Historically, school administrators schedule recess immediately after lunch. Recent research, however, suggests a plethora of benefits if recess is scheduled before lunch (i.e., decreased plate waste, increased consumption of nutrients, and decreased discipline problems on the playground and in the lunchroom). Thus, the purpose of this study was to survey Indiana elementary principals to identify the practices, perceived benefits and barriers, and attitudes of elementary school principals toward scheduling recess before lunch in Indiana. Email addresses of Indiana principals were obtained from the Executive Director of the Indiana Association of State Principals. An anonymous, online survey was distributed in an individualized email to elementary principals whose lowest grade was 5th or less. Results were evaluated using frequencies (percent) and chi-square analyses. A total of 527 surveys were completed from the 1,392 emails that were successfully delivered (38% response rate). Results indicate 30.7% of elementary schools scheduled recess before lunch, with 69.3% scheduling recess after lunch. Major benefits of scheduling recess before lunch included: increased consumption of lunch, improved behavior in the cafeteria, and increased focus on consuming lunch. Major barriers preventing schools from scheduling recess before lunch were: need to revise the daily schedule, preservation of academic hours, and lack of staffing. There were no significant differences in the
scheduling of lunch and recess by geographic location, school nutrition region, enrollment, percent free or reduced lunch or type of school (p > 0.05). Based on the adjusted standardized residuals, there were significant differences when recess and lunch were scheduled based on the number of lunch periods offered, with schools offering one lunch period significantly more likely to schedule recess after lunch (AR= 2.4), while schools with two lunch periods more likely to schedule recess before lunch (AR= 2.6). The results of this study delineate the prevalence of scheduling recess before lunch in Indiana and helps identify benefits and barriers to this practice.