.0	80.2	7.9	20.4	72.8	6.8

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-22: Changes in the Number of Food Choices Offered in Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / food category	Type of Menu Planning														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	36.1	59.7	4.3	42.5	51.8	5.7	39.7	56.6	3.7	34.6	63.2	2.2	50.6	49.4	--
Fruit	64.7	34.1	1.1	70.0	30.0	--	66.4	32.3	1.3	66.9	32.0	1.2	70.1	28.9	0.9
Vegetables	52.8	46.1	1.2	67.5	31.3	1.2	57.0	42.0	1.0	55.7	41.8	2.5	62.4	36.7	0.9
Grain/Bread	49.4	49.2	1.5	67.9	32.1	--	71.3	28.2	0.5	53.9	45.5	0.6	51.0	49.0	--
Milk	11.3	85.6	3.1	18.4	80.4	1.2	13.2	84.5	2.3	12.3	85.5	2.2	3.7	96.3	--
Desserts	22.7	66.2	11.1	30.6	67.3	2.1	26.3	65.5	8.3	16.8	71.7	11.5	19.3	78.3	2.4
1998/99															
Entrees	47.3	50.2	2.5	39.1	50.9	10.4	57.9	40.5	1.6	48.8	49.5	1.6	52.0	47.4	--
Fruit	46.6	52.1	1.2	42.3	49.7	8.0	56.1	43.8	0.1	56.2	43.0	0.8	48.5	51.5	--
Vegetables	38.2	60.2	1.6	36.4	53.0	10.7	49.0	50.3	0.6	44.7	53.7	1.6	28.6	70.9	--
Grain/Bread	37.1	61.4	1.4	29.9	62.1	8.0	60.6	39.0	0.4	43.5	56.2	0.3	43.9	55.6	--
Milk	9.3	88.5	2.2	13.0	78.7	8.0	8.9	90.5	0.7	13.7	85.4	0.9	11.2	83.2	5.6
Desserts	20.1	74.4	5.5	16.0	71.9	12.1	21.4	70.3	8.3	16.9	73.4	9.7	19.9	74.5	4.6
1999/00															
Entrees	39.2	57.1	3.8	47.6	40.3	12.1	49.3	49.7	1.0	45.7	52.8	1.4	36.9	63.1	0.0
Fruit	42.2	57.5	0.3	51.9	41.2	6.9	54.2	45.6	0.1	46.7	52.6	0.7	42.9	57.1	0.0
Vegetables	26.1	72.7	1.2	34.1	59.0	6.9	39.6	59.9	0.5	32.9	66.3	0.8	33.3	66.7	0.0
Grain/Bread	24.5	73.9	1.6	36.1	55.5	8.4	50.5	49.5	0.0	32.5	66.8	0.7	34.5	65.5	0.0
Milk	8.5	89.9	1.6	6.3	86.7	6.9	10.0	89.5	0.5	9.3	89.4	1.3	8.3	91.7	0.0
Desserts	16.3	78.2	5.5	18.4	70.0	11.5	16.1	77.4	6..5	15.5	77.0	7.5	25.0	67.3	7.7

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Portion Sizes

Another means of contributing to the accomplishment of the SMI nutritional objectives is to alter portion sizes. The enhanced food-based menu planning system expressly calls for smaller servings of meat or meat alternatives and larger servings of fruit, vegetables, and grain-based foods. Districts using the other menu planning systems can make similar changes.

In each of the three surveys conducted for this study, school food directors have been asked whether they had "increased," "decreased," or made "no change" in the size of portions offered as part of their reimbursable meals, compared to the previous school year. Findings from the first two years generally indicated that districts had changed portion sizes in ways that were consistent with the adoption of healthier diets. This was particularly evident in the first year when a majority of all districts increased the size of their fruit, vegetable, and grain/bread portions. While the same pattern was observed the second year, the pace had slowed as fewer districts were making changes. Presumably, many districts had made whatever changes were required to reach their nutritional targets in the first year.

Findings for the third year, SY 1999/00, indicate a continuation of trends observed in the first two years. As districts have achieved the desired portion sizes, the pace of change has slowed. Three-quarters or more of all districts report "no change" in portion sizes for each of the major food categories. To the extent districts were still making changes in the size of their portions in SY 1999/00, most were increasing the portion sizes of fruit, vegetables, and grain/bread. Reductions in portion sizes are reported by only about 5% of all districts and are generally confined to offering smaller desserts though some districts report smaller entrees too.

There are comparatively few differences by size of district, though the largest districts (25,000 or more) have reported the lowest incidence of change from the beginning. A comparison of changes in portion size by type of menu planning system also reveals few differences. Nearly one-third of the districts using the enhanced food-based system increased the size of their grain/bread servings in their middle/secondary schools in 1999/00. Though down sharply from the 80.8% reported two years earlier, it suggests that many districts continue to make adjustments aimed at improving the nutritional profile of their meals.

Table VI-23: Changes in the Portion Size of Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / food category	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	13.8	82.6	3.6	10.7	84.1	5.2	12.4	80.2	7.5	4.6	84.2	11.3	12.1	82.9	4.9
Fruit	54.2	44.9	0.8	55.9	42.9	1.2	57.2	42.4	0.5	43.3	55.8	0.8	55.1	44.0	0.9
Vegetables	48.9	50.1	1.0	50.9	48.0	1.1	54.5	44.8	0.7	38.3	60.0	1.7	50.3	48.7	1.0
Grain/Bread	53.9	45.6	0.6	64.0	35.0	1.0	67.2	32.3	0.6	57.1	41.3	1.7	59.9	39.3	0.8
Milk	2.9	97.1	0.0	0.8	98.3	0.9	1.5	98.4	0.2	0.8	97.9	0.8	1.8	97.8	0.4
Desserts	6.8	84.7	8.5	11.7	80.4	8.0	14.7	76.6	8.7	13.8	82.9	2.9	10.0	81.8	8.2
1998/99															
Entrees	12.3	85.5	2.2	9.1	87.1	3.8	9.3	86.0	4.8	3.9	92.6	3.5	10.2	86.5	3.3
Fruit	32.7	65.5	1.7	24.2	74.9	0.8	25.1	73.9	0.9	15.7	82.5	1.7	27.5	71.3	1.2
Vegetables	29.2	69.3	1.5	23.2	75.3	1.5	26.0	73.4	0.6	15.3	83.4	1.3	25.7	72.9	1.4
Grain/Bread	29.8	68.5	1.8	31.2	67.9	0.9	34.3	64.5	1.2	19.2	80.3	0.4	30.7	68.0	1.3
Milk	3.6	95.5	0.9	0.4	99.2	0.4	0.4	99.6	0.0	0.4	99.6	0.0	1.7	97.8	0.5
Desserts	4.5	86.7	8.8	5.0	89.7	5.3	7.6	86.1	6.2	6.1	90.0	3.9	5.1	88.1	6.8
1999/00															
Entrees	10.1	87.0	2.9	7.2	90.9	1.9	7.9	88.5	3.6	4.3	92.7	3.0	8.4	89.0	2.6
Fruit	21.1	78.3	0.6	20.5	79.2	0.3	18.6	80.8	0.6	12.1	87.4	0.4	20.3	79.2	0.5
Vegetables	18.2	80.6	1.2	19.7	79.9	0.4	18.8	80.9	0.3	13.9	84.4	1.7	18.9	80.4	0.7
Grain/Bread	18.6	80.2	1.2	20.5	79.2	0.4	22.3	76.5	1.2	11.2	86.6	2.2	19.8	79.4	0.8
Milk	0.9	99.1	0.0	1.1	98.9	0.1	0.7	98.9	0.3	0.9	99.1	0.0	1.0	99.0	0.1
Desserts	4.8	89.4	5.9	2.4	92.8	4.8	4.5	91.6	3.9	2.2	94.0	3.9	3.6	91.2	5.1

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-24: Changes in the Portion Size of Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / food category	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	15.9	80.5	3.7	19.4	77.0	3.6	16.8	76.4	6.8	12.9	79.2	7.5	17.6	78.2	4.2
Fruit	57.0	41.7	1.3	60.8	39.0	0.3	57.4	42.3	0.3	46.3	52.9	0.8	58.6	40.7	0.7
Vegetables	54.2	44.0	1.8	57.0	42.1	0.9	55.6	44.0	0.4	41.7	58.3	0.0	55.5	43.4	1.1
Grain/Bread	59.1	39.9	1.0	69.2	29.4	1.4	69.4	29.8	0.8	63.8	34.6	1.3	65.5	33.4	1.2
Milk	5.0	95.0	0.0	1.8	97.6	0.6	0.9	98.9	0.2	0.0	100.0	0.0	2.8	96.9	0.3
Desserts	7.0	85.4	7.7	13.5	78.8	7.7	15.9	76.0	8.1	17.1	80.4	2.5	11.6	80.8	7.6
1998/99															
Entrees	18.4	78.7	2.9	17.5	80.4	2.1	17.0	80.2	2.9	9.5	89.6	0.9	17.5	80.1	2.4
Fruit	29.6	68.4	2.0	28.0	71.8	0.3	27.3	72.3	0.5	18.2	81.8	0.0	28.1	71.1	0.9
Vegetables	29.4	68.6	2.0	27.9	71.7	0.4	25.7	74.3	0.0	13.4	86.6	0.0	27.6	71.5	0.8
Grain/Bread	28.7	68.9	2.4	34.1	65.1	0.8	35.5	64.2	0.3	26.0	73.6	0.4	32.3	66.5	1.2
Milk	4.3	94.4	1.3	1.8	97.8	0.4	0.6	99.4	0.0	0.4	99.6	0.0	2.4	97.0	0.6
Desserts	6.6	86.3	7.1	7.2	87.2	5.6	9.2	85.1	5.7	8.2	88.7	3.0	7.3	86.7	6.0
1999/00															
Entrees	16.3	81.5	2.2	16.3	82.5	1.2	12.4	85.6	2.0	4.8	93.9	1.3	15.5	82.9	1.7
Fruit	24.1	75.0	0.9	23.6	76.4	0.0	22.5	77.0	0.4	11.7	87.9	0.4	23.3	76.3	0.4
Vegetables	22.6	76.4	0.9	22.6	77.3	0.2	23.1	76.7	0.2	13.0	86.6	0.4	22.5	77.1	0.4
Grain/Bread	23.0	76.0	1.0	24.0	75.5	0.4	26.5	73.0	0.6	10.3	88.4	1.3	23.8	75.6	0.7
Milk	2.5	97.5	0.0	1.2	98.7	0.1	1.4	98.4	0.2	0.9	99.1	0.0	1.7	98.3	0.0
Desserts	5.8	89.9	4.3	4.5	92.0	3.6	4.2	92.1	3.7	2.2	94.0	3.9	4.8	91.4	3.8

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-25: Changes in the Portion Size of Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / food category	Type of Menu Planning														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	18.0	70.8	11.2	6.1	84.9	9.0	12.3	83.3	4.4	9.9	86.7	3.4	7.8	85.8	6.4
Fruit	54.1	44.5	1.4	33.8	64.7	1.4	68.6	31.1	0.3	49.9	49.2	0.9	51.0	46.3	2.7
Vegetables	48.4	50.2	1.4	32.3	66.2	1.4	64.9	34.8	0.3	43.9	55.1	1.0	43.3	54.0	2.7
Grain/Bread	51.7	46.8	1.5	38.3	60.3	1.4	77.3	22.2	0.5	54.5	44.8	0.7	54.7	45.3	--
Milk	1.6	96.9	1.5	--	100.0	--	1.0	98.9	0.1	2.3	97.5	0.1	--	100.0	--
Desserts	11.7	78.5	9.8	5.3	81.4	13.3	16.1	76.8	7.2	6.8	84.7	8.5	21.7	75.9	2.4
1998/99															
Entrees	10.0	80.9	9.0	17.7	68.2	14.1	11.8	87.2	1.0	9.0	88.9	2.1	3.9	92.2	3.9
Fruit	28.5	68.8	2.7	30.6	60.8	8.3	32.1	67.2	0.7	24.2	75.3	0.5	21.1	79.4	--
Vegetables	27.0	70.2	2.9	28.8	62.7	8.3	30.5	69.0	0.5	22.6	76.5	0.9	19.1	81.4	--
Grain/Bread	28.0	70.5	1.6	30.0	61.5	8.3	39.7	59.5	0.8	26.7	72.3	0.9	19.6	80.4	--
Milk	2.4	97.4	0.1	5.1	89.2	5.5	1.1	98.3	0.6	1.9	97.9	0.3	--	100.0	--
Desserts	8.0	83.8	8.2	5.8	77.4	16.6	6.1	87.1	6.8	4.0	90.5	5.5	4.9	95.1	--
1999/00															
Entrees	7.3	88.3	4.4	12.8	78.8	8.4	10.2	87.3	2.5	7.6	90.9	1.5	0.0	96.9	3.1
Fruit	21.4	76.9	1.7	20.3	79.7	0.0	25.3	74.7	0.0	17.1	82.6	0.3	17.2	81.3	1.6
Vegetables	19.2	79.6	1.1	17.6	82.4	0.0	22.1	77.9	0.0	17.0	81.9	1.0	9.9	88.5	1.6
Grain/Bread	14.4	84.2	1.4	20.9	73.9	5.1	30.6	69.0	0.4	15.7	83.9	0.4	8.9	89.6	1.6
Milk	1.2	98.6	0.2	0.0	99.4	0.6	1.9	98.1	0.0	0.6	99. 3	0.0	0.0	98.4	1.6
Desserts	6.7	88.1	5.2	3.8	79.1	17.1	3.6	91.8	4.6	3.4	92.3	4.3	5.2	93.2	1.6

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-26: Changes in the Portion Size of Reimbursable Meals Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Type of Menu Planning System, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / food category	Type of Menu Planning														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
	(percent)														
1997/98															
Entrees	25.5	68.5	6.1	14.7	75.0	10.2	17.1	78.7	4.2	14.9	81.9	3.2	16.2	81.5	2.3
Fruit	58.0	41.2	0.7	44.3	55.7	--	72.0	27.3	0.7	52.6	46.9	0.6	48.3	51.7	--
Vegetables	53.9	45.4	0.7	44.2	53.9	2.0	68.2	31.5	0.3	49.1	49.4	1.5	48.3	51.7	--
Grain/Bread	57.3	40.6	2.1	50.6	47.4	2.0	80.8	18.4	0.8	61.2	37.7	1.1	59.5	40.5	--
Milk	1.5	97.8	0.7	--	100.0	--	2.5	97.3	0.2	3.3	96.5	0.2	--	100.0	--
Desserts	13.9	77.8	8.2	13.8	81.8	4.4	16.5	76.3	7.3	8.1	83.4	8.5	22.5	75.1	2.4
1998/99															
Entrees	22.5	72.6	4.9	15.4	71.0	13.6	18.6	80.0	1.4	15.1	83.4	1.5	15.3	84.2	--
Fruit	28.3	70.4	1.3	22.5	70.4	7.1	33.6	65.9	0.5	25.8	73.8	0.4	16.8	83.2	--
Vegetables	27.3	71.4	1.3	28.4	64.5	7.1	32.6	66.9	0.5	25.1	74.5	0.4	14.8	85.2	--
Grain/Bread	26.8	71.8	1.4	27.5	65.4	7.1	43.1	56.0	0.8	29.1	69.8	1.1	27.6	71.9	--
Milk	3.0	96.8	0.1	8.6	84.3	7.1	1.2	98.2	0.6	2.8	96.8	0.3	--	100.0	--
Desserts	9.4	84.2	6.4	12.4	75.4	12.1	10.1	84.2	5.8	4.9	89.7	5.5	8.2	91.8	--
1999/00															
Entrees	15.4	81.6	2.9	19.1	73.4	7.5	15.1	83.5	1.4	14.8	84.4	0.8	5.4	92.9	1.8
Fruit	21.6	77.2	1.2	26.8	73.2	0.0	27.2	72.7	0.0	21.2	78.6	0.2	19.6	78.6	1.8
Vegetables	20.7	78.6	0.6	25.7	74.3	0.0	25.8	74.1	0.0	20.7	78.8	0.5	21.4	76.8	1.8
Grain/Bread	18.3	80.7	1.0	18.4	74.6	6.9	32.1	67.9	0.0	21.3	78.3	0.4	10.1	88.1	1.8
Milk	1.8	98.0	0.1	2.0	97.1	0.9	2.5	97.5	0.0	1.5	98.5	0.0	0.0	98.2	1.8
Desserts	6.4	89.9	3.7	5.2	82.9	11.8	5.1	91.3	3.6	4.0	92.5	3.5	10.1	88.2	1.8

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Plate Waste

Plate waste is food that is served but left on the plate uneaten. It is a possible indicator of the acceptability of the food that is served. School food service directors were asked during each of the three surveys for their perceptions regarding changes in the amount of food students waste at lunchtime since SFAs were required to serve meals that comply with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. They were asked this for each of seven food groups.

Survey results on this topic have changed very little across the three years studied. A majority of all districts indicate "no change" in food waste for all seven food groups, ranging from 54.1% for cooked vegetables to 77.3% for milk. To the extent school food directors detect change in the amount of food wasted, by a margin of about 2-to-1 (or more) they report less waste as opposed to more waste. Cooked vegetables continue to be the one exception with the share of districts indicating an increase in waste about double the share indicating a decrease (27.0% vs 14.4%).

A comparison of responses by size of district and type of menu planning system between SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00 reveals few differences of any magnitude. Among the largest districts (25,000 or more), a substantially smaller share indicated greater waste of cooked vegetables compared to the average across all sizes (13.9% vs 27.0%). As we found in the first two surveys, a somewhat larger share of districts using the enhanced food-based menu planning system reported increased waste in the bread/grains food group. While these districts are required to offer additional or larger servings in this food group, as we noted in the Second Year Report, these districts are also required to offer additional or larger servings of fruits and vegetables and there is no evidence of greater waste in these categories.

Difficulty in Performing Tasks

Effective implementation of the SMI is dependent on the performance of several key tasks. While some of these tasks are not new to SFAs, adoption of the SMI has required that many of the tasks become an even more integral part of the district's menu planning system. These tasks are required to ensure that the meals are prepared and served in compliance with the menus as they are planned and that they satisfy the nutritional objectives of the SMI. The same tasks generally apply to all menu planning approaches, whether nutrient-based or food-based.

Survey respondents were asked if they had difficulty in performing each of 10 tasks and, if they did, whether they viewed it as a "major difficulty" or of "some difficulty." The same question was asked all three years.

Table VI-27: Changes in the Number of A La Carte Items Offered at Lunch Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Elementary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / Food category	District size																All districts			
	Less than 1,000				1,000 – 4,999				5,000 – 24,999				25,000 or more							
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered
	(percent)																			
1997/98																				
Entrees	6.7	32.3	1.9	59.1	10.4	53.6	1.5	34.5	10.8	54.5	0.7	34.0	7.5	67.9	1.3	23.3	8.8	44.7	1.6	44.9
Dessert	4.3	32.1	1.5	62.1	9.2	54.6	2.9	33.2	10.9	58.6	1.8	28.8	12.1	62.1	4.2	21.7	7.3	45.5	2.2	45.0
Beverages (including milk)	6.6	43.6	0.6	49.2	12.3	64.3	0.1	23.3	14.1	68.5	0.8	16.5	15.4	71.3	0.8	12.5	10.1	56.0	0.4	33.5
Side dishes	6.3	29.4	0.7	63.6	10.9	53.2	0.7	35.2	10.8	55.2	0.8	33.2	9.6	65.8	--	24.2	8.9	43.4	0.7	47.1
Snacks	6.7	28.6	0.9	63.8	14.0	50.1	2.2	33.8	16.1	53.2	1.4	29.2	17.5	58.3	1.7	22.5	11.2	41.3	1.5	46.0
1998/99																				
Entrees	6.2	21.8	0.5	71.5	11.2	47.0	0.8	41.0	14.8	48.8	1.3	35.1	11.4	61.1	0.9	26.6	9.6	37.3	0.7	52.4
Dessert	3.2	23.2	0.9	72.8	9.6	49.2	1.6	39.6	15.7	49.2	2.3	32.7	9.6	64.2	0.4	25.8	7.8	38.9	1.4	51.9
Beverages (including milk)	7.0	33.2	0.6	59.3	14.2	56.5	0.7	28.6	20.4	58.6	0.7	20.3	20.1	68.6	--	11.4	12.1	47.8	0.6	39.4
Side dishes	3.9	22.9	0.8	72.5	9.3	49.7	0.4	40.6	11.7	53.2	0.3	34.9	8.7	65.5	--	25.8	7.4	39.6	0.5	52.6
Snacks	7.1	16.1	1.3	75.5	15.4	37.9	1.1	45.6	22.6	39.7	1.2	36.6	24.9	49.8	0.4	24.9	13.1	29.5	1.2	56.3
1999/00																				
Entrees	6.3	19.5	0.6	73.5	8.2	40.4	1.3	50.1	10.7	50.2	0.5	38.6	7.8	57.1	2.6	32.5	7.7	33.5	0.9	57.9
Dessert	3.4	19.8	1.4	75.4	6.3	43.1	2.1	48.5	12.7	50.0	2.1	35.2	11.2	58.6	2.6	27.6	6.1	34.8	1.8	57.4
Beverages (including milk)	5.2	33.6	0.4	60.8	11.4	56.2	0.8	31.7	19.1	61.2	0.4	19.3	22.1	68.4	1.7	7.8	10.1	47.8	0.6	41.5
Side dishes	3.7	25.1	0.8	70.4	8.2	43.7	0.7	47.4	10.0	51.9	0.7	37.4	6.5	61.5	1.7	30.3	6.6	37.5	0.7	55.2
Snacks	7.4	15.8	0.4	76.4	16.5	31.8	2.8	48.9	22.1	37.3	2.5	38.1	22.8	49.1	3.9	24.1	13.6	26.3	1.8	58.3

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-28: Changes in the Number of A La Carte Items Offered at Lunch Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP Middle/Secondary Schools, by Size of District, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

School year / Food category	District size																All districts			
	Less than 1,000				1,000 – 4,999				5,000 – 24,999				25,000 or more							
	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered	Increased	No change	Decreased	Not offered
	(percent)																			
1997/98																				
Entrees	14.3	49.8	0.9	34.9	28.9	59.7	2.2	9.3	30.3	62.0	1.1	6.4	26.3	69.2	-	4.6	23.8	56.7	1.5	18.0
Dessert	10.5	53.2	1.9	34.4	21.7	65.5	3.3	9.6	23.4	69.7	2.3	4.7	20.0	72.1	2.9	5.4	17.9	61.8	2.6	17.7
Beverages (including milk)	12.2	55.5	1.1	31.1	28.1	64.6	0.9	6.4	30.7	64.9	0.6	3.7	30.0	64.6	1.7	3.8	22.8	61.4	0.9	14.8
Side dishes	12.3	51.7	1.3	34.7	27.6	61.8	1.2	9.5	22.1	71.2	1.2	5.5	19.2	75.8	0.8	4.2	21.1	59.8	1.2	17.8
Snacks	22.7	40.8	0.9	35.6	35.6	51.9	2.1	10.4	33.9	58.7	1.8	5.5	31.7	62.5	0.8	4.6	30.6	49.1	1.6	18.6
1998/99																				
Entrees	27.9	24.1	2.1	45.8	43.2	43.2	1.1	12.4	44.0	47.3	1.9	6.8	29.4	63.6	2.6	4.3	38.2	38.2	1.6	22.0
Dessert	11.3	43.6	2.7	42.4	23.9	61.4	2.8	11.9	28.8	61.4	2.7	7.2	16.5	80.1	0.4	3.0	20.3	56.3	2.7	20.7
Beverages (including milk)	21.2	40.7	1.5	36.6	45.3	44.4	1.0	9.3	48.9	45.5	1.3	4.3	37.7	59.3	1.7	1.7	38.0	43.8	1.2	17.0
Side dishes	14.2	43.8	2.4	39.6	28.3	59.4	1.0	11.2	28.4	62.9	1.4	7.2	16.9	77.5	1.3	3.9	23.5	55.6	1.5	19.4
Snacks	31.0	19.5	1.9	47.6	47.6	37.4	2.1	12.8	54.4	35.3	2.5	7.9	45.0	49.4	1.7	3.9	43.4	31.6	2.1	22.9
1999/00																				
Entrees	15.8	41.5	3.2	39.5	34.4	51.9	2.1	11.6	37.8	54.2	1.1	6.9	27.6	65.9	0.9	5.6	28.7	49.2	2.2	19.9
Dessert	10.9	46.9	2.6	39.6	19.7	65.9	2.9	11.5	26.6	61.8	2.9	8.6	15.9	77.2	1.7	5.2	17.8	59.3	2.7	20.2
Beverages (including milk)	17.2	47.6	1.9	33.3	40.3	49.6	1.0	9.0	45.0	49.0	1.1	4.9	40.1	56.5	1.3	2.2	33.4	49.0	1.3	16.2
Side dishes	12.3	45.5	1.9	40.3	25.1	61.8	1.1	12.0	26.4	65.0	0.9	7.7	16.8	77.6	0.9	4.7	20.9	57.3	1.3	20.5
Snacks	24.7	30.6	1.0	43.6	48.3	36.1	2.3	13.4	48.2	40.8	2.7	8.3	39.7	55.6	0.9	3.9	40.3	35.4	1.9	22.3

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-29: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in Public NSLP School Districts, by Size of District, SY 1999/00

Food group	District size																All districts			
	Less than 1,000				1,000 – 4,999				5,000 – 24,999				25,000 or more							
	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know
	(percent)																			
Milk	6.6	10.7	79.8	2.9	5.7	13.5	74.9	6.0	5.9	12.6	77.1	4.4	4.3	15.2	72.7	7.8	6.0	12.2	77.3	4.5
Main dish/entrée	13.6	22.8	61.1	2.6	10.0	22.0	61.7	6.3	13.4	19.3	61.3	6.0	4.8	18.2	68.8	8.2	11.9	21.9	61.5	4.6
Bread/grains	10.9	24.6	62.4	2.1	13.8	21.9	57.7	6.6	17.1	18.0	58.8	6.0	8.2	17.3	64.1	10.4	12.8	22.5	60.1	4.6
Salad/raw vegetables	14.9	25.6	57.2	2.2	17.0	25.1	51.5	6.4	18.9	23.3	52.3	5.5	11.2	28.9	51.7	8.2	16.3	25.1	54.2	4.5
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	27.0	13.7	55.8	3.5	27.0	15.2	52.6	5.2	28.4	14.1	52.0	5.5	13.9	18.6	59.3	8.2	27.0	14.4	54.1	4.5
Fruit	7.2	30.3	60.3	2.1	11.3	26.1	57.3	5.4	14.6	25.6	54.3	5.5	5.2	28.6	58.9	7.4	9.8	27.9	58.4	4.0
Desserts	2.8	21.7	72.1	3.4	2.3	22.9	68.7	6.1	2.4	16.6	73.2	7.9	1.3	11.3	72.7	14.7	2.5	21.3	70.9	5.3

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-30: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in Public NSLP School Districts with Enrollment Less than 1,000 Students, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	7.1	6.6	10.2	10.7	79.0	79.8	3.7	2.9
Main dish/entrée	12.0	13.6	17.4	22.8	67.6	61.1	3.0	2.6
Bread/grains	13.4	10.9	20.8	24.6	63.3	62.4	2.5	2.1
Salad/raw vegetables	16.8	14.9	24.7	25.6	55.6	57.2	2.9	2.2
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	28.2	27.0	10.5	13.7	58.3	55.8	3.0	3.5
Fruit	12.0	7.2	24.6	30.3	61.0	60.3	2.5	2.1
Desserts	4.8	2.8	21.3	21.7	70.4	72.1	3.4	3.4

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-31: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in Public NSLP School Districts with Enrollment Between 1,000 and 4,999 Students, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	3.5	5.7	11.8	13.5	78.0	74.9	6.7	6.0
Main dish/entrée	10.3	10.0	17.3	22.0	64.7	61.7	7.7	6.3
Bread/grains	16.0	13.8	20.3	21.9	56.2	57.7	7.5	6.6
Salad/raw vegetables	16.3	17.0	25.8	25.1	50.9	51.5	7.0	6.4
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	25.9	27.0	12.8	15.2	54.4	52.6	6.9	5.2
Fruit	11.1	11.3	25.0	26.1	57.2	57.3	6.7	5.4
Desserts	3.0	2.3	19.3	22.9	69.8	68.7	7.9	6.1

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-32: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in Public NSLP School Districts with Enrollment Between 5,000 and 24,999 Students, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	4.5	5.9	11.3	12.6	79.1	77.1	5.1	4.4
Main dish/entrée	11.0	13.4	17.4	19.3	66.3	61.3	5.2	6.0
Bread/grains	21.2	17.1	18.4	18.0	55.7	58.8	4.7	6.0
Salad/raw vegetables	18.7	18.9	25.8	23.3	50.2	52.3	5.3	5.5
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	24.3	28.4	13.2	14.1	57.5	52.0	4.9	5.5
Fruit	12.1	14.6	23.7	25.6	60.2	54.3	4.0	5.5
Desserts	2.4	2.4	16.0	16.6	72.6	73.2	9.0	7.9

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-33: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in Public NSLP School Districts with Enrollment Equal to or Greater Than 25,000 Students, SY 1997/98 and 1999/00

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	2.1	4.3	12.5	15.2	79.2	72.7	6.3	7.8
Main dish/entrée	9.6	4.8	17.5	18.2	67.1	68.8	5.8	8.2
Bread/grains	12.9	8.2	15.0	17.3	66.3	64.1	5.8	10.4
Salad/raw vegetables	16.3	11.2	22.5	28.9	53.8	51.7	7.1	8.2
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	20.4	13.9	13.3	18.6	60.0	59.3	6.3	8.2
Fruit	6.3	5.2	22.5	28.6	65.4	58.9	5.8	7.4
Desserts	0.8	1.3	12.1	11.3	80.8	72.7	5.8	14.7

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-34: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Following Implementation of the SMI Guidelines in All Public NSLP School Districts, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Food Group	Waste More		Waste less		No change		Don't know	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Milk	5.1	6.0	11.1	12.2	78.6	77.3	5.2	4.5
Main dish/entrée	11.2	11.9	17.3	21.9	66.2	61.5	5.3	4.6
Bread/grains	15.5	12.8	20.2	22.5	59.4	60.1	4.9	4.6
Salad/raw vegetables	16.9	16.3	25.3	25.1	52.9	54.2	5.0	4.5
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	26.6	27.0	11.9	14.4	56.6	54.1	5.0	4.5
Fruit	11.5	9.8	24.6	27.9	59.4	58.4	4.5	4.0
Desserts	3.7	2.5	19.6	21.3	70.6	70.9	6.1	5.3

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-35: Perceived Changes in Food Waste Compared to the Previous Year in Public NSLP School Districts, by Type of Menu Planning System, SY 1999/00

Food group	Type of Menu Planning System																			
	NSMP				ANSMP				Enhanced Food-based				Traditional Food-based				Other			
	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know	Waste more	Waste less	No change	Don't know
	(percent)																			
Milk	5.7	14.2	76.6	3.6	1.7	14.3	82.1	1.9	3.0	11.5	80.2	5.2	8.0	11.6	76.1	4.2	2.2	6.6	86.8	4.4
Main dish/entrée	13.1	20.2	60.5	6.2	17.7	20.9	61.4	0.0	11.3	21.6	62.9	4.2	11.5	22.4	61.9	4.2	13.5	15.7	62.9	7.9
Bread/grains	9.0	20.0	65.0	6.0	12.8	24.2	61.1	1.9	19.3	22.7	53.6	4.3	10.7	22.8	62.5	4.1	14.9	18.0	62.7	4.4
Salad/raw vegetables	14.6	23.8	55.9	5.7	13.5	34.7	51.8	0.0	17.5	26.3	51.5	4.6	16.3	24.1	55.8	3.9	8.8	24.2	62.6	4.4
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	24.7	15.4	53.3	6.7	31.9	17.3	50.8	0.	29.2	13.2	53.3	4.3	26.9	13.9	54.8	4.4	15.0	17.2	63.4	4.4
Fruit	9.1	25.5	60.7	4.7	13.3	38.0	48.7	0.0	11.7	28.0	56.0	4.3	8.7	27.3	60.5	3.5	1.7	39.3	51.1	7.9
Desserts	2.1	21.9	70.0	6.0	0.0	36.4	61.1	2.5	2.9	19.4	71.9	5.8	2.2	21.9	71.3	4.6	6.6	20.2	66.7	6.6

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Survey findings for the three years are very similar. As in the first two years, findings for SY 1999/00 indicate that the tasks fall into two groups when measuring their level of difficulty. In one group are 6 of the 10 tasks. These tasks appear to pose minimal difficulty for most districts with 70% or more indicating "no difficulty" in performing them.

The remaining four tasks are less easily accomplished. They are described as presenting "some difficulty" by 34 to 48% of the districts and as a "major difficulty" by 6 to 9%. These tasks and the share of districts reporting at least some difficulty are as follows:

- documenting last-minute substitutions (52.6%),
- substituting nutritionally-comparable foods (48.4%),
- adhering to standardized recipes (55.3%),
- maintaining food production records (42.8%).

To the extent there have been changes in the perception of difficulty across the period of study, it has been toward reduced levels of difficulty. With the exception of one task (moving students through the line), the share of districts reporting "no difficulty" was slightly higher in SY 1999/00 than it had been two years earlier for each task.

Table VI-36: Extent to Which Public NSLP School Districts have Experienced Difficulty in Performing Tasks Associated with Implementation of the School Meals Initiative, by Size of District, SY 1999/00

Tasks	District size												All districts		
	Less than 1,000			1,000 – 4,999			5,000 – 24,999			25,000 or more					
	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty
	(percent)														
Documenting last-minute substitutions	5.4	42.2	52.4	8.5	46.9	44.6	15.8	46.3	38.0	9.1	45.9	45.0	8.0	44.6	47.3
Substituting nutritionally-comparable foods	3.7	41.4	55.0	7.1	41.0	51.9	10.9	49.8	39.3	5.6	47.6	46.8	6.0	42.4	51.5
Defining a reimbursable meal	1.3	13.2	85.5	2.1	15.6	82.3	5.0	21.6	73.4	2.2	16.9	81.0	2.1	15.3	82.6
Implementing offer vs. serve	1.8	9.8	88.5	1.5	11.9	86.6	3.2	16.8	80.1	1.7	14.7	83.6	1.8	11.6	86.6
Serving planned portions	2.4	18.4	79.2	2.2	18.3	79.5	3.4	20.5	76.2	2.2	16.4	81.5	2.4	18.5	79.1
Moving students through the line	2.1	21.3	76.6	3.1	28.9	68.1	6.3	35.5	58.1	3.0	22.4	74.6	3.0	26.2	70.8
Adhering to standardized recipes	4.3	45.5	50.2	8.0	49.5	42.5	12.7	55.2	32.1	9.5	49.8	40.7	7.0	48.3	44.7
Maintaining food production records	8.1	31.0	60.9	9.1	35.6	55.2	12.0	39.4	48.6	7.3	29.7	62.9	9.0	33.8	57.2
Separating a la carte and reimbursable sales	1.9	8.7	89.4	4.0	13.3	82.7	6.6	19.4	74.0	2.6	19.9	77.5	3.3	12.1	84.5
Obtaining production information for self-serve bars	3.0	14.9	82.1	7.9	21.9	70.2	12.9	25.6	61.6	10.3	17.2	72.4	6.5	19.1	74.4

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

A somewhat larger share of districts in the 5,000-24,999 enrollment category reported some level of difficulty in performing the full range of tasks. With this exception, district size does not appear to have much effect on how districts view the level of difficulty in performing these tasks.

A comparison of findings by the type of menu planning system in use suggests that a somewhat higher share of NSMP districts have difficulty with at least some tasks than districts using other menu planning techniques. For example, while 29.3% of the NSMP districts had at least some difficulty defining a reimbursable meal, only 13.9% of the enhanced food-based districts and 15.2% of the traditional food-based districts reported difficulty performing this task. For most other tasks, however, the differences are small.

Program Acceptance

School food directors were asked in each year of the study to assess the attitude of key stakeholders in their districts toward the SMI. This included the attitude of administrative and financial staff, cafeteria managers, cooks, cashiers, students, and parents. In addition, school food directors were asked for their own opinion of the SMI. In assessing attitudes, a five-point scale ranging from "very positive" to "very negative" was used.

Overall, results from the survey conducted in SY 1999/00 indicate that most district stakeholders remain positive-to-neutral in their attitude toward the SMI. Kitchen managers are the most positive with 65% described by their school food directors as being at least "somewhat positive" toward the initiative. In contrast, financial staff and cashiers were said to be least supportive with 35.1% and 38.6%, respectively, identified as being at least "somewhat positive." While more than half (57.5%) of all directors reported that their cooks had a positive attitude toward the program, another 17.5% characterized them as being at least "somewhat negative," the highest share of any stakeholder category.

A comparison of the results for SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00 suggests that directors feel the principal stakeholders have become slightly less positive and slightly more neutral. The share that are thought to have a negative feeling toward the initiative has not changed much. Given that most districts have moved substantially closer to full implementation over this period, the findings for SY 1999/00 probably offer a truer indication of how stakeholders view the SMI after having had experience with it.

Table VI-37: Extent to Which Public NSLP School Districts have Experienced Difficulty in Performing Tasks Associated with Implementation of the School Meals Initiative, by Type of Menu Planning System, SY 1999/00

Tasks	Menu Planning System														
	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced Food-Based			Traditional Food-based			Other		
	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty	Major difficulty	Some difficulty	No difficulty
	(percent)														
Documenting last-minute substitutions	11.6	47.4	41.1	8.9	35.7	55.5	8.4	44.4	47.2	6.2	44.5	49.3	8.3	46.5	45.2
Substituting nutritionally-comparable foods	8.2	43.6	48.2	4.0	27.4	68.6	6.6	39.3	54.1	4.5	44.9	50.6	6.1	40.2	53.7
Defining a reimbursable meal	5.8	23.5	70.7	2.5	15.6	81.9	1.8	12.1	86.0	0.6	14.6	84.7	1.3	6.6	92.1
Implementing offer vs. serve	4.3	15.4	80.3	0.0	15.8	84.2	2.2	8.2	89.7	0.6	11.7	87.7	1.3	5.7	93.0
Serving planned portions	4.2	20.5	75.2	5.3	13.9	80.8	2.0	18.5	79.5	1.7	17.6	80.8	0.0	12.3	87.7
Moving students through the line	3.6	27.6	68.8	8.6	17.3	74.1	4.1	28.4	67.5	1.6	24.9	73.6	4.4	18.9	76.8
Adhering to standardized recipes	8.4	52.1	39.4	7.6	44.4	48.0	6.8	46.3	46.9	6.1	48.7	45.2	3.1	38.3	58.6
Maintaining food production records	8.3	35.9	55.8	12.4	24.6	62.9	9.4	37.3	53.3	8.6	32.5	58.9	5.7	24.9	69.4
Separating *a la carte* and reimbursable sales	4.2	13.3	82.5	2.5	17.3	80.2	4.1	12.3	83.7	2.6	11.5	85.9	1.3	4.4	94.3
Obtaining production information for self-serve bars	8.7	20.2	71.1	5.3	15.0	79.7	6.6	21.1	72.3	5.2	17.3	77.5	5.3	9.6	85.1

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-38: Attitude of Public NSLP School District Stakeholders Toward the School Meals Initiative, as Reported by School Food Director, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Stakeholder	Very positive		Somewhat positive		Neutral		Somewhat negative		Very negative		Not applicable	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	----------(percent)----------											
Administrative staff	27.7	22.5	32.2	24.8	28.3	39.2	5.4	6.0	1.2	1.3	5.1	6.3
Financial staff	19.3	16.6	20.7	14.1	39.1	49.8	7.7	5.8	1.8	1.1	11.4	12.5
Cafeteria managers	27.1	22.2	37.0	40.8	15.3	18.7	13.5	12.7	2.4	2.0	4.7	3.7
Cooks	22.3	18.1	36.9	38.3	19.2	21.6	16.1	17.2	2.7	2.9	2.8	1.9
Cashiers	17.3	14.1	23.2	19.7	37.9	45.5	7.1	7.2	1.9	1.0	12.7	12.4
Students	12.5	10.5	30.4	28.6	39.2	43.0	12.2	12.1	2.9	3.3	2.8	2.5
Parents	14.5	11.0	29.1	27.3	44.4	48.7	4.6	6.1	1.1	1.1	6.4	6.0

Source*: School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VI-39: Attitude of Public NSLP School District Cooks and Students Toward the School Meals Initiative, as Reported by School Food Director, by Menu Planning System Used, SYs 1997/98 and 1999/00

Stakeholder/Menu Planning System	Very positive		Somewhat positive		Neutral		Somewhat negative		Very negative		Not applicable	
	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00	1997/98	1999/00
	(percent)											
Cooks												
NSMP	22.2	14.5	40.9	40.2	17.1	20.0	14.9	20.2	2.4	3.9	2.5	1.2
ANSMP	30.2	22.9	28.4	36.8	15.0	16.2	17.9	20.8	6.5	1.3	1.9	1.9
Enhanced food-based	24.3	19.8	33.6	38.9	19.5	19.7	17.8	18.7	3.0	2.4	1.9	0.5
Traditional food-based	20.4	18.7	37.5	37.5	20.8	23.2	15.5	15.0	2.6	2.9	3.2	2.7
Other	25.4	18.9	36.4	46.5	10.3	14.5	21.7	16.7	0.6	0.0	5.6	3.5
Students												
NSMP	15.0	9.4	30.8	27.2	37.0	47.6	11.7	10.8	2.9	4.1	2.5	0.9
ANSMP	9.8	6.1	41.3	38.5	29.8	35.8	9.5	6.3	9.7	11.4	0.0	1.9
Enhanced food-based	13.5	11.5	31.5	27.3	38.9	44.8	13.0	13.0	1.5	2.1	1.5	1.3
Traditional food-based	11.6	10.9	28.7	28.8	40.1	41.3	12.7	12.4	3.1	3.0	3.8	3.7
Other	15.9	11.8	23.9	45.6	59.5	28.5	0.0	14.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

A comparison of the perceived attitude of cooks and students toward the SMI, disaggregated by the menu planning system used for SY 1997/98 and SY 1999/00 (Table VI-37), indicates that the trends described above generally occurred across all menu planning systems. That is, both cooks and students were thought to have become slightly less positive and slightly more neutral-to-negative.

The attitude of the school food directors toward the SMI remains highly supportive, though slightly less so than two years ago. Two-thirds (66.0%) of all directors are at least "somewhat positive" toward the SMI. This is down slightly from 69.4% in SY 1997/98. A somewhat higher share of school food directors in districts of 25,000 or more, high poverty districts, and those using NSMP have positive attitudes toward the SMI, as in the past.

The share of all school food directors indicating a negative opinion of the SMI remains relatively low at 13.1%.

CHAPTER VII: SELECTED OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Introduction

While the principal purpose of this study has been to assess the implementation status of the School Meals Initiative, the annual surveys used in the study have provided a convenient vehicle for collecting information on other topics of current interest to FNS policymakers and program administrators. In this chapter, we assess findings related to several operational issues about which information was collected from school food directors during SY 1999/00. The topics examined are: direct certification, after school care programs, "pouring rights" contracts, Provision 2 and 3 schools, use of food service management companies, charter schools, and internet access.

Research Questions

The following research questions serve as the basis for assessing these issues:

- How many SFAs use direct certification of children in the Food Stamp Program (FSP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) households to qualify for free meal eligibility?
- What methods do school districts use to conduct direct certification?
- What share of students approved for free lunches are directly certified?
- In how many school districts are afterschool snacks provided under the NSLP or CACFP?
- For those school districts providing afterschool snacks:
  - How many schools are providing snacks?
  - Who operates the afterschool care programs?
  - How many children participate in these programs?
  - Do any of these programs serve children aged 13 to 18 years?

- How many school districts have entered into exclusive "pouring rights" contracts with carbonated beverage companies? Of these contracts, how many apply to products sold in the cafeteria? Are individual districts entering into these "exclusive" contracts or are multiple districts forming "consortiums" to enter into them?

- How many school districts are operating schools under the special assistance alternatives (Provisions 2 and 3) to the normal requirements for annual eligibility determinations and daily meal counts? For those districts that are, how many schools are participating?
- How many SFAs use a food service management company (FSMC) to run their food service operation?
- How many school districts have "charter schools" operating within their systems? How many charter schools are they operating? For how many of these charter schools are school districts responsible for providing meals?
- How many school food directors have access to the internet, at work or at home?

Direct Certification

To certify students eligible for free and reduced price meals, school districts must distribute, collect, process, verify a sample of applications, and notify eligible applicants.

Congress authorized an alternative method for establishing a child's eligibility for free (but not reduced-price) meals. This simpler method is called "direct certification." Under direct certification, the SFA and/or the SA (on behalf of the SFA) obtains documentation from the appropriate State or local agency that enables the SFA to identify children in households currently certified to receive assistance through the Food Stamp Program, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Children in households receiving these benefits are automatically eligible for free meals under the NSLP and the SBP.

This determination can be made either through a State operated system or, in the absence of a State-wide system, by individual SFAs working with the appropriate local agencies. If a State-operated system is used, once the qualifying children have been identified, notification is made in one of two ways. Either (1) the child's household is notified by the State agency and provided with documentation for presentation to local school authorities or (2) the SFA is notified directly by the State agency.

The advantages of direct certification are obvious. Since many of the children qualifying for free meals live in households that qualify for FSP, TANF, and/or FDPIR, their eligibility has already been determined. Using this information allows SFAs and SAs to avoid duplicating an expensive, time-consuming certification process for the children in these households.

School food directors were asked about their district's use of direct certification in both the Year 2 and Year 3 surveys. Since different wording was used in each survey, small differences in response could be due to these differences.

Nationwide, an estimated 62.7% of all districts reported that they used direct certification in SY 1999/00. This is down slightly from the 70.8% that reported using the technique in SY 1998/99. A somewhat larger share of all districts in the largest size class (25,000 or more) use direct certification (83.4%).

Of the three principal methods used for direct certification, nearly half (45.6%) of those districts that certify directly use a State-wide system that notifies qualified households directly. Under this method, households are required to bring the notice they receive from the State to school. This approach is favored by smaller districts, by low poverty districts, and by those districts that do not participate in the SBP.

In slightly fewer than one-quarter (22.7%) of districts using direct certification, households are certified on the basis of a matched database provided to the district by the State. The incidence of use of this method is positively associated with district size. While only 15.4% of the smallest districts (less than 1,000) used this approach in SY 1999/00, nearly half (48.2%) of all districts with an enrollment of 25,000 or more used it.

The remaining, 29.6% of direct certification districts certify households at the district level on the basis of information they obtain from local agencies. The smallest districts (less than 1,000) use this approach less frequently than do larger districts.

Nationally, it is estimated that just under one-third (29.3%) of all students eligible for free meals are certified directly. This is down slightly from the 34.5% estimated for the previous school year. The share of students certified directly is relatively uniform across district size categories. Direct certification accounts for a somewhat higher share of approved students in high-and medium-poverty districts than in low-poverty districts (31.3% and 29.4% vs. 22.9%).

Table VII-1: Share of Public NSLP School Districts Using Direct Certification, by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1998/99 and 1999/00

District characteristics	District certifies children directly				Method used for direct certification, 1999/00			Percent of approved students certified directly	
	1998/99		1999/00		State agency notifies household directly	State agency notifies school district	School district conducts its own match	1998/99	1999/00
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	-------(percent of districts that certify directly)------			-------(percent)------	
All districts	9,290	70.8	8,203	62.7	45.6	22.7	29.6	34.5	29.3
District size[1/]									
Less than 1,000	3,881	70.3	3,597	62.2	56.2	15.4	23.8	29.3	28.0
1,000 – 4,999	3,938	69.9	3,244	60.1	39.9	25.7	33.4	34.9	29.4**
5,000 – 24,999	1,198	73.3	1,144	69.7	31.8	33.4	36.6	35.1	28.1
25,000 or more	207	89.2	193	83.4	17.6	48.2	34.7	34.2	30.0**
Program participation									
NSLP and SBP	7,056	75.3	6,614	66.5	41.9	25.1	31.5	34.9	30.0
NSLP only	1,814	57.8	1,497	50.0	63.1	13.3	22.6	28.9	20.5**
District poverty level[2/]									
High (>60% f&r)	1,675	74.2	1,225	66.9	30.2	32.4	32.4	39.3	31.3
Medium (31-60% f&r)	3,667	76.0	3,637	68.5	42.6	21.7	32.6	34.0	29.4**
Low (≤30% f&r)	3,883	65.4	3,315	56.1	54.1	20.4	25.6	23.7	22.9**

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

**Difference in proportions (within group) is significant at the .01 level. Reference group used: District size – Less than 1,000; Program Participation – NSLP and SBP; District Poverty Level – High.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Afterschool Care Programs

The USDA is authorized to provide cash reimbursements in support of afterschool snack programs, through both the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Any school participating in the NSLP may participate in the afterschool program. The program must be operated under authority of the school, though other organizations may be delegated authority for day-to-day operations. The afterschool activities must meet certain criteria in that they must "include education or enrichment activities in organized, structured, and supervised environments."[1] The rate of reimbursement for snacks served under the NSLP authority varies, depending on whether the school is in a high poverty area.[2]

To qualify for reimbursement under CACFP, the site must be in area served by a school in which at least 50% of the enrollment qualifies for free and reduced price meals. Also, unlike under the NSLP, all snacks served under CACFP must be provided free of charge and all reimbursements are on this basis.

In the Second Year survey, conducted in SY 1998/99, school food directors were asked generally about the presence of afterschool care programs in their districts and whether food was provided. The questions asked in the Third Year survey were somewhat more narrowly focused in that they were restricted to those schools within each district that provide afterschool snacks.

Results of the survey conducted in SY 1998/99 indicated that 31.8% of all public NSLP school districts were holding afterschool care programs. The SY 1999/00 results indicate that about half of these districts (15.5%) are providing snacks to participants in these afterschool care programs. While snacks are being offered through programs held in both elementary and middle/secondary schools, a substantially higher share of elementary schools take part (19.3% versus 6.9%).

Large school districts and those operating in high poverty areas are substantially more likely to participate in the afterschool snack programs than are smaller districts and those operating in low-poverty areas. While only 7.7% of the smallest districts operate these programs, 69.6% of the largest districts do so.

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[1] USDA, FNS, Memorandum to State and Regional Directors from Stanley C, Garnett on Reimbursement for Snacks in After School Care Programs, January 14, 1999.

[2] A high poverty area is defined as an area served by a school in which at least 50% of the enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced price meals.

Table VII-2: Share of Public NSLP School Districts in Which Afterschool Snacks are Provided Under the NSLP or CACFP by Type of School, and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1999/00

District Characteristics	Districts		Elementary		Middle/Secondary		Other	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
All	2,032	15.5	9,652	19.3	1,858	6.9	299	5.0
District size[1/]								
Less than 1,000	445	7.7	374	7.0	81	2.1	113	6.1
1,000 – 4,999	905	16.8	1,678	11.0	499	5.1	62	3.7
5,000 – 24,999	621	31.7	2,707	16.4	576	7.6	56	4.6
25,000 or more	161	69.6	4,892	37.3	702	11.9	68	5.7
Program participation								
NSLP and SBP	1,894	19.0	9,052	21.1	1,801	7.7	275	5.7
NSLP only	132	4.4	593	8.3	57	1.5	24	2.2
District poverty level[2/]								
High (>60% f&r)	587	32.0	3,675	37.8	714	15.4	81	5.2
Medium (31-60% f&r)	989	18.6	4,915	23.5	984	8.5	146	5.8
Low (≤30% f&r)	456	7.7	1,062	5.4	160	1.5	72	3.9

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Nearly a half million children participated in these afterschool care programs in SY 1999/00. This is the equivalent of 2.5% of the total enrollment in those districts conducting the programs and 1.1% of total national enrollment. Although a relatively small share of the smallest districts offer these programs, as noted above, the share of total enrollment that participates is substantially higher in these districts than it is in the larger districts.

Of the 2,000+ districts that were offering snacks through afterschool care programs in SY 1999/00, an estimated 40.2% were serving children aged 13 to 18. A substantially higher share of the largest districts and those serving high poverty areas were serving children in this age range.

Table VII-3: Number of Children Participating in Afterschool Care Programs that Offer Snacks Under the NSLP or CACFP and are Held in Public NSLP School Districts, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1999/00

District Characteristics	Number of participants	Share of enrollment in program districts	Share of total national enrollment	Programs serving children aged 13 to 18 years	
	(number)	(percent)	(percent)	(number)	(% of program districts)
All districts	496,181	2.5	1.1	817	40.2
District size [1/]					
Less than 1,000	22,978	11.0	0.9	156	35.1
1,000 – 4,999	122,733	5.5	1.0	329	36.4
5,000 – 24,999	170,888	2.9	1.1	239	45.9
25,000 or more	179,582	1.5	1.2	94	58.4
Program participation					
NSLP and SBP	484,067	2.6	1.2	788	41.6
NSLP only	11,803	0.9	0.2	24	18.2
District poverty level [2/]					
High (>60% f&r)	156,321	2.4	1.7	304	51.8
Medium (31-60% f&r)	291,961	3.0	1.6	416	42.1
Low (≤30% f&r)	47,899	1.3	0.3	98	21.5

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

To receive assistance through the NSLP, FNS regulations require that afterschool care programs be "operated" by the school in the sense that the school district must retain final administrative and managerial responsibility for the program. However, the school district may arrange with another organization to oversee day-to-day operations.

In SY 1999/00, nearly two-thirds (64.7%) of the districts operated the afterschool care programs themselves. Programs of the remaining districts were operated by a variety of community-based organizations, led by the YMCA/YWCA with programs in 10.9% of the districts.

Table VII-4: Number of Public NSLP School Districts by Who Operates the Afterschool Care Programs, SY 1999/00

Operating Organization	Number of districts	Percent of districts with afterschool care programs
	(number)	(percent)
School district	1,790	64.7
YMCA/YWCA	302	10.9
Child Care Agency	109	3.9
Community Action Agency	119	4.3
Community Park/Recreation Depart.	142	5.1
Church affiliate Organizations	13	0.5
Parent/Teacher Organizations	28	1.0
Don't know	230	8.3
Other	419	15.1

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Pouring Rights Contracts

In recent years, some soft drink companies have pursued an aggressive campaign of negotiating exclusive "pouring rights" contracts with school districts. Under the terms of many of these contracts, districts receive a substantial financial incentive to promote soft drink consumption, often through the placement of vending machines in the schools.

Recent findings from the School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS) 2000 indicate that more than one-third (38.2%) of elementary schools, 50.4% of middle/junior high schools, and 77.9% of senior high schools have a contract that gives a company the right to sell soft drinks at the school.[1] These are not necessarily "pouring rights" contracts since they might only permit companies to place vending machines in individual schools.

In the Year Three survey, school food directors were asked if their school district had an exclusive "pouring rights" contract with a carbonated beverage company during SY 1999/00. Those districts that answered affirmatively were also asked if they had entered into the contract alone or in combination with other districts and if the contracts applied to any products sold in the cafeteria.

[1] *Journal of School Health*, Vol. 71, Number 7, September 2001.

Nearly one in three districts (29.9%) reported that they were under an exclusive contract with one of these companies in SY 1999/00. Collectively, these districts account for 29.2% of all public NSLP elementary schools, 30.3% of all middle/secondary schools, and one-third (33.3%) of all other schools. The share of districts involved in these contracts was relatively constant across all sizes. Contracts were more prevalent among low-poverty districts than among high-poverty districts (35.0% versus 20.5%).

The vast majority of all districts under contract to soft drink companies during the year indicated that they had entered the contract alone. Only 7.2% did so as part of a consortium of school districts. A somewhat larger share of mid-size districts (1,000-24,999) indicated that they had done so as part of a consortium while both the smallest districts (less than 1,000) and the largest (25,000 or more) were more likely to have gone it alone.

Of those districts that were under contract to a soft drink company in SY 1999/00, over one-third reported that their contract applied to products sold in the cafeteria. The share of school food directors responding in the affirmative to this question was related to both district size and poverty status. A somewhat smaller share of small districts and high poverty districts said that their contracts applied to products sold in the cafeteria.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools that are created through formal agreement with their State or with a local school board. Under their agreement or charter, these schools are granted a high degree of operational control and are freed from many of the requirements that other schools must meet. In return, charter schools are held accountable for achieving certain educational objectives specified in the charter.

Charter schools are now authorized by law in 38 States. The Center for Educational Reform, a nonprofit advocacy organization, estimates that there will be 2,063 charter schools operating in 36 states and the District of Columbia in the fall of 2001. Over half (59.0%) of these schools are in five states: Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan, and Texas.

In the Year Two survey, school food directors were asked if there were any charter schools operating in their districts and if so, who provided their food services. In the most recent survey, directors were asked how many charter schools were in their district in SY 1999/00 and for how many of these schools was the district responsible for providing meals.

Charter schools were reportedly operating in 847 districts, up slightly from the number reported a year earlier. Charter schools are far more likely to be found among the largest school districts than among the smallest. While only 3.4% of districts of less than 1,000 reported the presence of charter schools in SY 1999/00, 41.4% of all districts of 25,000 or more had them. They are also somewhat more likely to be found among districts offering both the NSLP and the SBP and in high poverty districts.

Table VII-5: Number of Public NSLP School Districts that Have Entered into Exclusive Contracts with Carbonated Beverage Companies, by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1999/00

District characteristics	Entered into contract		Of districts entering into contract:		
	Number of districts	Percent of all districts	Entered alone	Entered as part of consortium	Contract applies to products s old in cafeteria
	(number)	(percent)	----------(percent)----------		
All districts	3,911	29.9	92.8	7.2	36.8
District size[1/]					
Less than 1,000	1,566	27.1	96.4	3.6	23.6
1,000 – 4,999	1,800	33.4	91.0	9.1	43.8
5,000 – 24,999	465	28.3	86.9	13.1	50.1
25,000 or more	68	29.4	98.5	1.5	52.9
Program participation					
NSLP and SBP	3,007	30.2	93.3	6.7	33.6
NSLP only	865	28.9	92.5	7.5	45.7
District poverty level[2/]					
High (>60% f&r)	376	20.5	93.4	6.6	23.1
Medium (31-60% f&r)	1,454	27.4	95.1	4.9	28.2
Low (≤30% f&r)	2,070	35.0	91.0	9.0	44.9

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31, 1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Survey respondents indicated that 1,619 charter schools were operating in their districts in SY 1999/00. This compares to the Department of Education's estimate of 1,484 public charter schools in SY 1998/99.[1]

Charter schools are found among districts of all sizes and poverty levels. Within small districts, a single charter school can and usually does have a major presence, since small school districts are commonly comprised of no more than 5 schools and often fewer. Within those relatively few small districts that had them, charter schools represented more than half (62.3%) the total number. That is, more often than not the charter school was one of only two schools in the district.

Districts of 25,000 or more that had charter schools averaged five charter schools per district, the equivalent of 4.7% of the total number of schools in the district. Thus, charter schools are somewhat less prominent in larger districts, even though they are about as numerous there as they are among the smaller districts.

A comparison of charter schools by poverty level indicates that these schools have a greater presence in low-poverty districts than in medium or high-poverty districts. That is, they represent a substantially larger share of the total number of schools in low-poverty districts (17.2% versus 8.2% and 7.0%).

In 58.2% of all districts with charter schools, the SFA is responsible for providing food service to at least some of the charter schools in that district. Small districts (less than 1,000) are most likely to be dependent on the SFA for food service while districts of 5,000-24,999 are least likely.

[1] Office of Education Research and Improvement, US Department of Education, *The State of Charter Schools, 2000*, 4th Year Report, January 2000.

Table VII-6: Public NSLP School Districts with Charter Schools, by School District as Food Service Provider and by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1998/99 and 1999/00

District Characteristics	Districts with charter schools				Charter Schools, 1999/00		School District is food service provider:			
	1998/99		1999/00				1998/99	1999/00	1999/00	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(% of schools in districts with charter schools)	(percent of districts with charter schools)		(number of charter schools)	(% of schools in districts with charter schools
All districts	824	6.3	847	6.5	1,619	9.7	46.8	58.2	866	53.5
District size[1/]										
Less than 1,000	137	2.5	198	3.4	228	62.3	33.3	84.8	198	86.8
1,000 – 4,999	349	6.2	348	6.5	558	27.4	50.7	52.6	329	59.0
5,000 – 24,999	213	13.0	205	12.5	351	8.8	50.5	37.2	145	41.3
25,000 or more	98	42.2	96	41.4	482	4.7	51.0	68.1	193	40.0
Program participation										
NSLP and SBP	646	6.9	695	7.0	1,368	10.1	44.4	55.5	692	50.6
NSLP only	116	3.7	138	4.6	858	28.6	60.2	67.5	480	55.9
SBP only	--	--	--	--	32	64.0	--	--	22	68.8
Neither	--	--	--	--	86	59.7	--	--	20	23.3
District poverty level[2/]										
High (>60% f&r)	174	7.7	164	8.9	394	7.0	46.0	73.3	190	48.2
Medium (31-60% f&r)	317	6.6	331	6.2	626	8.2	55.8	47.4	306	48.9
Low (≤30% f&r)	305	5.1	352	6.0	599	17.2	42.3	61.2	371	61.9

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Provision 2 and 3 Schools

To help schools and households reduce the paperwork that is required to annually determine student eligibility for free and reduced-price meals, Congress authorized three alternative approaches that schools may use. They are commonly referred to as the Provision 1, 2, and 3 alternatives. In brief, they operate as follows:

- **Provision 1.** In schools where at least 80% of the enrolled students are eligible for free or reduced price meals, certification of children eligible for free meals may be reduced to every other year. These schools must continue to record daily meal counts by type of meal, that is by whether each reimbursable meal is free, reduced-price, or full price.
- **Provision 2.** Under this option, schools collect free and reduced-price applications and determine the number of meals served as free, reduced-price and full-price during a base year. Reimbursements to the school for the following three years are based on the percentage of free, reduced, and full-price meals in the base year applied to a current total count of reimbursable meals served. No further eligibility determinations are required for the four year period. All meals are served at no charge to the student.
- **Provision 3.** This alternative is similar to Provision 2 except that schools receive the same level of cash and commodity support they received in the base year, adjusted only for changes in enrollment, inflation, and, if appropriate, operating days. As a result, reimbursement is not generated on the basis of meal counts after the base year. As under Provision 2, all meals are served at no charge to the student.

Any additional cost that results from providing meals at no charge to all children, as required under Provisions 2 and 3, is the responsibility of the school district. Limited Federal funding for a period of two years was available in the form of grants to States for use in identifying schools that might benefit from these Provisions and helping them evaluate the costs and benefits of adopting one of the approaches. These grant funds were not available to SFAs to offset the costs of the provisions.

In the Year Two survey, school food directors were asked how many schools in their district participated in each of the three alternatives. The Year Three survey narrowed the scope of the question to Provisions 2 and 3 only.

In SY 1999/00, 517 school districts (3.9%) reported schools within their district operating under Provision 2 or Provision 3. Nationwide, there were an estimated 3,154 schools (3.8%)

using these approaches with most of them (89.1%) following the Provision 2 approach. Among the largest districts, an average of 29 schools per district operated under one of the provisions in SY 1999/00. Among the smallest districts, fewer than 2 schools per district took part, on average.

Provision 2 in particular is used with greatest frequency in the largest districts (25,000 or more) and in high-poverty districts. Not surprisingly, neither approach is used with any frequency in low-poverty districts since they are not likely to have many qualifying schools. Within those districts that employ one of these approaches they are used somewhat more frequently in elementary and other schools than in middle/secondary schools.

Use of Food Service Management Companies

Some school districts contract with commercial firms, referred to as Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs), to manage their food service programs. The share of all districts entering into contracts with FSMCs has moved irregularly higher over the past two decades.

Results from the survey conducted in SY 1999/00 indicate that 11.1% of all districts contracted with FSMCs, down from 13.8% the year before. Reasons for the reversal in the earlier trend are not evident. The breakdown by district characteristics indicates that the decline in numbers in SY 1999/00 was largely confined to small and high- and medium-poverty districts. As noted in Chapter VIII, this finding contradicts the findings of the State Agency survey that indicates continued growth in the number of SFAs contracting with FSMCs in SY 1999/00.

As in the past, FSMCs are found in proportionately higher numbers in mid-size districts (1,000-24,999), in low-poverty districts, and in those districts that participate only in the NSLP and not in the SBP.

Internet Access

The internet has become an increasingly popular and convenient means of transmitting information for all purposes. In August 2000, it was estimated that 44% of all Americans were using the Internet from some location, an increase of one–third in less than two years. [1] Nearly one quarter (23.9%) of all job holders used the Internet at work. Between December 1998 and August 2000 the share of households with Internet access rose from 26% to 42%.

[1] US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, *Falling Through the Net: Toward Digital Inclusion*, October 2000.

Table VII-7: Share of Public NSLP Schools Operating Under Provisions 2 and 3, by Type of School and by Selected District Characteristics, SY 1999/00

District characteristics	Districts with provision 2 and 3 schools		Provision 2 Schools			Provision 3 Schools			All schools		
			Elem	Mid/Sec	Other	Elem	Mid/Sec	Other	Elem	Mid/Sec	Other
	(number)	(percent)	(percent of all schools by type)						(number)		
All	517	3.9	4.1	2.3	2.6	0.4	0.2	1.4	50,140	27,104	5,954
District size[1/]											
Less than 1,000	224	3.9	3.1	2.1	1.9	0.9	0.0	0.0	5,312	3,784	1,860
1,000 – 4,999	149	2.8	1.3	1.3	1.5	0.5	0.3	3.3	15,222	9,870	1,661
5,000 – 24,999	100	6.1	4.2	3.0	4.7	0.3	0.1	0.3	16,481	7,553	1,208
25,000 or more	44	19.0	7.5	3.4	3.0	0.1	0.4	2.2	13,124	5,898	1,197
Program participation											
NSLP and SBP	415	4.2	4.4	3.0	3.6	0.5	0.3	2.1	39,173	19,908	3,917
NSLP only	55	1.8	3.7	0.6	1.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	7,090	3,697	1,106
District poverty level[2/]											
High (>60% f&r)	272	14.8	11.1	7.7	4.6	1.6	1.2	2.9	9,722	4,633	1,560
Medium (31-60% f&r)	186	3.5	4.1	1.9	2.5	0.2	0.1	1.4	20,886	11,554	2,496
Low (≤30% f&r)	59	1.0	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	19,533	10,917	1,860

[1/] Total school district enrollment as of October 31,1999.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals as of October 31, 1999.

Source*: School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VII-8: Number of Public NSLP School Districts Utilizing the Services of a Food Service Management Company by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

District characteristics	1997/98		1998/99		1999/00	
	Number of districts using FSMCs	Districts using FSMCs as percent of total	Number of districts using FSMCs	Districts using FSMCs as percent of total	Number of districts using FSMCs	Districts using FSMCs as percent of total
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
All districts	1,588	11.8	1,810	13.8	1,450	11.1
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	342	5.9	522	9.5	231	4.0
1,000 – 4,999	919	16.3	1,000	17.7	957	17.7
5,000 – 24,999	303	16.7	247	15.1	246	15.0
25,000 or more	24	10.0	16	6.9	15	6.5
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	1,041	10.3	1,113	11.9	953	9.6
NSLP only	547	16.1	578	18.4	491	16.4
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	126	6.0	250	11.1	105	5.7
Medium (31-60% f&r)	404	7.7	491	10.2	369	6.9
Low (≤30% f&r)	1,058	17.2	1,044	17.6	976	16.5

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

The access of school food directors to the Internet has also been growing rapidly. In SY 1999/00, 87.0% of all directors said they had access to the Internet, either at work or at home, up from 67.0% the year before. While most directors (72.2%) have access at work, more than half (55.8%) also have access at home.

Larger districts have an edge in Internet access with districts of 25,000 or more having complete coverage and districts of 5,000-24,999 nearly complete at 97.1%. Nonetheless, even among the smallest districts (less than 1,000), 80.3% have access with the gap separating them from the larger districts narrowing rapidly. The one advantage that larger districts enjoy is that nearly two-thirds (65.4%) of their directors have access to the Internet both at work and at home while only about one-in–five directors of school food programs in the smallest districts (less than 1,000) have that flexibility.

Table VII-9: Share of School Food Directors in Public NSLP School Districts Who Have Access to the Internet, by Selected District Characteristics, SYs 1998/99 and 1999/00

District characteristics	Share of all directors		Share of all directors in 1999/00 who have access:			
	1998/99	1999/00	At home	At work	Both	Neither
	---------(percent)--------		----------(percent)----------			
All districts	67.0	87.0	14.8	41.0	31.2	13.0
District size[1/]						
Less than 1,000	58.8	80.3	13.1	46.4	20.8	19.7
1,000 – 4,999	68.4	90.7	17.6	38.6	34.4	9.3
5,000 – 24,999	86.9	97.1	13.5	32.6	51.0	2.9
25,000 or more	90.1	100.0	7.8	26.8	65.4	0.0
Program participation						
NSLP and SBP	70.7	88.6	14.5	41.3	32.8	11.4
NSLP only	56.9	81.4	15.5	39.5	26.4	18.6
District poverty level[2/]						
High (>60% f&r)	66.9	85.1	11.6	44.4	29.1	14.9
Medium (31-60% f&r)	69.2	89.2	14.6	43.8	30.8	10.8
Low (≤30% f&r)	65.3	85.7	16.2	37.7	31.8	14.3

[1/] Total school district enrollment in the respective school years.

[2/] Represented by percent of total enrollment approved for free and reduced-price meals in the respective school years.

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study*: *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

CHAPTER VIII: VIEWS OF THE STATE DIRECTORS OF CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Introduction

State Child Nutrition Agencies (SAs) play a key role in implementation of the school meals programs. They are delegated responsibility by the US Department of Agriculture for the administration of Federal child nutrition programs within their States. In turn, these agencies enter into agreements with local school food authorities (SFAs), usually school districts, for the day-to-day operation of the programs in conformance with Federal regulations.

In carrying out these responsibilities, State agencies perform a broad range of tasks relating to monitoring program compliance and providing needed technical support to their SFAs. This includes reviews for compliance with the requirements of the SMI. State agencies also review SFA contracts with food service management companies, conduct training programs, provide on-site technical assistance, and, in some instances, assist SFAs with the operation of computerized nutrient standard menu planning systems and with the certification of children eligible for free meals.

With such a broad range of responsibilities, these agencies are in close and continuous contact with the SFAs in their States. They are therefore well positioned to assess the performance of the school meals programs in their States as well as to identify potential problems and opportunities.

Research Questions

In this chapter we examine the results of a survey of the directors of all 50 State child nutrition agencies conducted during the 1999/2000 school year. Most of the information collected applies to conditions in that year, though a few questions requested information for the 1998/99 school year, the most recent year for which complete data were available. This is the third consecutive year that State directors have been surveyed for their views on implementation of the SMI and related issues, making it possible to compare responses across this period.

As in the previous chapters of this report, information was collected only for public NSLP school districts. That is, private schools participating in the NSLP were not included. Since the record-keeping systems in some States do not readily distinguish between public and

private schools taking part in the school meals programs, some respondents found it necessary to estimate numeric responses for certain questions.

State agency directors were asked for information on a variety of topics, including some issues not directly associated with the SMI. The principal research questions addressed are as follows:

- What share of the SFAs within each State is using each of the menu planning options and how this changed during the SY 1997/98 – SY 1999/00 period?
- What roles have State agencies played in assisting public SFAs in the selection and implementation of new menu planning systems? To what extent are State agencies providing ANSMP to their SFAs? How does this compare with the previous two years?
- How many SFAs and how many school sites have been reviewed for compliance with the SMI? How many have required improvement plans? Are SMI and administrative reviews being conducted simultaneously? How have these measures changed over the past two years?
- To what extent do State agencies generate lists for use in the direct certification of children eligible for free and reduced price meals and what is the effective month of these lists?
- What is the level of activity of food service management companies (FSMCs) within the individual States? How does this compare to the level of activity in the two previous school years?
- How many charter schools are participating in the NSLP in each State? How many charter schools have been granted "SFA" status? What has been the trend in these numbers over the past two school years? What new issues, if any, have resulted from the growth in the number of charter schools within each State?
- To what extent do States have procurement standards that apply to child nutrition programs? To the extent they do, are they more restrictive than Federal standards?
- To what extent do State agencies conduct periodic reviews of SFA procurement activities? To what extent are State competitive food policies more restrictive than Federal policy?
- To what extent do State agencies require use of a prototype free/reduced price application form for all schools in the State?

- How many school districts were required to undergo organization-wide financial and compliance audits in the 1998/99 school year and of these, how many had problems requiring resolution?
- What activities have the State agencies undertaken related to implementation of after-school snacks in the NSLP or the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP)?
- How many non-clerical professional staff members are employed or contracted by State agencies to administer Federal child nutrition programs? What are the salary ranges for these individuals?
- To what extent do State child nutrition directors administer programs other than the Federal child nutrition programs?

SFA Use of Alternative Menu Planning Systems

Only slight changes were evident in SY 1999/00 in the menu planning systems that school districts chose to use, as reported by the SAs. They report that most schools districts continue to use one of the two food-based systems with the enhanced system used by 42.5% of all districts and the traditional approach used by 40.2%. Between the two systems, there would appear to be a slight movement away from the enhanced system and toward the traditional system over the three years for which these surveys were conducted. NSMP continues to be the system of choice for about 16% of all districts. As in the past, ANSMP is the approach that is least used with only 1.3% of all districts using it in SY 1999/00. A very small share of all districts, around 1%, appears to use more than one menu planning system in their district. This is consistent with the findings of the two previous years as well.

As noted in Chapter IV of this report, there has been a continuing discrepancy between the results of the SFA and the SA surveys regarding the distribution of SFAs among the alternative approaches to menu planning. The differences are greatest within the food-based category with the SA results indicating that slightly more districts are using the enhanced food-based approach while the SFA results reveal that nearly twice as many districts are using the traditional approach. As we indicated earlier, it would appear that the SFA findings are probably closer to the mark, for the reasons given (see p IV-10).

The pattern of use of the four principal menu planning options among the 50 States has not changed much over the period of study. With the exception of ANSMP, which was being used in only 19 States in SY 1999/00, each of the menu planning options was being applied to some degree in most of the other States. In only three States were all SFAs in the State using

the same approach – two States in which all districts were using traditional food-based and one State in which only the enhanced food-based was used.

Table VIII-1: Share of Public School Food Authorities Participating in the NSLP by Menu Planning System Used, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

Menu planning system	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Nutrient Standard Menu Planning	16.2	16.4	15.9
Assis ted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning	1.9	1.3	1.3
Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning	46.5	44.8	42.5
Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning	35.3	37.8	40.2
Other	0.9	0.8	0.9
	(number)	(number)	(number)
Total number of SFAs	13,888	13,831	13,972

Note: There was one State in 1997/98 and another in 1998/99 that could not provide information on menu planning. Each State represented 1.4% of the total number of SFAs during the respective data collection periods. The number of SFAs by menu planning system exceeds 100.0% because some SFAs used more than one menu planning system.
Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

While NSMP and the two food-based approaches are widely represented among the SFAs within most States, there remains a tendency for a majority of the SFAs within a State to use the same system. In two-thirds of all States, 60% or more of all SFAs were using the same menu planning system in SY 1999/00. And, in one-third of the States, at least 80% of all SFAs were using the same approach, usually a food-based approach..

Table VIII-2: Number of States by Share of Public School Food Authorities within State using Alternative Menu Planning Systems, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

Share of State's SFAs	NSMP			ANSMP			Enhanced food-based			Traditional Food-based		
	97/98	98/99	99/00	97/98	98/99	99/00	97/98	98/99	99/00	97/98	98/99	99/00
	(number of States)											
0%	7	7	7	30	33	31	6	7	7	9	7	8
1-19	26	24	23	16	16	19	9	9	12	10	10	9
20-39	8	10	11	2	0	0	10	14	12	9	9	6
40-59	3	3	4	1	0	0	10	6	6	11	9	12
60-79	3	3	3	0	0	0	7	6	7	4	7	7
80-99	2	1	2	0	0	0	6	6	5	4	5	6
100%	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2

Note: There was one State in 1997/98 and another in 1998/99 that could not provide information on menu planning. Each State represented 1.4% of the total number of SFAs during the respective data collection periods.
Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

State agency involvement in ANSMP continues to dwindle. In SY 1999/00, the number of State agencies providing support for SFAs in their States fell to seven, down from 12 the year before and from 15 two years earlier. The number of SFAs reported to be using their State agency for ANSMP support fell from 93 in SY 1998/99 to 81 in SY 1999/00.

It is noted that the five State agencies that stopped providing ANSMP in SY 1999/00 were, at most, each providing this service to fewer than 3 SFAs, on average. This evident lack of interest by the SFAs in these States was most likely instrumental in the decisions of these States to discontinue the service.

Table VIII-3: State Child Nutrition Agency Participation in ANSMP, SYs 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/00

Item	1997/98		1998/99		1999/00	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
State agencies providing an ANSMP system for SFAs in State	15	30.0	12	24.0	7	14.0
SFAs using ANSMP provided by State Agency	127	3.2[1/]	93	2.8[1/]	81	3.7[1/]

[1/] Percent of all SFAs within those States offering ANSMP.

Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Training and Technical Assistance

Adoption of the SMI in SY 1996/97 placed additional demands on State agencies to provide training and technical assistance in support of the initiative for their SFAs. As in the surveys conducted in the first two years of this study, State agency directors were asked about the level of assistance they were providing. In the Third Year survey, they were asked about activities conducted during SY 1998/99, the last complete school year preceding data collection. Since most States have been providing help on this topic since SY 1995/96 when materials describing the new procedures first became available, it would not be surprising if the level of activity has now begun to diminish. Also, in the *First Year Report*, we reported on the level of training and technical assistance activity in SYs 1995/96 and 1996/97 combined. Thus, comparisons with the levels of activity reported for SY 1997/98 and SY 1998/99 should be judged accordingly.

Overall, the number of State agencies that provided training and technical assistance in support of the SMI fell slightly in each of the last two survey years. As the findings in Table VIII-4 suggest, the role of State agencies in support of the SMI appears to be shifting away from providing computer support and conducting training sessions and, to a lesser extent,

nutritional assistance, and toward more on-site technical assistance. With the maturity of the SMI, these trends are probably to be expected. While the need for nutritional assistance is likely to continue at some level in the future, the most enduring need will probably be for more tailored forms of technical assistance that are most effectively performed on-site.

Table VIII-4: Share of State Child Nutrition Agencies that Provided Training and Technical Assistance in Support of the School Meals Initiative, School Years 1995-97, 1997/98, and 1998/99

Nature of support	1995-97		1997/98		1998/99	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
Training sessions	50	100.0	47	94.0	39	78.0
Nutritional assistance	47	94.0	47	94.0	41	82.0
Computer assistance	45	90.0	40	80.0	29	58.0
On-site technical assistance	45	90.0	41	82.0	42	84.0
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
Total number of State agencies	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0

Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

The reduced level of training activity by the State agencies is reflected in the measures displayed in Table VIII-5. While the median number of training sessions held in SY 1998/99 (14.0) was somewhat higher than the number held the year before (8.5), the number of States reporting that they conducted any training sessions at all in SY 1998/99 was down by nearly one-fifth. It is also evident from these comparisons that:

- the share of SFAs taking part in training sessions has fallen,
- the number of sessions held relative to the level of NSLP participation has fallen, and
- the number of staff attending relative to the level of NSLP participation has fallen.

Compliance Reviews

SAs are required to conduct periodic evaluations of SFA compliance with the nutritional requirements that became effective in SY 1996/97 under the SMI. The initial reviews are to be conducted over a 7-year period. Thereafter, they are to be conducted on a 5-year schedule. Since administrative reviews (officially referred to as Coordinated Review Effort (CRE) Administrative Reviews) are conducted on a 5-year schedule too, the two reviews may be conducted concurrently, at the discretion of the SA.

Table VIII-5: Training Sessions Conducted by State Child Nutrition Agencies During SYs 1995-97, 1997/98, and 1998/99 in Support of the School Meals Initiative

Indication	1995 - 97		1997/98		1998/99	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
Total number of State agencies reporting detail on training sessions	50	100.0	46	92.0	37	74.0
Number of training sessions held by State agency						
1-19	16	32.0	35	76.1	26	70.3
20-49	19	38.0	9	19.6	6	16.2
50-99	9	18.0	1	2.2	4	10.8
100 or more	6	12.0	1	2.2	1	2.7
(1995-97 median = 30; 1997/98 median = 8.5; 1998/99 median = 14.0)						
Total	50	100.0	46	100.0	37	100.0
Share of State's SFAs represented in training sessions						
<1	0	0.0	1	2.2	0	0.0
1-19	1	2.0	7	15.2	4	10.8
20-49	4	8.0	6	13.0	6	16.2
50-79	12	24.0	11	23.9	12	32.4
80-99	15	30.0	9	19.6	9	24.3
100	18	36.0	12	26.1	6	16.2
(1995-97 median = 94.0%; 1997/98 median = 71.4%; 1998/99 median = 62.5)						
Total	50	100.0	46	100.0	37	100.0
Number of training sessions held per 100,000 NSLP participation						
<5.0	17	34.0	31	67.4	25	67.6
5.0-9.9	11	22.0	5	10.9	4	10.8
10.0–24.9	15	30.0	9	19.6	5	13.5
25.0-49.9	3	6.0	1	2.2	3	8.1
50.0-100.0	4	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
(1995-97 median = 7.7; 1997/98 median = 2.9; 1998/99 median = 2.8)						
Total	50	100.0	46	100.0	37	100.0
Number of SFA staff attending per 1,000 NSLP participation						
<1.0	10	20.0	24	52.2	20	54.1
1.0-4.9	26	52.0	19	41.3	15	40.5
5.0-9.9	10	20.0	2	4.3	0	0.0
10.0-14.9	4	8.0	1	2.2	1	2.7
15.0-19.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.7
(1995-97 median = 3.1; 1997/98 median = .9; 1998/99 median = .8)						
Total	50	100.0	46	100.0	37	100.0

Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

The procedures followed in conducting these reviews are dependent on the menu planning system in use. For SFAs using NSMP or ANSMP, the SA reviews the menus and production records and assesses the district's nutrient analysis for a one-week period. It can be any week of the current school year prior to the period of review. For SFAs using food-based menu planning systems, the State agency must conduct its own nutrient analysis of the menus served during the review period. For SFAs using food-based systems that conduct their own nutrient analysis using FNS-approved software procedures, the SA may review the district's analysis in lieu of conducting its own. Within each SFA, State agencies must review at least one school for each type of menu planning technique in use. Reviews are limited to lunches unless a different menu planning system is used exclusively for breakfasts.

If the compliance review discloses that an SFA has failed to meet the prescribed nutritional standards, the State agency works with the district to develop an improvement plan to correct the problem. Thereafter, the SA monitors the district's progress in implementation of the plan.

The pace of conducting compliance reviews accelerated somewhat in SY 1998/99. Nearly all the State agencies (48 of the 50) reported that they conducted SMI compliance reviews during that school year while the number of SFAs reviewed jumped 43% from the year before. The number of school sites reviewed rose by nearly the same (42%).

A handful of State agencies continue to lag behind in conducting SMI compliance reviews. The two States that reported an absence of reviews in SY 1998/99 had not conducted any in the two previous years either. Another six States reported that they had conducted SMI compliance reviews for fewer than 20% of the SFAs in their States during this period. At the other extreme, several State agencies have moved aggressively in conducting these reviews. Ten States reported that they had reviewed 80% or more of their SFAs between 1996/97 and 1998/99.

The breakdown of compliance reviews by type of menu planning system in use in SY 1998/99 more closely represents the larger population than it did in the previous two years. To some extent, the proportionately higher share of reviews for enhanced food-based systems in 1996/97 and 1997/98 might have been due to the fact that several States did not conduct reviews in these years, States that might contain a proportionally higher share of SFAs using one or more of the other menu planning options.

Overall, somewhat more than half of the SFAs that had been reviewed for SMI compliance through SY 1998/99 required improvement plans. The share requiring plans in SY 1996/97

was 68%, fell to 56% in SY 1997/98, and then rose slightly to 62% in SY 1998/99. As noted in our earlier reports, the share of SFA reviews requiring improvement plans has varied

Table VIII-6: SMI Compliance Reviews Conducted by State Child Nutrition Agencies in SYs 1996/97, 1997/98, and 1998/99

	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
	Number of State agencies		
Number of State agencies reporting that they had conducted SMI compliance reviews	36	41	48
Total number of SFAs reviewed for SMI compliance	1,669	1,697	2,423
Share of SFAs within individual State having received an SMI compliance review:			
40% or more	8	4	3
30-39%	4	2	1
20-29%	2	11	22
10-19%	11	12	20
1-9%	11	11	2
< 1%	-	1	-
1996/97 median = 15.8%			
1997/98 median = 17.6%			
1998/99 median = 19.9%			
	Percent of school sites reviewed [1/ 2/]		
Number of school sites reviewed for SMI compliance using:			
Nutrient Standard Menu Planning	13.5	10.1	16.3
Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning	2.1	1.0	1.5
Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning	58.2	57.4	42.9
Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning	25.3	30.7	38.4
Other Menu Planning Systems	1.4	1.0	0.9
Total number of school sites reviewed for SMI compliance	2,356	2,203	3,118
Public SFAs requiring improvement plans:			
Total number	1,129	944	1,508
	Number of State agencies [3/]		
Number of SFAs requiring improvement plans as percent of total number of SFAs reviewed within the State:			
40% or more	21	29	30
20-39%	3	1	7
1-19%	2	1	7
0	10	9	4
1996/97 median = 71.0%			
1997/98 median = 83.5%			
1998/99 median = 79.4%			

[1/] Percentages sum to more than 100% because some individual school sites use more than one menu planning option.
[2/] Two states, in combination representing 8.9% of the total number of SFAs, could not provide information on SMI compliance reviews of school sites, broken down by menu planning system used in 1997/98. One state, representing 0.6% of the total number of SFAs, could not provide this information for 1998/99.
[3/] In 1997/98, one state, representing 7.5% of the total number of SFAs, could not provide information on the number of SFAs requiring corrective action plans.
Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: First Year Report*, October 2000; *Second Year Report,* July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

widely among the reporting State agencies. While the median share has been above 70% in each of the three years, several State agencies have reported that none of their SFAs required such plans. Four SAs indicated that none of their SFAs required improvement plans in SY 1998/99 while another seven reported that fewer than 20% required these plans.

These results suggest that SAs are probably applying different standards in determining when improvement plans are required. While an improvement plan is required for failure to meet fat, saturated fat, vitamin A, vitamin C, protein, iron, calcium, and calorie standards, it is left to the SA to determine if corrective action is required on other standards such as cholesterol, sodium, fiber, and food variety since there are no quantitative requirements. Therefore, requirements for corrective action do not necessarily mean that an SFA has failed to meet one of the eight prescribed nutrient standards.

Of the 50 State agencies, 35 (70%) reported in SY 1999/00 that they "usually" or "always" conduct SMI compliance reviews at the same time they conduct CRE administrative reviews. This is up from 31 State agencies the year before. A majority (71%) of those State agencies that at least sometimes conduct these reviews simultaneously report that coordination of the reviews is, at worst, a "minor problem" and most (39%) say it is "not a problem."

The other 12 State agencies, however, view coordination of the two reviews as a "major problem." A year earlier, in SY 1998/99, only 7 State agencies described coordination of the reviews as a "major problem." Two SAs that had described coordinated reviews as a major problem in 1998/99 saw them in a somewhat less onerous light in 1999/00, terming them "minor". However, seven State directors who had not considered the coordinated reviews as anything more than a minor problem the year before, now did. For two of the seven, 1999/00 was their first experience of conducting both reviews simultaneously. Thus, their views might be attributed to a combination of inexperience and normal start-up problems. However, the fact that another 10 directors see coordination of these reviews as a major problem raises a yellow flag.

Table VIII-7: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies that Conduct SMI Compliance Reviews and CRE Administrative Reviews Simultaneously, SYs 1998/99 and 1999/00

	1998/99		1999/00	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
Agencies conducting reviews simultaneously:				
Always	16	32.0	19	38.0
Usually	15	30.0	16	32.0
Sometimes	8	16.0	6	12.0
Never	11	22.0	9	18.0
Total Number of State Agencies:	50	100.0	50	100.0
Agencies reporting that coordination of simultaneous reviews is [1/]:				
Not a problem	12	30.8	16	39.0
Minor problem	20	51.3	13	31.7
Major problem	7	17.9	12	29.3
Total Number of State Agencies:	39	100.0	41	100.0

[1/] Of the agencies reporting that they conduct reviews simultaneously, at least "sometimes."
Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report,* July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Direct Certification

As we noted earlier in this report, SFAs are required to determine who among its students are eligible for this benefit and to process their applications.

An alternative method of establishing a child's eligibility for free (but not reduced-price) meals is available for SFAs to use called "direct certification." The procedural options for carrying-out direct certification are described in Chapter VII.

Results of the Second Year survey found that 45 of the 50 State agencies were participating in direct certification and that most of these agencies (38 of the 45) were developing lists on an annual basis for this purpose. Results of the Third Year Survey indicate that in SY 1999/00, 45 State agencies were still generating lists for this purpose.

In response to being asked for the effective month of the TANF, FSP, and FDPIR information on which these lists are based, most States (38 of 45) indicated a month in the summer. Four States based their lists on information that is effective in the late spring or early fall and three States reported that their lists are continuously updated.

Table VIII-8: Role of State Child Nutrition Agencies in Direct Certification, SY 1999/00

	Number of State agencies	Percent of total
State Agencies providing direct certification, SY 1998/99	45	90.0
State Agencies generating lists, SY 1999/00	45	
Effective month of FS/TANF/FDPIR certification from which list of students eligible for direct certification compiled:		
January	0	0.0
February	0	0.0
March	0	0.0
April	0	0.0
May	1	2.2
June	5	11.1
July	23	51.1
August	10	22.2
September	2	4.4
October	1	2.2
November	0	0.0
December	0	0.0
Continuous	3	6.7

Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Prototype Application Forms

Given the demands of determining eligibility for free and reduced-price meals and the importance of following procedures that are both consistent and accurate, some State agencies have sought to standardize the process. Results of the Third Year survey indicate that in SY 1999/00, 54% of all State agencies (representing 59% of all SFAs) required their SFAs to use a prototype free/reduced-price meal application form. There is no relationship between State size (as represented by the number of SFAs) and use of a prototype application form.

Food Service Management Companies

Some school districts contract with food service management companies (FSMCs) to manage their food service operations. As we reported in the Second Year Report, this practice is permitted in all but two States. The incidence of FSMC contracting has been rising over the past few years. In SY 1999/00, 42 of 50 SAs report that SFAs within their States had contracts with these companies. This represents an increase of one State over the number reported the previous year.

Table VIII-9: Role of State Child Nutrition Agencies in Standardization of Free/Reduced Price Meal Applications, SY 1999/00

	Number of State agencies	Percent of total
State Agency requires use of a prototype free/reduced price meal application for all schools:		
Yes	27	54.0
No	23	46.0

Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

The number of SFAs managed by FSMCs has also been rising. For SY 1999/00, State agencies reported that 1,964 SFAs, 14.1% of the total number, were being managed by these firms. This represents an increase of nearly 300 school districts from the previous year when 1,675 SFAs (11.8%) were reported to be using FSMCs.

As noted in Chapter VIII findings from the SFA survey for SY 1999/00 indicate an opposite trend with the share of districts managed by these firms falling from 13.8% in SY 1998/99 to 11.1% in SY 1999/00. Although a reversal of the established growth trend would be surprising, as noted above, State agency responses are also thought to be subject to reporting errors.

Table VIII-10: SFAs Contracting with Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs), SYs 1998/99 and 1999/00

	State Agencies			
	1998/99		1999/00	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
States in which SFAs currently have contracts with FSMCs:	41	82.0	42	84.0
	School Food Authorities			
	1998/99		1999/00	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
Number of SFAs contracting with one or more FSMC:	1,675	11.8	1,964	14.1

Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

State Agency Support for SFA Procurement

In the SY 1998/99 survey, we found that 46 of the 50 State agencies provided their SFAs with various types of assistance relating to the procurement of goods and services. It was also found that 39 of the State agencies periodically reviewed the procurement activities of their SFAs.

We revisited this topic in the Third Year survey to determine if their had been any change in the number of State agencies that conduct periodic oversight of SFA procurement. In addition, we sought to determine if the States have their own procurement standards and if they do, to determine if the State directors believe that they are more restrictive than their Federal counterparts.

The number of State agencies indicating that they periodically review SFA procurement activities increased by one to 40 in SY 1999/00. A majority of the State agencies (36) indicated that their States have procurement standards that apply to the child nutrition programs, though less then half this number (14) felt that the State standards were more restrictive than the Federal standards. A slightly larger number of State directors (19), though less than half of all directors, felt that their State's competitive food policy was more restrictive than the Federal governments' competitive food policy.

Table VIII-11: Involvement of State Child Nutrition Agencies in the Procurement of Goods and Services by SFAs, SY 1999/00

	Number		Percent	
Agencies with State procurement standards that apply to CN programs:	36		72.0	
Number of State Directors who have State procurement standards and feel they are more restrictive than Federal procurement standards:	14		38.9[1/]	
Number of State directors who feel State-wide competitive food policy is more restrictive than Federal competitive food policy:	19		38.0	
State Agencies conducting periodic oversight of local procurement activities:	1998/99	1999/00	1998/99	1999/00
	39	40	78.0	80.0

[1/] Percent of agencies with State procurement standards that apply to CN programs.
Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Charter Schools

In the Second Year survey, we asked several questions about charter schools and the extent and nature of charter school participation in the NSLP. To help determine if there had been any changes in the situation over the past year, most of the same questions were repeated in the Third Year survey.

The number of State agencies that can identify charter schools participating in child nutrition programs, whether they are participating as independent SFAs or as part of an SFA that

includes non-charter schools, declined by one to 21 in SY 1999/00. Of these SAs, 19 reported that charter schools were currently participating in the NSLP in their States, the same number as the year before.

Those State agencies that could identify charter schools from their records reported that there were 457 charter schools participating in the NSLP in their States in SY 1999/00. This represents a 13% increase from the number reported a year earlier.

Respondents were also asked how many of the charter schools operating in their States had been granted SFA status. Since the question did not specify a time period, the responses are thought to represent the cumulative number of charter schools that have been granted SFA status rather than the number operating when the survey was completed. We know this is the case for some of those States with the largest number of charter schools since we contacted them for clarification. As with responses to several questions, there is also the possibility that some private schools are included in the numbers.

As of SY 1999/00, 17 State agencies reported that they had granted SFA status to 421 charter schools. This was two more States than had reported having done so the year before. The number of charter schools that had been granted SFA status rose by over half, jumping from 278 to 421.

In response to being asked whether the rapid growth in the number of charter schools in recent years had created any new issues for the administration of child nutrition programs in their State, nearly 80% indicated that it had. This was somewhat higher than the 63% who had given this response the year before.

Most of the issues identified by these SAs could be classified under one of two categories, with the number of SAs about equally divided between the two. On the one hand, 10 respondents described issues that could be summarized as resulting in added workload for the State Agency. This included the need for additional reviews and monitoring and increased technical assistance and monitoring.

Another ten State agencies identified issues relating to the overall lack of staff training, experience, and familiarity with program regulations on the part of charter school staff. In effect, the two issues are largely opposite sides of the same coin. Because charter school staff are largely unfamiliar with child nutrition programs, they require more supervision. Several respondents indicated that they had trouble identifying charter schools or that there was general confusion over the role of the NSLP in charter schools. Two SAs reported problems with companies managing the food service of charter schools in their States.

Table VIII-12: Charter School Participation in Child Nutrition Programs, SYs 1998/99 and 1999/00

	1998/99		1999/00	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
State Agencies identifying charter schools participating in child nutrition programs:	22	44.0	21	42.0
State Agencies by number of charter schools participating in NSLP per State:				
1-9	6	31.6	7	36.8
10-19	5	26.3	2	10.5
20-29	3	15.8	4	21.1
30 or more	5	26.3	6	31.6
	19	100.0	19	
Total number of charter schools participating in NSLP:	404		457	
State Agencies by number of charter schools granted SFA status per State:				
1-9	7	46.7	8	47.1
10-19	2	13.3	2	11.8
20-29	3	20.0	2	11.8
30 or more	3	20.0	5	29.4
	15	100.0	17	100.0
Total number of charter schools granted SFA status:	278		421	
State Agencies with charter schools participating in the NSLP reporting that rapid growth in charter schools created new issues	12	63.2	15	78.9

Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VIII-13: Issues Created by Rapid Growth in the Number of Charter Schools as Identified by State Child Nutrition Agency Directors, SY 1999/00

Issue	Number of States reporting issue
Has added to workload of State agency	10
Charter school staff lack of training, experience, familiarity with program regulations, facilities, etc.	10
Procedural and record-keeping uncertainty	6
Problems with private management companies	2

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Financial Management

State agencies play an important role in monitoring and supervising SFA compliance with Federal financial management standards, as well as financial management standards set by their State. They are assigned responsibility through FNS regulations for ensuring that the SFAs within their respective States comply with all financial accounting requirements. This includes the conduct of organization-wide financial and compliance audits to determine whether SFAs are meeting the prescribed Federal standards for financial management. This includes standards relating to: financial reporting, accounting records, internal control, budgeting control, advance payments, allowable costs, source documentation, and audit resolution.[1] These regulations direct the SAs and SFAs to establish procedures for scheduling and defining the scope of these audits, provided that they are conducted in compliance with Federal requirements.

In those instances where audits reveal shortcomings in SFA financial management, State agencies are charged with helping the SFA make the necessary corrections. This assistance can take a variety of forms including training and technical assistance tailored to the needs of the individual SFA.

In their responses to the Second Year survey, SAs indicated that they had conducted organization-wide financial audits of nearly 11,300 SFAs in SY 1997/98. Of the 47 State agencies responding, nearly three-quarters (74%) indicated that no more than 10% of the State's audited SFAs required any follow-up attention to resolve problems identified during the audit.

For comparative purposes, State agencies were asked in the Third Year survey how many school districts were the subject of an organization-wide audit in SY 1998/99 and of those

[1] 7 CFR part 3016.

audited, how many required follow-up attention. The results closely match those of the year before. Nearly 10,900 SFAs, 78% of the total, were audited. Of the 49 States responding to the question, 27% indicated that organization-wide financial and compliance audits had been required of all SFAs in their States. At the other extreme, two States did not conduct any audits during SY 1998/99 while another five audited fewer than 20% of their States' SFAs.

Table VIII-14: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies by Share of all SFAs for Which They Conducted Organization-wide Financial and Compliance Audits, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Share of State's SFAs	1997/98		1998/99	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
0 %	0	0.0	2	4.1
< 20 %	5	10.2	5	10.2
20 – 39 %	3	6.1	2	4.1
40 – 59 %	0	0.0	3	6.1
60 – 79 %	5	10.2	3	6.1
80 % or more	8	16.3	7	14.3
100 %	28	57.1	27	55.1
Total number of State agencies responding	49	100.0	49	100.0
Number of SFAs audited	11,282	80.4	10,872	77.8

Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report,* July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

State directors report that most SFAs receiving organization-wide financial and compliance audits do not require follow-up attention to resolve problems. Following the audits conducted in SY 1998/99, 19 States said that none of the participating SFAs required follow-up. In another 21 States, 10% or fewer of the audited SFAs required any further attention. In total, problems of some nature were identified in 8.7% of the SFAs audited. As indicated in the table below, these findings are generally consistent with those of the year before.

Table VIII-15: Number of States by Share of Public School Food Authorities Requiring Attention after Receiving Organization-wide Financial and Compliance Audits, SYs 1997/98 and 1998/99

Share of State's Audited SFAs Requiring Attention	1997/98		1998/99	
	(number)	(percent)	(number)	(percent)
0	13	27.7	19	41.3
< 1	4	8.5	1	2.2
1-10	18	38.3	20	43.5
11-20	6	12.8	2	4.3
21-30	3	6.4	1	2.2
31-40	1	2.1	1	2.2
41-50	0	0.0	1	2.2
51-60	1	2.1	1	2.2
100	1	2.1	0	0.0
Total number of State agencies responding	47	100.0	46	100.0

Sources: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Second Year Report*, July 2001; *Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Afterschool Care Programs

As discussed in Chapter VII, about one-third of all public NSLP school districts offer some form of afterschool care for children enrolled in their schools and about half of these provide snacks to the participating kids. Only a fraction of the enrollment in these districts participate in after-school care programs, 2 to 3 % on average.

State agency directors were asked about the nature of support they were providing to the NSLP and CACFP providers in their States. All 50 SAs were providing support in some form. While nearly all SAs did direct mailings relating to afterschool snacks, three-quarters or more of the States were involved in more "hands-on" ways in support of this mission. This included developing printed materials (84% of the SAs), conducting workshops and training programs (76%), and providing on-site technical assistance (74%).

Table VIII-16: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies by Activities Undertaken Related to the Implementation of Afterschool Snacks in the NSLP or CACFP, SY 1999/00

Activity	Number of State Agencies	Percent of Total
Conferences	26	52.0
Formal Training Programs/Workshops	38	76.0
Printed Material Development	42	84.0
On-site Technical Assistance	37	74.0
Direct Mailings	49	98.0
Total number of State Agencies responding:	50	100.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

State Agency Staffing

To gain a better understanding of the staffing requirements of the State child nutrition agencies, State directors were asked how many professional staff worked for them in administering CN programs and their range in annual salary. The directors were also asked if they were involved in the administration of programs other than the CN programs.

Not surprisingly, given the wide range in size and administrative complexity of the CN programs of the 50 States, there is also great variation in the size of the professional staffs of the SAs. The range in size is from as few as 2 to over 40. The average number of professionals employed or contracted by State agencies in SY 1999/00 was 17; the median was 14. Of the 49 responding State agencies, 16 reported the use of consultants. Nearly one-third of the SAs reported that they are responsible for administering other programs in addition to the CN programs.

While the information provided for professional staff employees was generally complete, the responses for contracted staff and consultants for several States were not in a form that could be readily annualized and therefore were not used. It is noted that fees paid for contracted staff or for consultants often contain a substantial overhead component and are therefore not directly comparable to employee salary levels.

As shown in Table VIII-18, the median salaries of State agency professional staff employees ranged from a low of nearly $34,500 to a high of just over $58,000 in SY 1999/00. For consultants and contracted staff fees, the median range was somewhat narrower, from a low of $36,400 to a high of $50,000.

Table VIII-17: Number of State Child Nutrition Agencies Employing or Contracting Non-Clerical Professional Staff to work on Child Nutrition Programs, SY 1999/00

Number of professional staff per State	Number of State Agencies	Percent of Total
1 – 10	16	32.7
11 – 20	18	36.7
21 – 30	7	14.3
31 – 40	6	12.2
41 – 50	2	4.1
Total number of State Agencies responding:	49	100.0
States reporting that the CN Director also administers other programs	15	30.0

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

Table VIII-18: Annual Salary/Fee Range of Professional Staff of State Child Nutrition Agencies, SY 1999/00

Staffing capacity	Median low annual salary	Median high annual salary
Professional staff employees salary	$34,478	$58,107
Number of responding State agencies	49	49
Professional consultants/contracted staff fee	$36,400	$50,000
Number of responding State agencies	7	11

Source: *School Meals Initiative Implementation Study: Third Year Report*, June 2002.

APPENDIX A

School Food Authorities Survey

OMB Clearance No. 0584-0485
Expiration Date: March 31, 2002

SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY (YEAR 3)

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

Survey of School Food Authorities

Sponsored by: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

Contractor: The Gallup Organization
Government & Education Division
1 Church Street, Suite 900
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Mailing Address: The Gallup Organization
Attn: Survey Processing Center
P.O. Box 5700
Lincoln, Nebraska 68505-9926

INSTRUCTIONS

General Information

This questionnaire is to be completed by the School Food Director.

Please answer each question directly on the questionnaire by checking the appropriate box or by writing your response in the space provided.

Some factual questions may require information that might not be readily available from office records (e.g., average daily attendance). Informed estimates are acceptable for such questions.

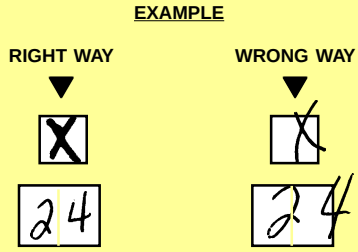
We realize that you are very busy; however, we hope that you can complete the questionnaire and return it to *The Gallup Organization* in the prepaid, self-addressed envelope provided as soon as possible. Respondents will be afforded sufficient time to complete and return the questionnaire to the extent this is required.

Your cooperation is needed to ensure that the results of this survey are nationally representative, accurate, and timely.

Survey Instructions

Please follow the steps below carefully when completing this survey.

- Use a blue or black ink pen only.
- Do not use ink that soaks through the paper.
- Make solid marks that fit in the response boxes.
- Make no stray marks on the survey.
- To answer the survey questions, please follow the specific instructions and mark the appropriate box(es).



Uses of the Data

The data from this survey will be used by federal and state policy makers to address issues regarding the implementation of the School Meals Initiative and related child nutrition programs.

Confidentiality

As a matter of policy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, is required to protect the privacy of individuals who participate in surveys. The information provided on this form will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be merged with those of other respondents, and the answers you give will never be identified as yours. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer; however, we hope you answer as many questions as you can.

Questions

If you have any questions, please call the Gallup Project Director, Dr. Sameer Abraham, or the Project Coordinator, Margrethe Montgomery, toll-free at 1-800-347-1638 during business hours (9:00 a.m.– 6:00 p.m. EST). You may also contact us via e-mail at: SMI_USDA@gallup.com.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Department of Agriculture, Clearance Officer, OIRM, Room 404-W, Washington, D.C. 20250; and to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, D.C. 20503.

SECTION 1
SCHOOL DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

1.1 How many schools are in your school district?
(Record total number of schools in your district.)

Number of Schools

1.2 During the 1999/2000 School Year, how many schools in your district are participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP)? *(If none, enter "0". Please record separately for elementary and middle/secondary schools as defined in the* Glossary *on page 16. Those schools which fall outside these definitions should be included as "Other". Briefly describe these schools in the space provided below.)*

Number of Schools	Elementary ▼	Middle/ Secondary ▼	Other ▼	Total ▼
Total Number				
Number participating in **both NSLP and SBP**				
Number participating in **NSLP only**				
Number participating in **SBP only**				
Number of **SBP severe-need** schools				
Number **NOT** participating in either **NSLP or SBP**				

Briefly describe any *Other* school types (e.g., K-8, K-12, etc.) here:

1.3 Indicate total student enrollment, the number of students approved to receive free and reduced price meals as of *October 31, 1999*, and the average daily attendance, either as the number of students OR as a percent of enrollment.
(Record number of students in each school category. If none, enter "0".)

Number of Students

	Elementary ▼	Middle/ Secondary ▼	Other ▼	Total ▼
Total Student Enrollment				
Number Approved to Receive:				
Free meals				
Reduced price meals				
Average Daily Attendance–Number of Students				

OR

Average Daily Attendance–Percent of Enrollment

. %	. %	. %	. %

1.4 Record the number of serving days and the number of student lunches and student breakfasts served, indicating whether they were full price, reduced price, or free. If your district operates under provisions 1, 2, or 3 of the NSLP regulations (see *Glossary,* page 16), you may indicate the number of meals claimed in each category. Please provide this information for the *1998/1999 School Year* and for *October 1999.*
(If there are differences among schools within your school district for number of serving days, provide the average number of serving days for the district. Do not include serving days for summer food service or other special programs that occur when the district is not in session.)

Student Lunches	1998/1999 School Year ▼	October 1999 ▼
Number of:		
Serving days (*average across all schools*)		
Full price lunches served/claimed		
Reduced price lunches served/ claimed		
Free lunches served/claimed		

Student Breakfasts	1998/1999 School Year ▼	October 1999 ▼
Number of:		
Serving days (*average across all schools*)		
Full price breakfasts served/claimed		
Reduced price breakfasts served/ claimed		
Free breakfasts served/claimed (*include severe need*)		
Severe need breakfasts served/ claimed		

Section 2
Implementation of the School Meals Initiative: Status of Menu Planning

2.1 How many of the schools in your school district are presently using each of the following methods in planning their lunch menus? *(The first three options are from the FNS regulations issued in June 1995. The fourth option was provided by legislation approved in May 1996. NOTE: Some individual schools may be using more than one menu planning method. Include those schools in the count of each method that they are using. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of Schools

	Elementary ▼	Middle/ Secondary ▼	Other ▼	Total ▼
Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus)				
Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)				
Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning				
Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning				
Other *(Please specify below.)*				

2.2 **Do you use menu cycles in your program?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2.3 **For the menu planning method you have chosen, how far along would you say that you are toward full implementation of that menu planning method?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Fully implemented
- ☐ At least three-quarters implemented
- ☐ At least half implemented
- ☐ At least one-quarter implemented
- ☐ Have not started implementation

Section 3
Implementation of the School Meals Initiative: Operational Procedures

3.1 **Are any schools in your district currently using Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning, Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning, or Other Menu Planning Systems?** *(Mark [x] one box)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.7, PAGE 4)*

Part A—Food Based Menu Planning

3.2 **Do the schools in your district publicize (e.g., through handouts or postings) the nutrient content of the meals served?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes, *all* schools disclose nutrient content
- ☐ Yes, *some* schools disclose nutrient content
- ☐ No

3.3 **Has your State Agency, or someone acting on their behalf (a contractor/consultant), conducted a nutrient analysis of the meals served in any of your schools?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3.4 **Do you do nutritional analysis of your menus?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.5, PAGE 4)*

3.4.a **In assessing the nutritional composition of foods in your menus, are food items weighted on the basis of their relative importance as determined by the number of either actual or planned servings?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3.5 **What steps are you taking to ensure that the meals served in your school district meet the *Dietary Guidelines*?** *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

- ☐ Offer additional servings of more nutritious foods
- ☐ Substitute more nutritious ingredients and foods
- ☐ Use more nutritious techniques in food preparation
- ☐ No changes have been made
- ☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

_____

_____

3.6 **Is your district currently working toward implementing, planning to work toward implementing, or not planning to work toward implementing the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) in elementary or middle/ secondary schools?** *(For each school type, mark [x] whether you are working toward implementing NSMP, planning to work toward implementation, or not planning to work toward implementation.)*

	Working ▼	Planning ▼	Not Planning ▼
Elementary schools	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary schools	☐	☐	☐

3.7 **Compared to last year, are your meals this school year very different, somewhat different, or is there no difference in the meals you offer?** *(Mark [x] one box for each menu and school type.)*

	Very Different ▼	Somewhat Different ▼	No Difference ▼	Not Applicable ▼
Breakfast menus				
Elementary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary school .	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lunch menus				
Elementary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary school .	☐	☐	☐	☐
Special menus (deli, salad bars, etc.)				
Elementary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary school .	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.8 **Compared to last school year, do you and/or your staff spend more time, the same amount of time or less time planning breakfast and/or lunch menus?** (*Mark [x] one box for each item.)*

	More Time ▼	Same Amount of Time ▼	Less Time ▼	Not Applicable ▼
Breakfast	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lunch	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.9 **Compared to last school year, have *a la carte* sales increased, not changed, or decreased?** (*For each type of school, mark [x] the degree of change this year. If* a la carte *items are not offered, mark [x]* a la carte *not offered.)*

	Increased Sales ▼	No Change ▼	Decreased Sales ▼	*A La Carte* Not Offered ▼
Elementary	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.10 **For each of the following tasks, has the on-going implementation of SMI been a significant burden, a minor burden, or not a burden on you and/or your staff?** *(Mark [x] one box for each task.)*

Task	Significant Burden ▼	Minor Burden ▼	Not a Burden ▼
Developing standardized recipes .	☐	☐	☐
Planning menus	☐	☐	☐
Providing specifications for purchased foods	☐	☐	☐
Monitoring foods received to ensure that specifications are met	☐	☐	☐
Training food service staff	☐	☐	☐
Marketing healthier food choices to students	☐	☐	☐

3.11 **Are any schools in your district using Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus) or Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO SECTION 4, PAGE 7)*

PART B—NUMENU/ ASSISTED NUMENU

3.12 **In assessing the nutritional composition of foods in your menus, are food items weighted on the basis of their relative importance as determined by the number of either actual or planned servings?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.14)*

3.13 **Are *a la carte* food sales of those food items that are also reimbursable meals excluded from the number of actual or planned servings used in making this calculation?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3.14 **Do the schools in your district publicize (e.g., through handouts or postings) the nutrient content of the meals served?** *(Mark [x] one response.)*

☐ Yes; *all* schools disclose nutrient content

☐ Yes; *some* schools disclose nutrient content

☐ No

3.15 **Do you have any schools that use Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.17, PAGE 6)*

3.16 Who is (or will be) conducting nutrient analysis for your district? *(Mark [x] one category.)*

- ☐ State Agency
- ☐ Another school district
- ☐ Private consultant
- ☐ Food service management company
- ☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

3.17 Do you offer school breakfasts? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 3.19)*

3.18 Are you implementing NSMP in your *breakfast* program? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3.19 Are you implementing NSMP in your *lunch* program? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

*(**NOTE:** IF NSMP IS IMPLEMENTED IN BOTH BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS (YES TO QUESTIONS 3.18 AND 3.19), CONTINUE. OTHERWISE, SKIP TO QUESTION 3.21.)*

3.20 Does the nutrient analysis conducted for schools in your school district result in a single analysis that combines breakfast and lunch menus? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3.21 Compared to last year, are your meals this school year very different, somewhat different, or is there no difference in the meals you offer? *(Mark [x] one box for each menu and school type.)*

	Very Different	Somewhat Different	No Difference	Not Applicable
Breakfast menus				
Elementary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lunch menus				
Elementary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Special menus (deli, salad bars, etc.)				
Elementary school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary school	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.22 Compared to last school year, do you and/or your staff spend more time, the same amount of time or less time planning breakfast and/or lunch menus? (*Mark [x] one box for each item.)*

	More Time	Same Amount of Time	Less Time	Not Applicable
Breakfast	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lunch	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.23 Compared to last school year, have *a la carte* sales increased, not changed, or decreased? (*For each type of school, mark [x] the degree of change this year. If* a la carte *items are not offered, mark [x]* a la carte *not offered.)*

	Increased Sales	No Change	Decreased Sales	*A La Carte* Not Offered
Elementary	☐	☐	☐	☐
Middle/Secondary	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.24 For each of the following tasks, has the on-going implementation of NSMP been a significant burden, a minor burden, or not a burden on you and/or your staff? *(Mark [x] one box for each task.)*

Task	Significant Burden ▼	Minor Burden ▼	Not a Burden ▼
Developing standardized recipes	☐	☐	☐
Entering/analyzing recipes	☐	☐	☐
Planning menus	☐	☐	☐
Obtaining food production information for weighted nutrient analysis	☐	☐	☐
Entering/analyzing menus	☐	☐	☐
Obtaining nutrient information for foods not in the database	☐	☐	☐
Providing specifications for purchased foods	☐	☐	☐
Monitoring foods received to ensure that specifications are met	☐	☐	☐
Training food service staff	☐	☐	☐
Entering product information	☐	☐	☐
Selecting appropriate items from database	☐	☐	☐
Retraining point of service staff to identify reimbursable meals	☐	☐	☐
Educating students to select reimbursable meals	☐	☐	☐
Marketing healthier food choices to students	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐

Section 4
Impact of the Continuing Implementation of The School Meals Initiative (SMI)

4.1 Compared to last school year, has there been an increase, no change, a decrease or total elimination of the following *menu related* features in your program? (*Mark [x] one box for each program feature.*)

Program Feature	*Increase* ▼	*No Change* ▼	*Decrease* ▼	*Totally Eliminated* ▼	*Never Had* ▼
Use of menu cycles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of centralized menu planning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of decentralized menu planning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of self-serve foods/food bars	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of *a la carte* in elementary schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of *a la carte* in middle/secondary schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of menu choices for reimbursable meals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of new menu items	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Portion sizes by age/ grade level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Opportunity for local cafeteria options	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of fruits and/or vegetables offered	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Variation of menu items among age/grade categories	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Marketing of menus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of offer vs. serve in elementary schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Physical layout of cafeteria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*					
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.2 Compared to last school year, has there been an increase, no change, a decrease or total elimination of the following *recipe or food preparation* features in your program? (*Mark [x] one box for each feature.*)

Recipe or Food Preparation Feature	Increase	No Change	Decrease	Totally Eliminated	Never Had
Use of standardized recipes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of new USDA recipes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Time devoted to recording food production information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Modification of recipes to improve nutritional content of meals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Modification of preparation methods to improve nutritional content of meals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchase of new equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.3 Compared to last school year, has there been an increase, no change, a decrease or total elimination of the following *food procurement practices* in your program? (*Mark [x] one box for each practice.)*

Food Procurement Practices	Increase	No Change	Decrease	Totally Eliminated	Never Had
Purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchase of prepared foods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchase of pre-plated meals from outside vendors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of USDA donated commodities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchase of low-fat/ reduced-fat foods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Requiring nutrition information from vendors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use and content of product specification	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use of purchasing cooperatives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.4 In comparison to how students ate before school lunches were required to comply with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, have you noticed any changes in the amount of food students waste (throw away or do not eat) at lunchtime? *(Mark [x] one box for each food.)*

Food	Students Waste More	Students Waste Less	No Change	Don't Know
Milk	☐	☐	☐	☐
Main dish/entree	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bread or bread alternate ..	☐	☐	☐	☐
Salad/raw vegetables	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cooked vegetables (other than french fries)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please continue on next page

4.5 **Compared to last school year, has the *number of food choices* offered in reimbursable meals increased, not changed, or decreased in the schools in your district?** *(For each of the following school types and food categories, please indicate if there has been a change in number of choices since last year. Mark [x] one box for each category.)*

Elementary Schools	Choices Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Choices Decreased ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐
Vegetables	☐	☐	☐
Grain/Bread	☐	☐	☐
Milk	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
_____	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐

Middle/Secondary Schools	Choices Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Choices Decreased ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐
Vegetables	☐	☐	☐
Grain/Bread	☐	☐	☐
Milk	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
_____	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐

4.6 **Compared to last school year, has the *portion size* offered in reimbursable meals increased, not changed, or decreased in the schools in your district?** (*For each of the following school types and food categories, please indicate if there has been a change in portion size since last year. Mark [x] one box for each category.)*

Elementary Schools	Portion Size Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Portion Size Decreased ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐
Vegetables	☐	☐	☐
Grain/Bread	☐	☐	☐
Milk	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
_____	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐

Middle/Secondary Schools	Portion Size Increased ▼	No Change ▼	Portion Size Decreased ▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐
Fruit	☐	☐	☐
Vegetables	☐	☐	☐
Grain/Bread	☐	☐	☐
Milk	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
_____	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐

4.7 **Compared to last school year, has the number of *a la carte* items offered at lunch increased, not changed, or decreased in your school district?** *(Mark [x] one box for each category.)*

	Items Increased	No Change	Items Decreased	*A La Carte* Not Offered
Elementary Schools	▼	▼	▼	▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beverages (including milk)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Side dishes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Snacks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*				
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Items Increased	No Change	Items Decreased	*A La Carte* Not Offered
Middle/ Secondary Schools	▼	▼	▼	▼
Entrees	☐	☐	☐	☐
Desserts	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beverages (including milk)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Side dishes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Snacks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*				
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.8 **Since implementing SMI, have you had major difficulty, some difficulty, or no difficulty in dealing with the following operational tasks?** *(Mark [x] one box for each operational task.)*

Operational Tasks	Major Difficulty ▼	Some Difficulty ▼	No Difficulty ▼
Documenting last-minute substitutions	☐	☐	☐
Substituting nutritionally-comparable foods	☐	☐	☐
Defining a reimbursable meal	☐	☐	☐
Implementing offer vs. serve	☐	☐	☐
Serving planned portions	☐	☐	☐
Moving students through the line	☐	☐	☐
Adhering to standardized recipes	☐	☐	☐
Maintaining food production records	☐	☐	☐
Separating *a la carte* and reimbursable sales	☐	☐	☐
Obtaining production information for self-serve bars	☐	☐	☐
Other *(Please specify below.)*			
☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 5

Overall Assessment of SMI

5.1 In general, how do you find the attitude of the staff, students and parents toward the School Meals Initiative? Is their attitude very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, or very negative? *(Mark [x] one box for each category. If you do not have staff in any of the categories, mark [x] Not Applicable.)*

	Very Positive ▼	Somewhat Positive ▼	Neutral ▼	Somewhat Negative ▼	Very Negative ▼	Not Applicable ▼
Administrative Staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Financial Staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kitchen Managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cooks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cashiers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5.2 As the School Food Director, what is your personal opinion of the School Meals Initiative? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- Very positive ..... ☐
- Somewhat positive ..... ☐
- Neutral ..... ☐
- Somewhat negative ..... ☐
- Very negative ..... ☐
- Undecided ..... ☐

SECTION 6
PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Direct Certification

6.1 Does your school district directly certify students from households participating in Food Stamps (FS), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.2)*

6.1.a What method does your school district use for direct certification? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ State welfare agency notifies FS/TANF/FDPIR households by letter of children's eligibility; households bring notice to school.
- ☐ School district obtains list of children in FS/TANF/FDPIR households and compares list with list of enrolled students; households are automatically certified.
- ☐ State agency conducts computer match of FS/TANF/FDPIR households with student enrollment lists and provides a matched database to the school district; households are automatically certified.
- ☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

6.1.b What percentage of students approved for free lunches are directly certified?

☐☐☐.0% Percentage

Income Verification

6.2 How many applications for free or reduced-price lunches were selected to verify eligibility during the 1999-2000 School Year?

☐☐☐☐ Number of Applications

6.2.a How were the applications for verification selected? Did you…

- ☐ Select a random sample
- ☐ Use "focused" sampling
- ☐ Verify all applications
- ☐ Use another method *(Please specify below.)*

6.2.b How were the applications verified? Did you… *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

- ☐ Examine wage stubs, case numbers, etc.
- ☐ Conduct computer wage-matching
- ☐ Make collateral contacts
- ☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

6.2.c **Income verification can lead to changes in student benefits as a result of parents or guardians misreporting information or failing to respond to the income verification request. The following question examines the results of the verification of applicants who *responded* to the income verification process by providing household income and size information or public assistance documentation. How many children…**
(Record a response for each item; if none, enter "0".)

	Number of Children
Had no change in eligibility status	
Changed from free to reduced-price status	
Changed from free to paid status	
Changed from reduced-price to free status	
Changed from reduced-price to paid status	

6.2.d **The following question examines the results of the verification of applicants who *failed to respond* to the income verification request. How many children…**
(Record a response for each item; if none, enter "0".)

	Number of Children
Had parents or guardians that failed to respond	
Changed from free to paid status	
Changed from reduced-price to paid status	
Were eventually reinstated to free status	
Were eventually reinstated to reduced-price status	

Afterschool Care

6.3 **Does your school district provide afterschool snacks under the NSLP or CACFP?**

☐ Yes

☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.4, PAGE 14)*

6.3.a **In how many schools in your district are these afterschool snacks offered?** *(If you are not certain of the number, estimate and mark [x] the appropriate box.)*

Number of Schools	Elementary	Middle/ Secondary	Other	Total
Offer Afterschool Snacks				
Estimate	☐	☐	☐	

6.3.b **Who operates the afterschool care program(s) that are held in your school?**
(Mark [x] all boxes that apply.)

☐ School District/Individual Schools

☐ YMCA/YWCA

☐ Community Action Agency

☐ Parent/Teacher Organizations

☐ Church Affiliated Organizations

☐ Child Care Agency

☐ Community Park/Recreation Department

☐ Don't Know

☐ Other *(Please specify below.)*

6.3.c **How many children participate in these afterschool care programs?** *(If you can not estimate, mark [x] the "Don't Know" box.)*

☐ Number of Children

☐ Don't Know

6.3.d **Do any of these programs serve children aged 13 to 18 years?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

Pouring Rights Contracts

6.4 **Has your school district entered into an "exclusive" (pouring rights) contract with a carbonated beverage company during School Year 1999-2000?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.5)*

6.4.a **Has your school district entered into this "exclusive" contract alone, or with other districts as part of a consortium?**

- ☐ Alone
- ☐ As part of a consortium

6.4.b **Does this contract apply to any products sold in the cafeteria?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Provision II or III

6.5 **Does your school district currently operate any Provision II or III schools (i.e., alternatives to the normal requirements for annual eligibility determinations and daily meal counts)?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *(SKIP TO QUESTION 6.6)*

6.5.a **During the 1999/2000 School Year, how many schools in your district are participating under Provision II or III?** *(Record number of schools by category for each provision.)*

Number of Schools	Elementary	Middle/ Secondary	Other	Total
Provision II				
Provision III				

Miscellaneous

6.6 **Is your food service operation currently under the direction of a food service management company** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6.7 **How many "Charter Schools" are in your school district?** *(If none enter "0".)*

☐ Number of "Charter Schools"
(If "0" SKIP TO QUESTION 6.8)

6.7.a **For how many of these "Charter Schools" is your school district responsible for providing meals?** *(If none record "0".)*

☐ Number of "Charter Schools"

6.8 **Do you personally have access to the internet…** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ At home
- ☐ At work
- ☐ Both at home and at work
- ☐ Neither at home nor at work

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SECTION BELOW.

School District Name _____ **Date** __ – __ – __

Name and address of School Food Director

Last Name _____

First Name _____

Title _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Telephone ___ – ___ – ____ EXT ____

Fax ___ – ___ – ____

E-mail _____

_____

Name and address of person filling out this survey, if other than School Food Director

Last Name _____

First Name _____

Title _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Telephone ___ – ___ – ____ EXT ____

Fax ___ – ___ – ____

E-mail _____

_____

6.9 How long have you been the School Food Director? *(Enter number of years you have been in the position in this school district. If you have been in your position less than one year, mark [x] "Less than one year".)*

Number of years ..... ☐☐

OR

Less than one year ..... ☐

GLOSSARY

After School Care Programs
Organized, supervised programs made available to school-age children on a scheduled basis following the completion of classes. Programs may be sponsored by the school district or by other organizations.

Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels using approved menu cycles based on nutrient analysis conducted outside of the SFA.

Charter Schools
Charter schools operate under a special "charter" or contract, usually with the local school board or the state. In return for a waiver from specified state and local laws and regulations, these schools agree to be held accountable for satisfying certain performance measures. The precise form of the charters varies among states and localities.

Elementary School
Schools classified as elementary by state and local practice and composed of any span of grades not above Grade 8. A preschool or kindergarten is included under this heading only if it is an integral part of an elementary school or a regularly established school system.

Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels by offering specific food items in prescribed quantities.

Middle/Secondary Schools
Schools that have no grade lower than Grade 6 and continue through Grade 12.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
A Federal meal program, established under the National School Lunch Act of 1946, that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 94,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions nationwide.

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus)
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels based on nutrient analysis of all meal items conducted by the SFA.

"Other" Schools
Schools that include grade spans other than those defined by Elementary and Middle/Secondary schools. For instance, a school with a K-12 grade span would be defined as an "other" school.

Provision 2
A school which serves meals at no charge to all children as determined by application once every three years.

Provision 3
A school that serves meals at no charge to all children regardless of eligibility status.

School Breakfast Program (SBP)
A Federal meal program that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free breakfasts to more than 6 million children each school day in more than 65,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions nationwide.

School Meals Initiative (SMI)
Launched in 1994, the first full-scale reform of the school lunch program since it was established. Its components include: updating the nutritional requirements of school meals; nutrition education training, and technical assistance; improvements in the donated commodity program; and, streamlining program administration.

Standardized Recipe
One that has been tested and adapted for use by a given food service operation and found to produce consistent results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment, and the same quantity and quality of ingredients.

Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels by offering specific minimum quantities of food items as prescribed by USDA in regulations issued prior to June 1995.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Please return the completed form in the self-addressed, prepaid envelope provided. The form should be sent to:

The Gallup Organization
ATTN: Survey Processing Center
P.O. Box 5700
Lincoln, Nebraska 68505-9926

Attention: Project USDA/School Meals Initiative

APPENDIX B

State Child Nutrition Directors Survey

OMB Clearance No. 0584-0485
Expiration Date: March 31, 2002

SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY (YEAR 3)

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS: SURVEY OF STATE DIRECTORS

Sponsored by: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

Contractor: The Gallup Organization
Government & Education Division
1 Church Street, Suite 900
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Mailing Address: The Gallup Organization
ATTN: Survey Processing Center
P.O. Box 5700
Lincoln, Nebraska 68505-9926

INSTRUCTIONS

General Information

This questionnaire is to be completed by the State Director of Child Nutrition Programs.

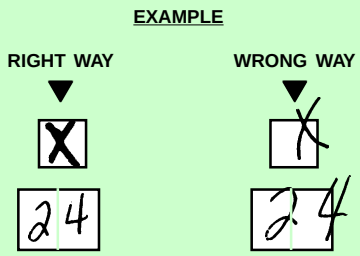
Please answer each question directly on the questionnaire by checking the appropriate box or by writing your response in the space provided. Some factual questions may require information that may not be readily available from office records. Informed estimates are acceptable for such questions.

We realize that you are very busy; however, we hope that you can complete the questionnaire and return it to *The Gallup Organization* in the prepaid, self-addressed envelope provided as soon as possible. Respondents will be afforded sufficient time to complete and return the questionnaire—30 days to gather the necessary information from other members of agency staff—to the extent this is required. Your cooperation is needed to ensure that the results of this survey are nationally representative, accurate, and timely.

Survey Instructions

Please follow the steps below carefully when completing this survey.

- Use a blue or black ink pen only.
- Do not use ink that soaks through the paper.
- Make solid marks that fit in the response boxes.
- Make no stray marks on the survey.
- To answer the survey questions, please mark the appropriate answer in each box.



Uses of the Data

The data from this survey will be used by federal and state policy makers to address issues regarding the implementation of the School Meals Initiative and related child nutrition programs.

Confidentiality

As a matter of policy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, is required to protect the privacy of individuals who participate in surveys. The information provided on this form will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be merged with those of other respondents, and the answers you give will never be identified as yours. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer; however, we hope you answer as many questions as you can.

Questions

If you have any questions, please call the Gallup Project Director, Dr. Sameer Abraham, or the Project Coordinator, Margrethe Montgomery, toll-free at 1-800-347-1638 during business hours (9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. EST). You may also contact us via e-mail at: SMI_USDA@gallup.com.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Department of Agriculture, Clearance Officer, OIRM, Room 404-W, Washington, D.C. 20250; and to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, D.C. 20503.

SECTION 1
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE (SMI)

1. How many *public* School Food Authorities (SFAs) within the state are currently (1999-2000 school year) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP)?
(Record number of SFAs. If none, enter "0".)

Number of public SFAs participating in NSLP or SBP ..... ☐☐☐☐

2. Of the total number of public SFAs within the state participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP), how many are currently (1999-2000 school year) using each of the following menu planning options? *(Some SFAs can be using more than one menu planning system. The total number of menu planning options in use might therefore exceed the total number of SFAs in the state; see* Glossary*, page 7. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of public SFAs currently using:

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus) ..... ☐☐☐☐

Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus) ..... ☐☐☐☐

Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning ..... ☐☐☐☐

Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning ..... ☐☐☐☐

Other *(Please specify below.)*

_____ ☐☐☐☐

_____ ☐☐☐☐

_____ ☐☐☐☐

3. What role did your Agency play in assisting public SFAs in the selection and implementation of new menu planning systems during the last school year (1998-99)?

Did your Agency, or someone working on its behalf (e.g., contractors), provide public SFAs with:

3a. Assistance in training sessions? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q.3b)

→ What level of assistance was provided during the 1998-99 school year? *(Record number for each item. If none, enter "0".)*

3a.1 ☐☐☐☐ Number of training sessions assisted

3a.2 ☐☐☐☐ Number of public SFAs represented

3a.3 ☐☐☐☐ Number of public SFA staff attending

3b. Nutritional expertise either directly or through an outside organization? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3c. Computer expertise either directly or through an outside organization? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

3d. On-site technical assistance? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q.4, PAGE 2)

→ What level of assistance was provided during the 1998-99 school year? *(Record number for each item. If none, enter "0".)*

3d.1 ☐☐☐☐ Number of on-site visits

3d.2 ☐☐☐☐ Number of SFAs visited

4. Has your Agency, or someone acting on your behalf (contractors), provided an Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning system for SFAs in your state?
(Mark [x] one box.)

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 6)

5. How many public SFAs in the state are currently using the system your agency provided?
(Record number. If none, enter "0".)

Number of public SFAs ☐☐☐☐

6. How many public SFAs, received an SMI compliance review by your Agency, or someone acting on your behalf (contractors), during the 1998-99 School Year? *(Record number. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of public SFAs reviewed ☐☐☐☐

7. How many public school sites were reviewed when conducting these SMI reviews? *(Record number of schools. If none, enter "0".)*

Total number of schools reviewed ☐☐☐☐

8. In conducting these SMI reviews, what was the total number of public school sites reviewed for each of the following types of menu planning systems? *(If an individual school was using more than one menu planning system, include that school in the total count for each of the menu planning systems used.)*

Number of school sites reviewed
(Record number for each category. If none, enter "0".)

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus) ..... ☐☐☐☐

Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus) ..... ☐☐☐☐

Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning ..... ☐☐☐☐

Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning ..... ☐☐☐☐

Other *(Please specify below.)* ☐☐☐☐

9. How many public SFAs required improvement plans as a result of these SMI reviews?
(Record number. If none, enter "0".)

Number of public SFAs ☐☐☐☐

9a. Does your agency conduct SMI compliance reviews and Coordinated Review Effort (CRE) Administrative Reviews at the same SFA simultaneously? *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Always

☐ Usually

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never (SKIP TO Q.10, PAGE 3)

9b. To what extent has the coordination of these reviews been a problem for your agency?
(Mark [x] one box.)

☐ Not a problem

☐ Minor problem

☐ Major problem

SECTION 2
OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Direct Certification

10. **Does your State generate a mailing list or a listing of children in households participating in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps (FS) or Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 12)

11. **What is the effective month of the TANF/FS/ FDPIR certification list from which the list of students eligible for direct certification is compiled?** *(Record month.)*

Effective Month ☐☐

Food Service Management Companies

12. **How many SFAs in your state currently have a contract with one or more Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs)?** *(Record number of SFAs. If none enter "0".)*

Number of SFAs ☐,☐☐☐

Charter Schools

13. **Do your records identify "charter schools" that are participating in child nutrition (CN) programs, whether they are participating as independent school food authorities or as part of a school food authority that includes non-charter schools?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 16)

14. **How many of your state's charter schools have been granted SFA status?** *(Record number of schools. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of charter schools ☐,☐☐☐

15. **How many charter schools are currently participating in the NSLP in your state?** *(Record number of schools. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of charter schools ☐,☐☐☐

16. **Has the rapid growth in the number of charter schools in recent years created any new issues for the administration of CN programs in your state?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO Q.17, PAGE 4)

→ Briefly describe the nature of these issues:

State Agency Support for SFA Procurement

17. **Does your state have state procurement standards that apply to CN programs?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (SKIP TO Q. 17b)

17.a. **Are they more restrictive than Federal procurement standards?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

17.b. **Does your Agency (or other entity within state government) conduct periodic oversight of the local procurement activities of the SFAs under your jurisdiction?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

18. **Is your state-wide competitive food policy more restrictive than the Federal competitive food policy?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Free/Reduced-Price Application

19. **Does your state require use of a prototype free/reduced price meal application for all schools?** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Financial Management

20. **Federal regulations call for organization-wide financial and compliance audits of school district financial operations. In School Year 1998-99, how many school districts were required to obtain an organization-wide audit?** *(Record number of school districts audited. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of school districts audited ☐☐,☐☐☐

20.a. **Of the school districts audited in SY 1998-99, how many required the attention of your Agency to resolve problems identified during the audit?** *(Record number of school districts. If none, enter "0".)*

Number of school districts requiring State Agency attention ☐☐,☐☐☐

CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

Afterschool Care Program

21. **Has the state undertaken any of the following activities related to the implementation of afterschool snacks in the NSLP or CACFP?** *(Mark [x] all that apply.)*

- ☐ Conferences
- ☐ Formal Training Programs/Workshops
- ☐ Printed Material Development
- ☐ On-site Technical Assistance
- ☐ Direct Mailings

Staffing

22. **How many non-clerical professional staff employed by or contracted by the State Agency work on Child Nutrition Programs?** *(Record number of staff.)*

Number of professional staff ☐☐,☐☐☐

23. **What are the annual salary ranges for the various types of non-clerical professional staff working on Child Nutrition Programs?** (Record the lower and upper salaries. If no staff in a particular category, enter "0".)

	Lower Annual Salary	Upper Annual Salary
State Agency Professional Staff	☐☐,☐☐☐	☐☐,☐☐☐
Consultants/Contracted Staff	☐☐,☐☐☐	☐☐,☐☐☐

24. **Does the State CN Director administer programs other than CN programs??** *(Mark [x] one box.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

25. Please complete the section below.

State

Name of State Agency

Name of Respondent

Last First

Title

Address

City

State Zip Code

Telephone – – ext.

Fax – –

E-mail address

COMMENTS:

GLOSSARY

Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels using approved menu cycles based on nutrient analysis conducted outside of the SFA.

Charter Schools
Charter schools operate under a special "charter" or contract, usually with the local school board or the state. In return for a waiver from specified state and local laws and regulations, these schools agree to be held accountable for satisfying certain performance measures. The precise form of the charters varies among states and localities.

Consultants/Contracted Staff
Individuals in positions higher than clerical-level who are paid by the State Agency on a per-job basis.

Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels by offering specific food items in prescribed quantities.

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
A USDA program, operated at the state and local level, that provides commodity foods to low-income families who live on Indian reservations, and to Native American families who live near reservations.

Food Service Management Company (FSMC)
A commercial firm contracted by a SFA to manage part or all of their food service operations.

Food Stamps (FS)
An assistance program, administered by the USDA and operated by state and local welfare offices, that enables low-income families to buy nutritious food with coupons and electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
A Federal meal program, established under the National School Lunch Act of 1946, that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 94,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions nationwide.

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus)
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School Meals Initiative (SMI)
Launched in 1994, the first full-scale reform of the school lunch program since it was established. Its components include: updating the nutritional requirements of school meals; nutrition education training, and technical assistance; improvements in the donated commodity program; and, streamlining program administration.

State Agency Professional Staff
Individuals in positions higher than clerical-level who are considered paid employees of the State Agency.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
A program overseen by the US Department of Health and Human Services that provides assistance and work opportunities to needy families by granting states the federal funds and wide flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs.

Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning
Attainment of minimum weekly nutrient levels by offering specific minimum quantities of food items as prescribed by USDA in regulations issued prior to June 1995.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Please return the completed form in the self-addressed, prepaid envelope provided. The form should be sent to:

The Gallup Organization
ATTN: Survey Processing Center
P.O. Box 5700
Lincoln, Nebraska 68505-9926

Attention: Project USDA/School Meals Initiative