

# Manager's Corner

## Create a Positive Customer Experience

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NUTRITION



OPERATIONS



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COMMUNICATIONS/  
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# Institute of Child Nutrition

## The University of Mississippi

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### **PURPOSE**

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

### COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING – 4100

**Employee will be able to develop plans that include involvement with school and community members, empower school nutrition leaders, and address excellent customer service.**

4130 – Customer Service

Empower school nutrition staff to provide excellent customer service.

## Introduction

*Manager's Corner: Create a Positive Customer Experience* 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:** Describe ways that the school nutrition staff can create a positive customer experience in the cafeteria.

**Background information:** School nutrition staff can create a positive customer experience in the cafeteria by providing the same experiences you enjoy at your favorite restaurants. By greeting students when they enter the cafeteria, putting a smile on your face, addressing students by their names, or even promoting exciting menu offerings each day can make a difference with student customers.

**Why it is important:** When people receive good customer service, they are more likely to enjoy the meal or the product. Establishing positive relationships with students is dependent on outstanding customer service. The main focus of school nutrition is to meet the dietary needs of student customers while providing a positive experience.

## Questions for Staff

- **What do you think of when you hear the words “customer service”?**  
**Answer:** Responses will vary. Examples might include: provide a good experience that people want to return, meeting customers' expectations, or provide a quality product (food) that people enjoy.
- **What are some good customer service experiences you've had when dining out at a restaurant?**  
**Answer:** Responses will vary. Examples might include: Being greeted when entering the restaurant, being seated in a timely manner, beverages being refilled before asking, the order is correct, and the food is of good quality.

- **Why is customer service important in a cafeteria?**

**Answer:** When people receive good customer service, they are more likely to enjoy the meal or the product. The cafeteria should have a positive atmosphere for children, and they should receive the same customer service that they would at a restaurant. If the atmosphere is positive, it can cause children to enjoy eating at school.

- **What does a student customer expect?**

**Answer:** Today's students eat out more often than those in previous generations. Changes to the National School Lunch Act have helped schools gain control over the outside influences of marketing and advertising to students in the school setting. Students expect the food, atmosphere, staff, and service line to be similar to what they experience when eating out in a commercial restaurant. They have grown to expect quick service and high value for their money and to be greeted by a pleasant server. Students prefer to customize their order or have some type of choice when it comes to selecting the food items they want to eat. They want to see food that is attractive, convenient, fresh, and tastes good. For customers to be satisfied, school nutrition programs must provide outstanding customer experience.

- **Why is it important that school nutrition staff have a good relationship with the students?**

**Answer:** Cafeteria staff have an amazing opportunity to build good relationships with the students, so they feel special. When cafeteria staff interact with students or offer a kind smile, it can brighten their day and make them feel like someone at the school cares. For example, when students are addressed by name in a positive way, it can be impactful.

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

## Activity: Customer Experience

**Activity materials included in this document:**

- **Customer Experience**
- **Customer Experience Answer Key**

**Materials provided by the school nutrition operation:**

- Copies of handouts.
- Pens/Pencils

**Activity Instructions:**

- Print the handouts and worksheets.
- Ask staff to complete the **Customer Experience**.
- At the conclusion of the activity, review the **Customer Experience Answer Key**.



## Customer Experience

**Instructions:** Write your response to the questions. Share your responses with the staff.

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**What can the school nutrition staff do to create a positive cafeteria experience?**

**What are some ways to improve customer satisfaction?**

## Customer Experience Answer Key

**Instructions:** Write your response to the questions. Share your responses with the staff.

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**What can the school nutrition staff do to create a positive cafeteria experience?**

**Example responses:**

- Wear fun shirts or outfits on special occasions
- Wear name tags so students can get to know the cafeteria staff too
- Add fun decorations or colorful posters to the students' cafeteria
- Smile and greet the students; address them by name; interact with students
- Serve menus around themes on holidays

**What are some ways to improve customer service?**

**Example responses:**

- Smiling at the students
- Asking them, "How may I help you?" "What would you like?" "How are you today?"
- Saying, "You're welcome" or "my pleasure."
- Having patience when a student spills something and cleaning it up with a smile

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

## References

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