School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study-III
Summary of Findings
Final Report

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

PURPOSE
The purpose of the National Food Service Management Institute is to improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

MISSION
The mission of the National Food Service Management Institute is to provide information and services that promote the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

VISION
The vision of the National Food Service Management Institute is to be the leader in providing education, research, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A key objective of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for its National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) is to ensure that children have access to healthy, well-balanced meals. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of USDA sponsored the third SNDA study to provide up-to-date information on the school meal programs, the school environment that affects the programs, the nutrient content of school meals, and the contributions of school meals to students’ diets. Data were collected from a nationally representative sample of districts, schools, and students in school year (SY) 2004-2005. The nutrient content of school meals offered and served was compared to USDA’s current regulatory standards. Students’ diets were assessed using the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs), the most up-to-date scientific standards for assessing dietary status.

SNDA-III data are representative of all public School Food Authorities (SFAs) that offer the NSLP in the contiguous United States, schools in those SFAs, and students in those schools (and their parents). Data were collected from 129 SFAs, 398 schools in those SFAs, and 2,314 children attending those schools (and their parents). SFA directors provided information on district wide policies (such as menu-planning systems) and operations (such as food purchasing). School foodservice managers completed a Menu Survey, providing detailed information on all foods offered as part of reimbursable meals during a selected week, including, for each food, a detailed description, portion size offered, and, for the analysis of meals as selected or served, the number of servings provided as part of a reimbursable meal. The managers also completed a
brief telephone or in-person interview regarding their school’s foodservice operations and policies on competitive foods available in or near the foodservice area. Principals in each school were interviewed concerning school schedules and rules about student mobility, nutrition education offered, and availability of competitive foods outside the foodservice area.

The report below represents the summary of findings from the secondary SNDA-III analysis concerning the characteristics of the representative 398 schools. The analysis concerned characteristics of the schools meeting the SMI standards. Characteristics in the report include: region of the contiguous United States in which the school is located, percentage of students in the schools that qualify for free and reduced meals, poverty level in the community where the school resides, and size of schools.
Key Findings from the SNDA Analysis

- Students in the Mountain Plains region of the country selected breakfast and lunch meals containing a greater quantity of calories than most other regions in the country. This occurred even though the students were offered a similar number of calories related to the other regions in the country.

- The students in the schools with the highest rates of students qualifying for free and reduced breakfasts were generally presented with and took foods that met the SMI standard for energy less often than students in the more affluent schools.

- Community poverty level does not affect the school’s rate of meeting the SMI standards. Regardless of the poverty level in the community in which the school exists, schools have an equal likelihood of meeting the SMI standards.

- Students from largest schools (greater than 1,000 students) have a greater chance of being presented with adequate breakfast calories than smaller schools based on the SMI standards. This also results in the students from the largest schools selecting foods with more calories than students in all other sized schools except schools with less than 400 students.

- Only 9.2% of elementary schools met the SMI standard for breakfast calories while 57.5% met the 1989 REA. Only one calorie level is designated by the SMI standards for all levels of schools. The calorie level to be served to a 1st grader is the same as the calorie level to be served to a 12th grader. The age-adjusted 1989 REA standards for breakfast and lunch calories resulted in more schools (57.5%) meeting the standard for 1st graders and fewer schools (5.8%) meeting the standard for 6th graders.
• The BMI-for-age results show that children, as of the 2004-2005 school years, have a higher mean BMI than the children used to develop the 2000 CDC growth charts. This indicates that the students used to gather the SNDA III data are larger than the students used to create CDC growth charts which used NHANES III data gathered in 1988-1994.

• The percent of middle school and high school students who are dieting are significantly different between males and females. The percentage and number of female students dieting are higher than the male dieters. The data showed that fewer males diet than females in both middle school and high school. The data also showed that there were more middle school male dieters than high school male dieters. No dieting differences were noted between middle school and high school females.