

Manager's Corner

Forecasting: The Role of School Nutrition Staff

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Improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

VISION

Lead the nation in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

MISSION

Provide relevant research-based information and services that advance the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

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Professional Standards

FOOD PRODUCTION – 2100

Employee will be able to effectively utilize all food preparation principles, production records, kitchen equipment, and food crediting to prepare foods from standardized recipes, including those for special diets.

2120 – Food Production Records

Complete a food production record and other required paperwork.

Introduction

Manager's Corner: Forecasting: The Role of School Nutrition Staff is designed to empower managers to use in training their staff. Each lesson is roughly 15 minutes.

This lesson plan contains:

- Learning objective
- Statement explaining the importance of the topic
- List of materials
- Instructions on how to present the information
- Questions to ask staff
- An activity to strengthen or refresh the knowledge of the staff

Lesson Overview

Instructions for lesson:

- Review the lesson objective and background information.
- Review why it is important.
- Ask staff the questions.
- Facilitate the activity outlined.
- Provide time for staff to ask questions.

Objective: Identify the role of school nutrition staff in the accurate forecasting of foods, goods, works, and services.

Background information: Forecasting is the process of reviewing current and past data (lunch counts) to figure out future trends.

Why it is important: Accurate forecasting of foods is important because it helps to ensure enough food is produced so that all students will be served the same menu item on the same day. It also helps the district to work with vendors for planning the quantity of foods needed during the month and year.

Questions for Staff

- **What are the benefits of accurate forecasting?**

Answer: Forecasting the specific type and quantity of food a school nutrition operation needs can provide a variety of benefits. Accurate forecasting of foods is important because it helps to ensure all students will be served the same menu item on the same day. It allows vendors to plan the quantity of foods needed in the month, semester, and year. It also allows managers to control inventory and food costs.

- **What can you, as school nutrition staff, do to help the school nutrition manager accurately forecast foods?**

Answer: Many factors contribute to accurately forecasting foods, and the school nutrition staff plays a vital role in the process. These factors include accurately completing production records, batch cooking to help reduce waste, preparing the correct quantity, serving the correct portion size, and communicating when outside factors change the normal meal counts (like when a class is going on a field trip).

Please note: The answers provided are only examples and are not an inclusive list of possible responses.

Activity: The Day They Ran Out of Chili

Activity materials included in this document:

- Scenario: The Day They Ran Out of Chili

Materials provided by the school nutrition operation:

No supplemental materials are required for this activity.

Activity Instructions:

- Read the scenario *The Day They Ran Out of Chili* to the staff.
- Ask the staff to respond to the questions at the end of the scenario.

Scenario: The Day They Ran Out of Chili

A principal contacts the school nutrition staff while the manager is out of the office and passionately communicated that several students stated they did not receive the vegetarian chili, which had been on the school lunch menu that day. The principal reminds the individual on the phone that, "This is the third time the kitchen has not had enough vegetarian chili for the entire meal service." The principal requests an explanation within 30 minutes. The production record indicates to prepare 250 servings of vegetarian chili.

The manager immediately is informed of the situation. After reviewing the past production records, the manager is puzzled since the projection of 250 servings appeared to be more than enough for all meal services.

The manager investigates the situation and learns:

- On a previous production record, staff did not complete the production record until the next day.
- The staff noted on the record that there were no servings left.
- The staff forgot to note the shortage of chili for the last meal service and did not note the number of students that did not receive the vegetarian chili.
- The staff keeps a personal notebook of the number of servings of food. When the manager asked the purpose of the notebook, a staff member replied, "This helps me remember the number of servings of certain items, so when I don't have time to complete the production record the day of the service I can just refer to my notes and use this number."

- **What actions can help avoid this scenario in the future?**
 - Example responses:
 - Complete production records on a daily basis.
 - Record accurate information.
 - Communicate to the manager any excess or shortages of menu items.
 - Retrain employees on how and when to complete production records.

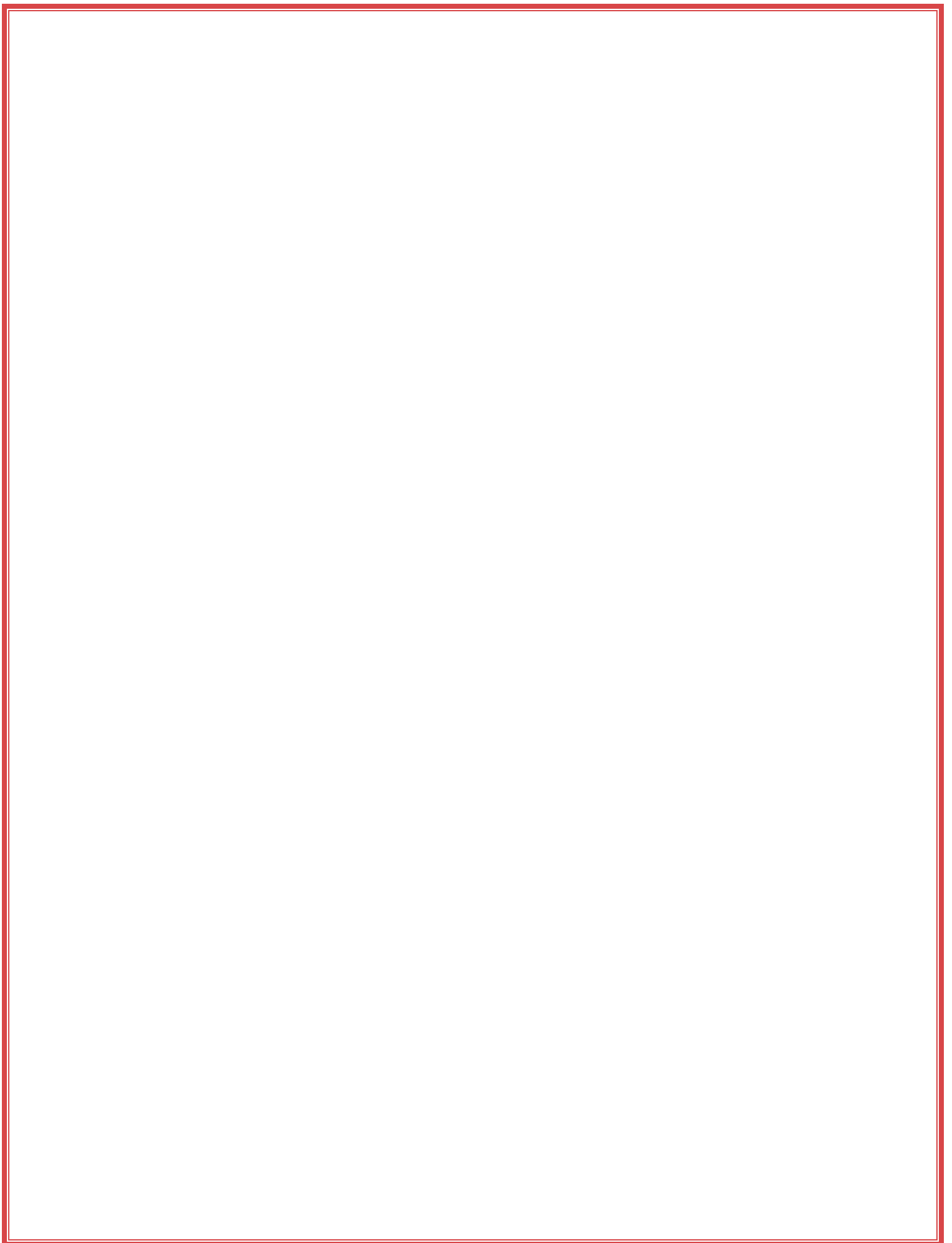
- **What is the impact of providing inaccurate information on a production record?**
 - Example responses:
 - Production records are a requirement of the school meals program and are part of an Administrative Review.
 - If a substitution is provided, the substitution may not meet the requirements of a reimbursable meal.
 - If a substitution is provided, inventory becomes inaccurate due to using another product that was reserved for another meal.
 - Meal participation may decrease due to unhappy customers.

Please note: The answers provided are only examples and are not an inclusive list of possible responses.

References

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2019). *STAR procurement and inventory management instructor's manual*. University, MS: Author.

United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Professional standards for school nutrition professionals*. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/professional-standards>





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