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# Management Retention Factors in the School Foodservice Industry

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# Management Retention Factors in the School Foodservice Industry

## **Abstract**

Management retention in the school foodservice industry has been a growing concern for school district decision makers due to the large numbers of managers reaching retirement age and the shortage of qualified people to fill the positions. As with other foodservice positions, turnover rates and the shortage of service employees will continue to be challenges well into the 21st century. The current study employed a self-administered questionnaire and asked 101 school foodservice managers in Central Florida to rate their perceived importance of and their perceived experience with 20 employment characteristics of their job. There were significant differences in 17 of the 20 characteristics thus highlighting significant gaps between perceived importance and perceived actual experience on the job and what would keep them from changing jobs. Management and human resources implications are discussed.

## **Keywords**

Robin DiPietro, Food and Beverage

# Management Retention Factors in the School Foodservice Industry

By Robin B. DiPietro

*Management retention in the school foodservice industry has been a growing concern for school district decision makers due to the large numbers of managers reaching retirement age and the shortage of qualified people to fill the positions. As with other foodservice positions, turnover rates and the shortage of service employees will continue to be challenges well into the 21st century. The current study employed a self-administered questionnaire and asked 101 school foodservice managers in Central Florida to rate their perceived importance of and their perceived experience with 20 employment characteristics of their job. There were significant differences in 17 of the 20 characteristics thus highlighting significant gaps between perceived importance and perceived actual experience on the job. The survey also questioned respondents regarding characteristics that brought them to their current job and what would keep them from changing jobs. Management and human resource implications are discussed.*

## Introduction

Manager turnover has been a concern in the hospitality industry for many years. Turnover issues in many segments of the hospitality industry is quite common and has been an accepted parameter of the industry (Prewitt, 2000). This turnover is expensive in economic and emotional terms. There is also a risk of a decrease in the overall customer service provided by an organization as more qualified managers' turnover. This situation may leave less qualified or newer managers left to perform at a level beyond their capabilities. Also, "turnover" means that a person is not "retained" and often a critical goal for organizations is to retain the best quality people.

One of the reasons posited for the high turnover in the hospitality industry in general and the foodservice industry specifically has been called, "turnover culture." "Turnover culture," as described by Iverson and Deery (1997), is an acceptance by employees and managers of an organization that high turnover is a norm in the workplace. It is this belief that leads to a lack effort to encourage retention and which can create a negative impact on the organization with respect to the costs of recruiting, training and retaining employees and managers. Some operators and managers appear to have their operations and systems set up to accept the reality of low skills, high turnover and little or no motivation in the foodservice industry (Enz & Withiam, 2003). This fact exacerbates the turnover culture seen in these organizations since turnover may be an accepted component of the operations.

With the evolution of school foodservice, cafeterias have become more organized and school districts now find themselves in direct competition with restaurants and other food outlets (VanEgmond-Pannell, 1985). This fact makes it critical that school foodservice operations start thinking in terms of how they can create a competitive advantage over other food outlets. Furthermore, high turnover will be one of the most challenging problems facing school districts in the 21st century (Pannell-Martin, 1999). Recruitment, motivation and retention of management in the hospitality industry in general will continue to be an ongoing challenge for organizations (Milman & Ricci, 2004).

Much of the research done to this point regarding retention factors primarily focuses on the lodging and restaurant industries as well as on hourly employees rather than managers (DiPietro & Milman, 2004; Milman & Ricci, 2004; Ricci & Milman, 2002). There has been very limited research to date on manager retention in the school foodservice industry. Part of the reason for this lack of research has been the relatively lower turnover in school foodservice industry compared to other foodservice outlets. Despite the fact that turnover of management in school foodservice is not as prevalent as it is in foodservice in general, understanding the reasons that managers stay can help to inform human resource practices.

The following study, therefore, will add to the literature regarding the school foodservice industry. The results of the study will aid school districts in creating policies and practices to help encourage retention of high quality managers and decrease turnover rates and the costs associated with it. With a new generation of managers entering the foodservice industry, manager attitudes will change as personal career goals change and therefore the need to reduce turnover and increase retention would need to be studied and encouraged on a continuing basis. This management emphasis will help to allow school foodservice outlets to function more effectively and efficiently with a healthier bottom line.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Foodservice Industry**

The foodservice industry in the U.S. is projected to do over \$537 billion in sales in 2007, with approximately \$46 billion of that representing the noncommercial foodservice sector. The foodservice industry is projected to grow at a rate of 5% across the U.S. and to employ almost 12.8 million people or 9% of the workforce, hence making it the largest private sector employer in the U.S. (National Restaurant Association, 2007).

The U.S. foodservice industry has had over 14 years of consecutive sales growth and is strong due to the number of dual income homes and the continued increase in the desire for convenient food options (National Restaurant Association, 2007). This increase in the desire for food away from home has also transcended into the school foodservice area.

Despite the increasing sales, the foodservice industry in general continues to have one of the highest turnover rates across industries because of wages, shift schedules, and social perceptions of entry-level jobs. Hurst (1997) has found that as turnover rates increase, labor costs rise. Turnover rates also can impact employee training costs, customers' perceptions of service quality, and employee job satisfaction. Turnover in the foodservice industry is very costly to organizations. The estimates are that turnover ranges from 50-200% among hourly employees and 25% for managers (Berta, 2003). Even with the downturn in the economy a few years ago, turnover in the hospitality industry is still over 100% (Ricci & Milman, 2002). Furthermore, a study conducted in 2001 of the top 100 restaurant companies in the U.S. found that the restaurant industry loses an estimated \$4 billion in turnover expenses for hourly employees annually. The turnover of managers costs the industry an additional \$454 million per year. (Spector, 2003).

### **School Foodservice**

School foodservice operations can vary in size and scope, and therefore may have different management needs. The facilities can range from a small, single-unit, decentralized school district with schools serving less than 100 meals per day to those operations in a centralized city and county districts that have up to 1200 schools and serve up to a half a million meals per day (Pannell-Martin, 1999). This wide variation causes some challenges in terms of determining generalized best practices for the school foodservice industry in general and human resource practices specifically.

The school foodservice industry is somewhat different from the foodservice industry in general. The length of tenure of school foodservice employees and managers is usually much longer than in the foodservice industry as a whole. School cafeteria employees and managers can have tenure that is 10, 20 or even 30 years (Lipowski, 1999). The concerns in recent years have been the fact that school foodservice has to compete in a tight labor market and face the fact that many of the school foodservice managers are reaching retirement age and there are not enough qualified people to fill those positions (Lipowski, 1999; VanEgmond-Pannell, 1985). There is projected to be a shortage of school foodservice managers by the 21st century. Part of the concern in staffing school foodservice manager positions with younger people is that the Generation X and Y employees seem to be more dissatisfied with their jobs and are willing to

leave their jobs much more quickly than foodservice managers of past generations (Lipowski, 1999). This will only exacerbate the existing labor crisis in the industry. This makes recruiting and retaining new managers to fill vacated positions very difficult.

Human resource professionals in the school foodservice area are anxious because of the impending shortage of school foodservice managers. The average turnover rate of all senior foodservice managers during 2001-2006 was projected to be 39%, while the turnover in school foodservice was supposed to be over 48% (Schrunk, 2001). That is a large number of school foodservice managers that will be retiring or leaving their jobs causing vacancies that will be very difficult to fill.

In the 1970's, a school foodservice employee was typically 45 to 50 years old with a high school diploma and approximately 8 years of industry experience. In the 1990's the average age of the typical foodservice employee was 60-65 years old (Pannell-Martin, 1999). However, it has been stated that in the 21st century, the typical foodservice manager will be 35 to 44 years old. The reason for this shift to a younger age of the foodservice managers is due to the mass exodus of the older foodservice employees and managers as retirement age approaches (DeMiccio, et al., 1997; Pannell-Martin, 1999). This exodus of foodservice managers is causing turnover that is costly and concerning to human resource practitioners as they try to determine how to recruit quality managers and retain those managers.

### **Manager Turnover Costs**

Managers leave their companies for different reasons than hourly employees. It is believed that managers are proactive in their approach to manage and control their own careers and development. To accomplish this, they seek positions that they perceive to be a good match for them with respect to the job itself and the organization associated to that job (Taylor & Walsh, 2005). The dollar amount of turnover for a single manager is said to be equivalent to the manager's annual base salary. The average salary of school foodservice managers is approximately \$41,270 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). In addition, high turnover also leads to lowered employee morale (Taylor & Walsh, 2005).

Several studies have investigated the quantitative costs of turnover in the hospitality industry (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000; Pine, 2000; Wasmuth & Davis, 1983; Woods & Macaulay, 1989). For example, a recent study by the National Restaurant Association of 50 companies in the hospitality industry estimated the median cost of turnover of an hourly employee at \$2,494 per person. These costs include recruiting, training and retaining a person (Pine, 2000). Other studies estimated that the cost of hourly employee turnover was approximately \$3,000 (Wasmuth & Davis, 1983; Woods & Macaulay, 1989). Turnover related costs for a foodservice operation may include advertising, recruiting, orientation, training, loss of profits due to a decrease in productivity, as well as extra food waste and equipment breakage (Loret, 1995).

Some writers have argued that the strong work ethic of the previous generation may be partially blamed for the challenge in filling positions and causing a shortage of replacements. It has been stated that this generation has had such a long retention period that they may have inadvertently blocked newer employees from the opportunity of gaining the necessary experience and skills needed to advance in their positions (Lipowski, 1999).

### **Retention**

Previous research on retention has focused on manager perception to the causes of employee turnover and the opinions of managers on what can be done to decrease employee turnover in the industry (Dermody, 2002; Gustafson, 2002). There has been a limited number of studies regarding manager turnover and retention in the foodservice area (Gustafson, 2002; Taylor & Walsh, 2005; Zuber, 2001).

Managers have stated that they would prefer a flexible schedule and the opportunity to spend more time with their family over an increased salary. It was also found that managers chiefly want growth opportunities through challenges in the current position (Taylor & Walsh, 2005). Studies have shown that when a work environment is more stable, employees are more likely to stay with the company (Zuber, 2001; Gustafson, 2002). In addition, Taylor & Walsh (2005) suggest that the key to retaining high-value managers and to increase their commitment levels is to make certain the way in which these managers manage their careers is understood.

The current study was designed to determine the retention factors of school foodservice managers in Central Florida. The research questions that guided the current study are listed below:

- 1) What are the factors that are most important in recruiting and attracting school foodservice managers to their jobs?
- 2) Where are there gaps in the level of importance and actual practices in school foodservice manager jobs?
- 3) What factors would cause school foodservice managers to find another job?

### Methodology

The current study employed a self-administered questionnaire of managers in the school foodservice industry. The questionnaire was developed by using a modified instrument previously employed in research on employee retention in the hotel and attraction industries (Milman, 2003; Milman & Ricci, 2004; Ricci & Milman, 2002). The survey was adapted for the school foodservice industry and qualitative review of the survey was done by 4 district managers for the Orange County School district in order to ensure that the questions were worded correctly and took into account that the respondents were managers rather than employees. In order to get a large enough sample, the seven county area in Central Florida was surveyed. The survey was administered by using two methods: via email sent to each of the schools and also administered at school district meetings where possible. There were a total of 645 surveys that were mailed to school foodservice managers. There were a total of 101 respondents for a response rate of 15.65%.

### Results

#### School Foodservice Manager Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents of the study are fairly representative of the school foodservice manager. Slightly over 92% of the respondents were female, with seven percent male. There were no managers who were under the age of 25 represented in the sample. The median respondent was in the 36-40 year age group. Most of the respondents had a high school education (44.1%), with 31.2% having some college education. Over 58% of the respondents were married, 22.8% divorced, 9.8% widowed, and 8.7% were single. The details regarding the demographics of the sample are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Gender	%	Age Group	%	Educational Background	%	Family Status	%
Female	92.6	18 or under	0.0	Grade School	1.1	Single	8.7
Male	7.4	19-25	0.0	High School	44.1	Married	58.7
		26-30	3.2	Technical Diploma	3.2	Divorced/ Separated	22.8
		31-35	5.3	Some College	31.2	Widowed	9.8
		36-40	42.1	Community College Degree	14.0		
		41-50	40.0	College Degree	5.4		
		51-60	8.4	Advanced Degree	1.1		
		61 or over	1.1				
Total	100	Total	100	Total	100	Total	100

### Job Tenure

The length of time that the respondents have been in their current job is shown in Table 2. The median length of time that a respondent has been in their current job is “more than 10 years.” This shows that there has been approximately half of the respondents have been with their current employer for more than 10 years, while the other half has been in their jobs for less than that time. Approximately 12% of the respondents have been in their jobs for less than 2 years. See Table 2 for more details on the job tenure.

**Table 2: Employment Tenure in Current School District**

Length of Time	%
1. Less than 6 months	1.0
2. 6-12 months	5.0
3. 1-2 years	6.0
4. 2-4 years	11.0
5. 4-6 years	9.0
6. 6-8 years	5.0
7. 8-10 years	11.0
8. More than 10 years	51.0
Total	100.0

N= 100     Median= “More than 10 years”

### Respondent Sources Regarding Current Job

Respondents were asked to indicate how they learned about their current job vacancy in the restaurant. The respondents could choose multiple sources that they may have used to learn about the job that they currently occupy. The majority of the respondents (21.9%) learned about their current job through referral by another employee who worked there or worked there in the past. The second largest source for helping respondents learn about their current job is “other” (17.5%). This category has the majority of their responses related to the respondent “being a parent at the school,” “having children in the school” and “wanting hours that matched their children.” Other sources were the website of the school system (7.5%), just dropped by looking for a job (6.3%), through other members of the community (4.4%), internet job search (2.5%), school/university recruitment (1.9%), and only one respondent each selected newspaper/magazine ads and community job fair. See Table 3 for more details.

**Table 3: Sources That Helped Respondents Learn About Their Current Job**

How Did You Learn About The Job?	%
Referral by another employee who works there or worked there in the past	21.9
Other	17.5
Web site of the school system	7.5
Just dropped by looking for a job	6.3
Through other members of the community	4.4
Internet general job search	2.5
School/university recruitment	1.9
Newspaper/magazine ads	0.6
Community job fair	0.6

N=101

### Respondents' Reasons for Attraction to Job

The respondents were also asked what attracted them to their current job. Multiple responses were allowed in this question as well. The biggest reason for respondents to be attracted to their current job was the employee benefits (31.9%). This was followed closely by flexible schedule (26.3%), interaction with people (20.6%), pay level (20.6%), and ease of commute (20.6%). The “other” respondents’ comments (13.1%) ranged from “it was a nice, fun job” to “no nights, no weekends.” The comments also reflected that some of the respondents

had been in foodservice jobs their whole lives and so this job made sense for their background. See Table 4 for additional characteristics that attracted respondents to their current jobs.

**Table 4: Characteristics that Attracted the Respondent to Their Current Job**

Employment Characteristic That Attracted You To Job	%
Employee benefits	31.9
Flexible schedule	26.3
Interaction with people	20.6
Pay level	20.6
Ease of commute/location	20.6
Other	13.1
Job duties	10.6
Employee working environment	10.6
Reputation of the entire school district	8.1
Friend/family member who already works there	7.5
Reputation of the particular school	5.0

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses

N=101

### **Managers' Evaluation of Current Employment Experience**

Respondents were asked to rate 20 employment characteristics with regard to their perceived importance. The respondents were also asked to rate their actual experience with these characteristics, more specifically to what extent these characteristics were manifested in their current employment. Each characteristic was evaluated according to its level of importance on a 5-point scale with "1" indicating "unimportant" and "5" indicating "very important." The actual experience that the respondents had with these characteristics on the job was then measured on a 5-point scale where "1" indicated "poor experience" and "5" indicated "excellent experience." The results of the specific employment characteristics are summarized in Table 5.

The most important employment characteristics to respondents were retirement plan (4.67), health benefits for manager (4.67), humane and caring approach to employees (4.65), clear information on job tasks and responsibilities (4.65), and introductory training (4.61). Of the 20 employment characteristics, 17 of them had statistically significant gaps between the perceived importance and the perceived actual experience in the current workplace. The largest gaps between importance and experience occurred in paid vacation, hourly wage, clear information on job tasks and responsibilities, and introductory training.

The three areas where there were not a significant difference between importance and experience were: direct deposit of paycheck, company policies, and flexible working hours. For more details regarding the employment characteristics, see Table 5.



**Table 5: Comparison Between Level of Importance and Actual Experience of Respondents' Employment Characteristics**

Employment Characteristic	Level of Importance		Actual Experience		T-Test		
	Mean	s. d.	Mean	s. d.	T Value	Sig.	df
1. Retirement plan	4.67	.651	3.93	.998	6.544	.000	90
2. Health benefits (for manager)	4.67	.681	3.99	1.011	5.771	.000	91
3. Humane (caring) approach to employees	4.65	.686	3.53	1.104	9.443	.000	91
4. Clear information on job tasks and responsibilities	4.65	.654	3.67	1.087	7.706	.000	92
5. Introductory training	4.61	.80	3.56	1.186	7.645	.000	95
6. Nice people to work with	4.60	.610	3.89	.914	6.729	.000	92
7. Consistent working hours (for steady income)	4.59	.792	4.18	.801	4.758	.000	89
8. Ongoing training	4.53	.682	3.63	1.011	8.027	.000	94
9. Hourly wage	4.49	.775	3.41	1.20	8.511	.000	92
10. Advancement opportunities	4.42	.774	3.54	1.123	6.148	.000	91
11. Company policies (dress code, etc.)	4.34	.770	3.79	1.046	5.141	.000	93
12. Fun and challenging job	4.34	.849	3.71	1.033	5.812	.000	93
13. Convenient travel to work	4.28	.864	3.96	1.073	2.950	.004	92
14. Performance reviews	4.28	.754	3.69	.951	5.293	.000	93
15. Company policies	4.15	1.138	4.27	1.007	-.946	.347	91
16. Health benefits (for family)	4.04	1.382	3.09	1.315	5.185	.000	80
17. Paid vacation	3.99	1.367	2.85	1.435	6.095	.000	84
18. Crew uniform	3.99	1.038	3.62	1.123	2.997	.004	90
19. Flexible working hours	3.98	1.041	3.79	1.071	1.734	.086	94
20. Direct-deposit of paycheck	3.96	1.197	4.06	.987	-.784	.435	92

Note: Level of Importance: 1 to 5 scale: "1"=Unimportant, "3"=Somewhat Important, "5"=Very Important  
 Actual Experience: 1 to 5 scale: "1"=Poor, "3"=Good, "5"=Excellent

### Job Retention Indicators

To help determine retention intent in the school foodservice industry, respondents were asked to reflect on their level of satisfaction with their current job, their level of likelihood to refer a friend or a family member to their current employer, and their likelihood to remain with their current employer for the next six months.

For the most part, managers were satisfied with their jobs (58.8%). There were 17.5% of the respondents that were very satisfied with their jobs. More than twelve percent (12.4%) were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with their jobs. There were 6.2% of the respondents that were dissatisfied and 5.2% that were very dissatisfied with their current job (Table 6).

**Table 6: Level of Satisfaction With Current Job**

Level of Satisfaction with Current Job	%
1. Very Dissatisfied	5.2
2. Dissatisfied	6.2
3. Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	12.4
4. Satisfied	58.8
5. Very Satisfied	17.5
Total	100.0

N=97 Mean=3.77 Standard Deviation=.984 Median=4 "satisfied"

The majority of the respondents were likely (37.8%) or very likely (30.6%) to refer a friend or family member to the current employer, while 16.3% were somewhat likely to refer a friend or family member. Only 9.2% were unlikely and 6.1% very unlikely to refer a friend or family member to the current employer (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Level of Likelihood to Refer Friend or Family to Apply for a job in the School District**

Level of Likelihood to Refer Friend or Family	%
1. Very Unlikely	6.1
2. Unlikely	9.2
3. Somewhat Likely	16.3
4. Likely	37.8
5. Very Likely	30.6
Total	100.0

N=98 Mean=3.78 Standard Deviation=1.162 Median=4 "likely"

In a question regarding intent to turnover, very few respondents were considering turning over in the next six months. Over 77% of respondents were very likely to remain with their current employer for more than six months. There were 13.5% of the respondents that were likely to remain with their current employer and 5.2% were somewhat likely to remain. Only 1.0% were unlikely and 3.1% were very unlikely to remain with their current employer for the next six months (see Table 8).

**Table 8: Likelihood of Remaining with Current Employer for Next Six Months**

Likelihood of Remaining with Current Employer for Next Six Months	%
1. Very Unlikely	3.1
2. Unlikely	1.0
3. Somewhat Likely	5.2
4. Likely	13.5
5. Very Likely	77.1
Total	100.0

N=96 Mean=4.60 Standard Deviation=.888 Median= 5 "very likely"

#### **Employment Characteristics That Contribute to Turnover**

Respondents were asked to assess 13 employment characteristics that might make them move to another employer. Each item was assessed by the respondents on a 5-point scale where "1" indicated "no value" and "5" indicated "very high value." The respondents rated better pay as having the highest value to them with regards to going to work for another company (4.33). The other job characteristics that would attract them to another company were better health benefits (3.99), better retirement plan (3.90), improved communication to employees (3.86), and a more humane or caring approach to employees (3.86). See Table 9 for the complete list of job characteristics.

**Table 9: Job Characteristics That Would Attract Managers to Move to Another Company**

Valued Characteristic	Mean	<i>s. d.</i>
1. Better pay	4.33	1.265
2. Better health benefits	3.99	1.335
3. Better retirement plan	3.9	1.311
4. Improved communication to employees	3.86	1.279
5. More humane (caring) approach to employees	3.83	1.252
6. Improved chance of promotion	3.78	1.368
7. Flexible working hours	3.75	1.341
8. Nice people to work with	3.73	1.311
9. Easier travel to work	3.72	1.583
10. Better company policies	3.67	1.260
11. Different management style	3.55	1.236
12. Improved consistency in working hours	3.52	1.387
13. Larger organization with more resources	3.35	1.373

Note: Value of Characteristic: 1=No value, 2=Low value, 3=Some value, 4=High value, 5=Very high value

### Discussion and Implications for Practitioners

As was shown in the demographic data, the sample of respondents has a long tenure with their respective schools with more than half of the respondents in their jobs for more than 10 years. This is very typical of a school foodservice manager as their length of tenure can be quite long (Lipowski, 1999). As the demographics start to shift as the older manager retires and a younger generation takes over the school foodservice positions for them, the factors that help recruit and retain these managers will be important to understand.

In responding to the first research question -What are the factors that are most important in recruiting and attracting school foodservice managers to their jobs, the following responses were determined to be important for school foodservice managers. In developing recruiting plans for school foodservice, it is important to note that referrals from another employee who works there, along with "other" responses such as "being a parent at the school," "having children in the school" and "wanting hours that matched their children" are the two significant responses for how people found out about their current job. This is an indication that by marketing through other employees and through the school itself is probably the most cost effective way to recruit new managers.

The top characteristics that attracted people to their current jobs were employee benefits, flexible schedule, interaction with people, pay level, and ease of commute or location. These responses are different from similar studies that were conducted with quick service and casual dining restaurant employees. In those studies, flexible schedules was the most important characteristics that attracted people to their jobs and employee benefits were down lower on the list. This may be due to the average age of the respondents. In the current study, the median age was 36-40, in both of the other studies, the median age was 19-25 (DiPietro & Milman, 2004; DiPietro & Milman, in press). This finding indicates that the strongest reason that attracted people to work for the school district is because the employee benefits that are offered. If the school foodservice manager's average age continues to decline as it has (Pannell-Martin, 1999), the implications for human resource practitioners may be to reevaluate these characteristics.

To determine where there are gaps in the level of importance and actual practices in school foodservice manager jobs, the respondents were asked to evaluate 20 employment characteristics' level of importance and the actual experience that the respondents had with each of the job characteristics. It was determined that there are large gaps between these characteristics in 17 out of 20 situations. The most important job characteristics as rated by respondents were retirement plan, health benefits for the manager, humane and caring approach

to employees, and clear information on job tasks and responsibilities. These again may be a reflection of the average age of the respondents. The largest gaps were found between the importance and experience regarding humane and caring approach to employees, hourly wage, ongoing training, and clear information on job tasks and responsibilities. There were no significant differences between the importance and experience with direct deposit of paycheck, flexible working hours, and company policies. This may be due to the fact that respondents were aware of these characteristics before starting their current jobs.

Respondents were very positive in their responses to the questions regarding level of satisfaction with their current job as most of them responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current job (76.3%). This followed that many of them would refer a friend or family member to a job in the school district (68.4%) and the majority of them would stay in their current job for the next six months (90.6%). This shows that the respondents surveyed were very positive about their job and would likely stay.

When asked what job characteristics would attract them to another company, the largest response was better pay. In keeping with the desire for good benefits, better health benefits and better retirement plans were the next highest characteristics that would attract the respondents to another company. This once again emphasizes the need for school foodservice organizations to ensure that their benefits packages are an outstanding component of the recruiting package.

### **Conclusions**

One of the limitations of the current study was that it was done in one limited geographical area and therefore is not representative of a larger area. It was also performed with schools that were self-operating their school foodservice operation rather than contracting out or using a management company to run their foodservice operation.

Future research could look at employees in school foodservice to determine if they rate job characteristics the same as the managers in the current study. This would help to guide the human resource practices in both managerial and employee ranks. Future research could also analyze self-operating school foodservice compared to foodservice in schools that were contracted out or operated by a management company.

The current study adds to the literature regarding school foodservice managers and why they choose school foodservice jobs and what keeps them in those jobs. This information can help to create human resource practices to allow school districts to more effectively and efficiently recruit managers. The current study also found that there were gaps in importance and experience with 17 of 20 job characteristics. This could be a reason for some of the turnover in management and could be an area that organizations could focus on in order to close the gaps and ensure that good managers are retained.

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