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**Sodium
Reduction
VILT Series**

Maintaining Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals

Instructor's Manual

Sodium Reduction VILT Series: Maintaining Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals

Instructor's Manual

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Key Areas:

1000 Nutrition

2000 Operations

USDA Professional Standards Codes:

1300 – General Nutrition

1100 – Meal Planning

2400 – Purchasing and Procurement

2100 – Food Production

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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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Instructor's Note: The purpose of the background information section is to help you become familiar with the context of the training. It is not a part of the training details.

Introduction

In January 2012, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published the final rule, *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs* (77 FR 4088), that updated the meal patterns and nutrition standards for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to reflect the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. One provision of the updated nutrition standards required the gradual reduction in the sodium content of school meals offered in the NSLP and SBP by meeting progressively lower-sodium targets.

On February 7, 2022, USDA FNS announced *Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium* (87 FR 6984) to support the continued provision of nutritious school meals as schools respond to and recover from the pandemic. The final rule modified the proposed sodium standards by establishing Sodium Target 1 as the sodium limit for school lunch and breakfast in SY 2022–2023 and implementing a Sodium Interim Target 1A effective for school lunch beginning in SY 2023–2024. In 2024, USDA FNS announced the Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which maintains the current sodium limits—Target 1A for lunch and Target 1 for breakfast—until June 30, 2027 and the associated reductions in lunch and breakfast starting on July 1, 2027.

USDA FNS has conducted studies investigating the barriers and challenges School Food Authorities (SFAs) face when implementing sodium nutrition standards. In 2019, USDA FNS conducted the *Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals* study to examine the market availability of foods that meet the current and future sodium targets for school meal programs and to identify best practices in schools that are successfully meeting sodium targets. These training modules explore some strategies identified as useful in meeting sodium targets.

The Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) developed four virtual instructor-led trainings sessions to reach school nutrition directors, dietitians, and menu planners nationwide. The training will focus on sodium reduction through menu planning and analysis, procurement, staff training, and maintaining student satisfaction. The intended audience includes directors, dietitians, and menu planners operating heat-and-serve or hybrid (heat-and-serve/speed-scratch/scratch) models focused on reducing sodium in their menus.

Sodium Reduction VILT Series sessions will consist of instruction on the subject, subject matter expert or peer presentation, facilitator-led breakout discussion, and hands-on application. The lead facilitator will introduce the handouts in the chat and BOX folder, the training objectives, a high-level overview of the training content, SMART goals, and the presenters. Following instruction and subject matter expert or peer presentation, the participants will form breakout discussion groups led by a group facilitator. After the training, participants will formulate action plans, including SMART goals, incorporating the gained knowledge into their nutrition program.

Maintaining Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals is one of the four virtual trainings. This training on maintaining student acceptability of lower-sodium meals aims to equip directors, dietitians, and menu planners with the skills and knowledge required to develop palatable, lower-sodium menus and recipes that meet the needs of elementary, middle, and high school students. Participants will learn how to develop and implement taste and meal preference survey tools, assess survey results, and incorporate customer feedback into menus and recipes. They will also gain an understanding of how to form and manage student nutrition advisory councils and involve students in the recipe and menu development process. By the end of the training, participants will have the skills and knowledge to create lower-sodium meals that are both healthy and appealing to students.

Prompts are as follows:

SAY: What the instructor is to say to participants. This is the content that teaches the learning objectives.

ASK: This prompt is used when the instructor should ask the participants a question.

FEEDBACK: This prompt is used to ensure certain elements are covered in discussions.

DO: This prompt is used to explain what the instructor or participants are to do. It may be used to lead into activities, do demonstrations, or show videos.

SHOW SLIDE: This prompt is used for showing slides. Each slide must have its own unique title. Slides should not be content-heavy or contain content not covered in the Instructor's Manual.

PRE-/POST-ASSESSMENTS: This manual includes a Pre-/Post-Assessment that will be administered at the beginning and the end of the training.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE: The Instructor's Note prompt provides additional information or helpful hints. This information should not be shared with the participants unless prompted. Instructions should be included in the "DO" segment.

FUNCTIONAL AREA AND COMPETENCIES

Functional Area 3: Food Production and Operation Management

Competency 3.1: Develops a management system to ensure high standards for quality food production.

Knowledge Statement: Knows principles of food science and fundamentals of flavor enhancement related to quantity food production, holding, serving, and appealing food presentation.

Functional Area 7: Menu and Nutrition Management

Competency 7.1: Develops guidelines for planning menus that comply with nutrition objectives and support operational goals of the school nutrition program.

Knowledge Statement: Knows menu planning principles.

Functional Area 8: Procurement and Inventory Management

Competency 8.1: Develops procurement guidelines that comply with established regulations and support operational goals of the school nutrition program.

Knowledge Statement: Knows federal, state, and local procurement regulations, policies, and procedures governing all school nutrition program purchases.

Source: *Institute of Child Nutrition. (2009). Competencies, knowledge, and skills for district-level school nutrition professionals in the 21st century. University, MS: Author.*

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Nutrition 1000

Menu Planning – 1100

Employee will be able to effectively and efficiently plan and prepare standardized recipes, cycle menus, and meals, including the use of USDA Foods, to meet all Federal school nutrition program requirements, including the proper meal components.

1150 – Analyze menus for school meal pattern requirements.

General Nutrition – 1300

Employee will be able to understand the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, USDA's food guidance system concepts and general nutrition principles.

1320 – Understand general nutrition concepts that relate to school meals, such as whole grains, sodium, etc.

Operations 2000

Food Production – 2100

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

2150 – Understand CN Labeling, product formulation statements and/or appropriate crediting information for school meal pattern requirements.

Purchasing and Procurement – 2400

Employee will be able to effectively and efficiently implement purchasing procedures and practices in order to appropriately and best utilize supplies and USDA Foods to meet menu requirements and comply with all Federal, State, and local regulations.

2430 – Purchase food, supplies, and equipment through vendors, meeting school district specifications in compliance with Federal, State, and local procurement regulations and availability of USDA Foods.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this training, participants will be able to accomplish the following objectives:

- Describe how to develop and implement taste and meal preference survey tools for elementary, middle, and high school students.
 - Explain how to assess results from meal preference surveys and incorporate customer preferences into menus and recipes.
 - Describe how to develop and implement customer feedback survey tools on existing menus and recipes.
 - Explain how to assess results from customer feedback surveys and modify menus and recipes to improve customer acceptance.
 - Recall how to form and manage a student nutrition advisory council in elementary, middle, and high schools.
 - Identify activities that involve students in the recipe and menu development process.
 - Develop an action plan to incorporate customer feedback and preferences into school menus.
-

GROUND RULES

ICN has developed Ground Rules to help the class run smoothly and allows all participants to benefit from the course instruction and information. (These Ground Rules can be found on the ICN website – [Ground Rules for Training Mini-Posters.](#))

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Instructions: The following tasks are necessary for presenting this lesson. Assign each task to a specific person and determine the date that each task must be completed. Keep track of the progress by checking off tasks as they are completed.

Task	Person Responsible	Completion Date	✓
Reserve equipment and gather supplies as needed for use on the day of class (6 weeks prior). Instructor's Manual Roster of participants attending for instructor Participants' sign-in sheets List of equipment and supplies needed Computer Microphone Webcam Pens, pencils, note paper Calculator Participant's Workbook	Instructor		
Agenda, roster of presenters/participants, and handouts			
Pre-/Post-Assessments (available at www.theicn.org)			
Other handouts (documents from outside sources needed for VILT)			

TRAINING-AT-A-GLANCE

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC
20 minutes	Introduction
80 minutes	Lesson 1: Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student acceptability• Engaging students• Menu Surveys• Taste-Test Surveys• Assessing survey results• Developing and implementing survey data• Assessing survey results• Implementing change
40 minutes	Lesson 2: Strategies for Maintaining Student Acceptability <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student Nutrition Advisory Councils (SNACs)• Student engagement activities
40 minutes	Culminating Activity and Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put it all together
3 hours	Total Time

LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE

Training Introduction

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions	
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training Overview• Pre-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-Assessment

INTRODUCTION

SHOW SLIDE: *Maintaining Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals*

SAY: Welcome to the *Maintaining Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals* training. The Institute of Child Nutrition would like to thank you for providing us with the opportunity to offer this sodium reduction virtual instructor-led training. It is our hope that you will gain the knowledge and skills for implementing sodium-reduction strategies into your school nutrition program.

This training is part of the Shaking It Up! Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors series. It provides the foundational knowledge and skills needed to reduce the amount of sodium in school meals while ensuring that meals are flavorful and satisfying for students.

We are going to cover some general information before exploring staff training and engagement for sodium reduction success.

First, let's begin by getting to know each other.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Introductions***Activity: Introductions**

Materials: Mute or Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 5 minutes

Instructions: Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to introduce themselves.

DO: Introduce yourself and other special guests. Be sure to state your name, title/credentials, and your experience in school nutrition and other child nutrition programs.

SAY: Please unmute and introduce yourself, including your name, title/credentials, and your experience in school nutrition and other child nutrition programs.

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat.

FEEDBACK: Thank the participants for responding.

SHOW SLIDE: *Logistics*

SAY: To help ensure this training is a success, there are a few key things to keep in mind.

- ICN has some training ground rules as you can see on the screen. They are:
 1. Show up on Time
 2. Be Present
 3. Let Everyone Participate
 4. Listen with an Open Mind
 5. Think Before Speaking
 6. Attack the Problem Not the Person
- We will take a minimum of two breaks during this training. Please be sure to return on time, as starting and ending breaks on time will allow us to cover all the training information and activities within the time allotted. If you need to stretch or attend to a need at a different time, please feel free to do so. All that I ask is that you leave and return without disturbing the training.
- Feel free to ask any questions in the chat or use the raise hand function to get my attention. I will aim to answer all questions and share the information with the class before the end of this training. Although, I will try to answer questions throughout the training, some questions may require research or a longer answer than time allows. Any questions I cannot answer, I will forward to the ICN for further assistance.
- Throughout the training, I will be referring worksheets from the Shaking It Up! Series, additional resources, and handouts. These can also be found in your Participant's Workbook for this training.

Now that we have reviewed some basic logistical information, let's shift our focus to the training topic, sodium reduction.

SHOW SLIDE: *Background*

SAY: In January 2012, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published the final rule, *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (77 FR 4088)*, that updated the meal patterns and nutrition standards for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to reflect the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. One provision of the updated nutrition standards required the gradual reduction in sodium content of school meals offered in the NSLP and SBP by meeting progressively lower-sodium targets.

On February 7, 2022, USDA FNS announced *Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium (87 FR 6984)* to support the continued provision of nutritious school meals as schools respond to and recover from the pandemic. The final rule modified the proposed sodium standards by establishing Sodium Target 1 as the sodium limit for school lunch and breakfast in SY 2022–2023 and implementing a Sodium Interim Target 1A effective for school lunch beginning in SY 2023–2024. In 2024, USDA FNS announced the *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which maintains the current sodium limits—Target 1A for lunch and Target 1 for breakfast—until 6/30/27 and the associated reductions in lunch and breakfast starting on 7/1/27.

USDA FNS has conducted studies to investigate the barriers and challenges School Food Authorities (SFAs) face when implementing sodium nutrition standards. In 2019, USDA FNS conducted the *Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals* study to examine the market availability of foods that meet the current and future sodium targets for school meal programs and to identify best practices in schools that are successfully meeting sodium targets. These training modules explore some of the strategies identified as useful in meeting the sodium targets.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: [*Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs \(77 FR 4088\)*](#), [*Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium \(87 FR 6984\)*](#), [*Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 7 C.F.R § 210, 215, 220, 225, 226 \(2024\)*](#), and [*Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals*](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Sodium Reduction Virtual Workshop Series*

SAY: In response to the study's findings, the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) developed four virtual instructor-led training sessions to reach school nutrition directors, dietitians, and menu planners throughout the country. The trainings focus on sodium reduction through menu planning and analysis, procurement, staff training, and maintaining student satisfaction. The intended audience includes directors, dietitians, and menu planners operating heat-and-serve or hybrid (heat-and-serve/speed-scratch/scratch) models focused on reducing sodium in their menus.

Sodium Reduction VILT Series sessions consist of instruction on the subject, breakout discussion, and hands-on application. At the conclusion of the training, you will formulate action plans, including SMART goals, incorporating the gained knowledge into your nutrition program.

SHOW SLIDE: *Maintaining Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals*

SAY: *Maintaining Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals* is one of the four VILTs. This training on maintaining student acceptability of lower-sodium meals aims to equip directors, dietitians, and menu planners with the skills and knowledge required to develop palatable, lower-sodium menus and recipes that meet the needs of elementary, middle, and high school students. Participants will learn how to develop and implement taste and meal preference survey tools, assess survey results, and incorporate customer feedback into menus and recipes. They will also gain an understanding of how to form and manage student nutrition advisory council and involve students in the recipe and menu development process. By the end of the training, participants will have the skills and knowledge to create lower-sodium meals that are both healthy and appealing to students.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Pre-Assessment***Activity: Pre-Assessment****Materials:** Link to Pre-Assessment**Time:** 5 minutes**Instructions:** Instruct participants to use the link in the chat or QR code on the screen to complete the Pre-Assessment.**SAY:** Before we begin exploring the first topic, let's assess what you already know about sodium in school meals and maintaining students' acceptance of lower sodium meals by completing a Pre-Assessment.**Instructor's Note:** Paste the link to the Pre-Assessment into the chat box.**DO:** Allow 5 minutes for participants to complete the Pre-Assessment.**Instructor's Note:** It is recommended that you take at least a 5 to 10-minute break for every hour of online learning. Plan breaks accordingly and based on your learners' needs.

LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE LESSON 1: STUDENT ACCEPTABILITY OF LOWER-SODIUM MEALS

Objective: Describe how to develop and implement taste and meal preference survey tools for elementary, middle, and high school students.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student acceptability• Engaging students• Menu Surveys• Taste-Test Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taste-Testing Brainstorm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper or notetaking method of choice• Pen/pencil

Objective: Explain how to assess results from meal preference surveys and incorporate customer preferences into menus and recipes.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessing survey results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper or notetaking method of choice• Pen/pencil

Objective: Describe how to develop and implement customer feedback survey tools on existing menus and recipes.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and implementing survey data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taste-Testing Brainstorm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper or notetaking method of choice Pen/pencil

Objective: Explain how to assess results from customer feedback surveys and modify menus and recipes to improve customer acceptance.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing survey results Implementing change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing Success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper or notetaking method of choice Pen/pencil

LESSON 1: STUDENT ACCEPTABILITY OF LOWER- SODIUM MEALS

SHOW SLIDE: *Lesson 1: Student Acceptability of Lower-Sodium Meals*

SAY: Our first lesson is all about maintaining student acceptability. In this lesson, we will cover how to engage your students in menu development and taste-testing of lower-sodium foods and meals. Let's get started.

Objective: Describe how to develop and implement taste and meal preference survey tools for elementary, middle, and high school students.

SHOW SLIDE: *Why is student acceptability important?*

SAY: To make sure we are all on the same page, we are going to begin with some simple questions.

ASK: Why is student acceptability important?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat. After participants have responded, click to display the feedback on the slide and summarize.

FEEDBACK: Maintaining student acceptability while serving lower-sodium meals is a crucial aspect of school nutrition programs. While reducing sodium in school meals is essential for promoting better health outcomes for students, it can also pose a challenge in terms of maintaining student satisfaction and ensuring that they consume the meals provided. If students do not find their meals appealing, they may be more likely to choose to bring lunch from outside the school or not eat at all, which can have negative consequences on their health and academic performance. Therefore, school nutrition programs need to strike a balance between reducing sodium and maintaining student acceptability to ensure that students are receiving nutritious meals that they enjoy and are willing to consume.

SHOW SLIDE: *Engaging Students in Menu Development*

SAY: A thriving school nutrition program looks beyond the cafeteria and includes input from the entire school community. Key stakeholders in your community include school administration, teachers, staff, parents and guardians, and students. Show your community that you value their opinion by asking for feedback and incorporating it into the menu. Students can participate in menu development and implementing healthier, lower-sodium items through various activities explored in this training, including menu surveys, taste-test surveys, and joining the Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC).

SHOW SLIDE: *Menu and Taste-Test Surveys*

SAY: Menu and taste-test surveys allow the school nutrition staff to interact with a large number of students on a regular basis.

Menu surveys provide an avenue for you to collect feedback and interest on current and future menu items. For example, you can use surveys to ask about specific menu items on days when your meal participation is lower. You can also use surveys to gauge the level of interest in items you are considering for the menu.

Taste-test surveys enable you to test the initial acceptability of new products and recipes. For example, you might need to replace an entrée with a lower-sodium version and use a taste test survey to find out which products students find acceptable.

Let's take a closer look at taste-test surveys.

SHOW SLIDE: *Taste-Test Surveys*

SAY: Numerous tools help to determine students' meal preferences; taste-test surveys are one option. Student taste-test surveys provide menu planners and production staff feedback on menu item popularity. This information can also be shared with brokers, manufacturers, and distributors. Taste-test surveys are used to convey student preferences for the items sampled. Menu planners can decide whether to add these items to the menu based on the results and student feedback.

SHOW SLIDE: *Planning Taste-Test Surveys*

SAY: When it comes to planning a taste-test survey, you need to start with a plan. Here are some things to consider:

- Determine the purpose of the taste test.
- Ensure the potential menu items are appropriate for your program.
- Plan to test no more than three or four items at a time.
- Decide the specifics.
- Develop a summary sheet to record the survey results.
- Decide on an “acceptability” rate.

Let's go through these in more detail.

SHOW SLIDE: *Determine the purpose of the taste test.*

SAY: Determine the purpose of the taste test:

- Is it to sample a potential new menu item?
 - Is it to sample and receive student preference for multiple versions of one menu item (for example, three brands of low-sodium chicken nuggets)?
-

SHOW SLIDE: *Ensure the potential menu items are appropriate for your program.*

SAY: Ensure the potential menu items you want to sample are appropriate for your program. Ask yourself the following menu item consideration questions:

- Does it meet nutrition standards?
- Does it meet the budget or desirable price point?
- Is it available for delivery?
- Do you have the equipment to properly prepare the product?
- Does your staff have the time and skill to prepare it properly?
- Do you have adequate storage for the item?
- Is it appetizing (appearance & plate coverage)?
- Will it hold well on the serving line?

SHOW SLIDE: *Plan to test no more than three or four items at a time.*

SAY: It's important to limit the number of food items that students taste and evaluate to only three or four items at a time. If we ask students to test too many items, they may become tired and lose interest, and their feedback may not be as focused. Additionally, testing too many items can be confusing for students, making it harder to tell which items would be successful if added to the menu. By testing fewer items, we can get more detailed and accurate feedback from students, which helps us make better choices about what foods to serve in schools.

SHOW SLIDE: *Decide the specifics.*

SAY: Decide:

- Who will participate in the testing—specific grades, meal periods, student groups, etc.?
 - When and where will you hold the testing—during a meal period in the cafeteria, in a classroom, etc.?
 - Who is going to set up and facilitate the testing?
 - How much time is available for the taste test?
 - How will you gather your survey results—paper surveys, QR codes, etc.?
-

SHOW SLIDE: *Develop a summary sheet to record the survey results.*

SAY: Creating a summary sheet to keep track of taste test results is important for several reasons. Without one, it can be hard to keep track of what food items were tested, how many students tasted them, and what feedback was given. By having a summary sheet, it's easier to see patterns and trends in what foods the students liked, which can help menu planners and dietitians make healthier and tastier menus. Also, the summary sheet can be shared with school administrators, teachers, and parents to keep everyone informed about what foods are being tested and why. Overall, having a summary sheet helps everyone stay organized and makes sure that the results of taste tests are used to make better food choices.

For example, Montana Team Nutrition has a form to report the results of student taste tests of the local recipes along with feedback related to the recipe. Use this example to create your own summary report based on your survey and questions.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the link can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Link for reference: Montana Team Nutrition's [Test Schools K12 Taste Test Survey Results](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Decide on an “acceptability” rate.*

SAY: Before assessing the taste-test results, decide on an “acceptability” rate to help you determine whether or not to offer or include the menu item.

For example, Wisconsin Team Nutrition used an 85% acceptability rating when conducting student taste tests of recipes featuring local agricultural products. Recipes that did not meet the 85% acceptability rating were modified based on constructive student feedback obtained from the [Wisconsin Team Nutrition Taste Test Ballot](#).

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the link can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Link for reference: [Wisconsin Team Nutrition Taste Test Ballot](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Implementing Taste-Test Surveys*

SAY: Now that we know how to plan for a taste test, let's explore various ways we can implement taste tests.

SHOW SLIDE: *Use disposable soufflé cups or boats for the samples.*

SAY: One method of implementing a taste test would be using disposable soufflé cups or boats for the samples. Students may pick up the samples from the serving line, or cafeteria staff may take them into the dining room, a classroom, or another designated area to test.

SHOW SLIDE: *Follow food safety and sanitation standards.*

SAY: Follow food safety and sanitation standards. Keep hot samples hot and cold samples cold and cover them as needed to prevent contamination. Prevent bare-hand contact with food samples by properly wearing gloves, using single-use containers, or using utensils to plate or pass out samples. Clearly mark any potential allergens the sample may contain.

SHOW SLIDE: *Create a safe place for sharing.*

SAY: Create a safe place for sharing. Explain to the students that you value their opinions and want their feedback to encourage them to participate and share their ideas.

SHOW SLIDE: *Promote customer acceptability.*

SAY: Provide sample items in a manner that promotes customer acceptability. For example, if testing a sauce, accompany it with an appropriate “food partner.”

SHOW SLIDE: *Note verbal comments.*

SAY: Note verbal comments made during the taste test that may also be helpful in menu development.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Taste-Testing Brainstorm*

SAY: Let's take some time to discuss incorporating taste tests into your program.

Activity: Taste-Testing Brainstorm

Materials: Paper or notetaking method of choice, pen or pencil, Mute or Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions: Instruct participants to use the information on taste-testing and the Wisconsin example taste-test ballot as a guide to plan and create a taste-test survey. They will work independently for 10 minutes. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share their answers with the group.

SAY: Using the information on taste testing and the Wisconsin example taste-test ballot as a guide, plan and create a taste-test survey to use in your program. Take 10 minutes to work independently. Then, we will share your ideas and plans with the group.

DO: Allow participants 10 minutes to work independently.

ASK: Who would like to share their plan and taste-test survey?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat.

FEEDBACK: Thank the participants for sharing.

Objective: Explain how to assess results from meal preference surveys and incorporate customer preferences into menus and recipes.

SHOW SLIDE: *What now?*

SAY: When you conduct a taste-test survey, it's important to assess the results carefully. This means looking at the data you collected, analyzing it, and drawing conclusions about what people liked and didn't like. By doing this, you can learn valuable information that can help you make improvements to your product or service and ultimately make it more successful.

SHOW SLIDE: *If the product or recipe is found acceptable ...*

SAY: If the product or recipe is found acceptable, you want to do the following steps:

- Add products or recipes to the menu and assess student satisfaction of the item three times as a serving line choice before incorporating it into a cycle menu.
- Modify how often the item is offered within a cycle menu; students can even become tired of the most popular items.
- Continue to monitor your production records and plate waste for the item; adjust your menu accordingly.

SHOW SLIDE: *If the product or recipe is not found acceptable ...*

SAY: If the product or recipe is not found acceptable, you might want to:

- Reject the product (do not purchase it).
- Revise the recipe based on constructive student feedback if descriptors regarding taste, texture, etc. were included in the taste-test survey. Refer to the Wisconsin Team Nutrition Taste Test Ballot for ideas. Upon revision, the recipe would need to be retested.
- You should verify that the recipe was prepared correctly to ensure the steps were followed. For example, if they were tasting a chicken product plain, and the feedback was that there was not enough breading, they could try preparing it in a sauce and re-testing

SHOW SLIDE: *Assessing Recipes*

SAY: Recipes require special attention if changes need to be made. When assessing a recipe, refer to the product evaluation phase-formal evaluation procedures outlined in the USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: [*USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs*](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Sharing Success***Activity: Sharing Success**

Materials: Breakout Rooms, Mute or Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat Functions

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Instruct participants to brainstorm and share successes and challenges with taste-test surveys. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute or unmute or chat function to share.

SAY: We have discussed planning, implementing, and assessing taste-test surveys. In your Breakout Room, you will share successes and challenges with taste-test surveys for 10 minutes.

Instructor's Note: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms.

ASK: Who would like to share their successes and challenges with taste-test surveys and how they will implement the results in their district?

DO: Allow participants time to share their answers. Thank the participants for sharing.

Objective: Describe how to develop and implement customer feedback survey tools on existing menus and recipes.

SHOW SLIDE: *Developing & Implementing Menu Surveys*

SAY: Menu surveys allow you to collect feedback from students on current and future menu items. Students can be surveyed in various locations, including the cafeteria, classroom, after-school program, etc. Design the survey questions so that the responses can guide action afterward. When planning the survey, identify the students' grade level so that the appropriate number and type of questions and methods are used for distributing and collecting surveys. Let's look at ideas for different ages.

SHOW SLIDE: *Early Elementary Students (Pre K–3rd Grade)*

SAY: The following slides show different survey methods, along with questions and responses that are best used to gather feedback on new or improved menu items from elementary-aged children. You can use any of the formats shown, but the most important part is to choose the one that will work best for you, your students, and your program. For this age group, stick with only one question to not overwhelm the students.

SHOW SLIDE: *Paper-and-Pencil*

SAY: You can pass out paper-and-pencil surveys with the following responses:

- Words: YES (I like it!) / NOT SURE / NO (I do not like it.)
or
- Graphics: “Thumbs Up / Thumbs Down” or Emojis: “Smiley Face / Neutral Face/ Sad Face”

SHOW SLIDE: *Technology*

SAY: Instead of a paper-based survey, you can use technology. Set up similarly to the paper-and-pencil survey, ask students to complete the survey via a computer or tablet. This can be done in coordination with a classroom teacher or a technology/library/media teacher.

SHOW SLIDE: *Tokens*

SAY: Add some fine motor skills engagement by using tokens. At a table, provide the survey question, tokens, and two or three collection boxes. The question should be in a large, easy-to-read font. Each collection box should be marked with a response (words or graphics). Ask students to drop a token into the collection box that represents their response.

For example, one box displays a picture of students holding a thumbs up indicating that they liked the sample and the other box displays a picture of students holding a thumbs down indicating that they did not like the same. The student would then add their token to the box displaying their preference of the sample.

SHOW SLIDE: *Words/Graphics*

SAY: Another similarity to tokens is using words or graphics. At a table, provide the survey question, printed words/graphics to represent possible responses, and a collection box. The question should be in an easy-to-read, large font. Ask students to select the graphic representing their response and drop it into the collection box.

SHOW SLIDE: *Older Elementary (4th and 5th Grade) and Middle School Students*

SAY: Let's explore ways to survey older elementary (4th and 5th grade) and middle school students. This age group can answer more than just one question, but try not to ask more than four to keep their attention focused at the taste test.

SHOW SLIDE: *Paper-and-Pencil*

SAY: Use paper and pencil to collect responses. Use "Yes/No" questions with one to two open-ended questions about your current menu options and menu items you are considering adding to the menu. If an existing menu item is unpopular, use a survey to find out why.

SHOW SLIDE: *Technology*

SAY: Like the paper-and-pencil survey, ask students to complete the survey via a computer or tablet. This can be done in coordination with a classroom teacher or a technology/librarian/media teacher.

SHOW SLIDE: *Consider This*

SAY: For both types of surveys, consider these open-ended questions:

- What do you like most about [menu item]?
- What do you NOT like about [menu item]?
- What would you change about [menu item] to improve it?
- Would you like to see this [menu item] on the menu?
- What food or beverage would you like to see added to the menu?

SHOW SLIDE: *High School Students*

SAY: Provide older students with more detailed evaluation tools that include ratings and a broader range of questions about:

- The portion size, flavor, appearance, and texture of menu items
- Products to accompany menu items, such as sauces, dips, or toppings
- Preferred fruit and vegetable sides for specific entrées
- Favorite menu items from restaurants they would like to see on the school menu

SHOW SLIDE: *Paper-and-Pencil*

SAY: You can also use paper and pencil to collect responses for this audience. Adapt the implementation ideas listed for middle school students. Generally, you can ask more questions and ask for more details.

Use student council members (or other student leaders) to interview students and record comments on a survey tool. Ask teachers to recommend students who may be interested in leading or participating in this activity. If your school has a Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) or similar organization, this would be a great activity for group members.

SHOW SLIDE: *Technology*

SAY: To incorporate technology, post a QR code linked to a short survey in your cafeteria that students can complete using their smartphones. Depending on school policy, you can also ask students to answer questions and post suggestions on social media.

SHOW SLIDE: *All Age/Grade Groups*

SAY: Provide non-food prizes and awards or hold a prize drawing for those who complete and return surveys. Individual prizes might include water bottles, Frisbees™, balls, jump ropes, movie passes, or donated local vendor incentives that promote active, healthy lifestyles. Please note that survey incentives are not an allowable cost to the non-profit school food service accounting. Consider reaching out to your Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or local businesses to donate items.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Taste-Testing Brainstorm*

SAY: Let's take some time to discuss incorporating taste tests into your program.

Activity: Menu Survey Brainstorm

Materials: Breakout Rooms, Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Instruct participants to brainstorm ideas for survey types they can develop for each of their schools. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share.

SAY: We have discussed planning, implementing, and assessing taste-test surveys. In your Breakout Room, you will brainstorm ideas for survey types you can develop for each of your schools for 10 minutes.

Instructor's Note: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms.

ASK: Who would like to share their ideas for menu surveys and how they will implement them in their district?

DO: Allow participants time to share their answers. Thank the participants for sharing.

Objective: Explain how to assess results from customer feedback surveys and modify menus and recipes to improve customer acceptance.

SHOW SLIDE: *Responses are Reputable*

SAY: Verify that collected survey responses are reputable by reviewing the responses and talking to some of the students who provided feedback to gather more information and insight. Teachers can help make sure younger students' genuine opinions are reflected.

SHOW SLIDE: *Listen to Your Customers*

SAY: Listen to your customers and look for themes in their responses. For example, have numerous students mentioned a menu item was too bland or too spicy? Don't be discouraged by unfavorable feedback. All feedback is valuable when assessing ways to make the menu the best it can be.

SHOW SLIDE: *Menu Preferences*

SAY: Menu preferences and likes/dislikes can vary, so significant menu changes should require a number of responses.

SHOW SLIDE: *Ideas*

SAY: Survey responses may include ideas that could improve several menus—such as offering a variety of fresh toppings for burgers, chicken patties, and sandwiches.

SHOW SLIDE: *Look at the Big Picture*

SAY: If an entrée is not well-liked, consider what it is paired with. Would it be more acceptable with different side items? Could it be enhanced with a low-sodium sauce?

SHOW SLIDE: *Production Records*

SAY: Remember, menu item data from your production records provide useful information on menu selections. It can help determine favorite items after they have been offered multiple times.

SHOW SLIDE: *Incorporating Menu Survey Feedback*

SAY: It is important to use the results of your menu survey to make decisions about your menu. This will help you to offer menu items that your customers will enjoy and keep coming back for. Additionally, it shows your customers that you value their opinions and are committed to providing them with a dining experience that meets their expectations.

When you decide to incorporate your students' feedback and update your menu, keep the following ideas in mind.

SHOW SLIDE: *Appeal to the Senses*

SAY: Appeal to your students' senses when making menu modifications—it has to look good, smell good, AND taste good to be a popular menu choice and gain student acceptance.

SHOW SLIDE: *Share Responses*

SAY: Share student survey responses with the entire operations team. The team can help generate ideas on how to improve menu items. This gets buy-in from the staff and gets everyone on the same page.

SHOW SLIDE: *Presentation*

SAY: Make sure the menu item presentation is attractive. Plate it appropriately (right side up, proper spacing, and separated if necessary). Check out USDA's School Meals Trays, Many Ways for presentation ideas.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the link can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Link for reference: [School Meals Trays, Many Ways](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Nutrition Information*

SAY: Consider advertising nutrition information. A number of menu planning and nutrient analysis software programs allow you to post nutritional information of your online menus. Only USDA-approved nutrient analysis software is considered an allowable cost to the non-profit school food service account. Nutrient analysis software with online production record capability can also make it easier to pull reports and look for trends.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the link can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Link for reference: [USDA-approved nutrient analysis software](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Nutrition Education*

SAY: Consider providing nutrition education about the foods on your menu through fact sheets, posters, and learning activities.

Here are some helpful resources for nutrition education:

- USDA's Team Nutrition Resources for Schools offers nutrition education for children and families, among other resources.
- Check out Iowa Team Nutrition's Nutrition Education Tools used to educate students about local Iowa foods.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: USDA's [Team Nutrition Resources for Schools](#), Iowa Team Nutrition's [CNSS](#), and [Nutrition Education Tools](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Make Changes*

SAY: For an unpopular entrée or side:

- Made from a recipe, consider modifying it or trying a new recipe. Be sure to taste test (with your students) and standardize new recipes before putting them in your menu rotation.
- That is a heat-and-serve product, consider procuring a different variety or brand. Ask your distributor for samples; ask your students to taste test the samples for acceptability before they are added to the menu.
- Collaborate with the school culinary community members.

SHOW SLIDE: *Continuous Evaluation*

SAY: Continue to evaluate your menu items' success by monitoring participation trends and production records. While there is no set recommendation for how often to evaluate, set a regular schedule that works best for your program. This may be monthly, quarterly, mid-year, or at the beginning of each school year.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Sharing Success***Activity: Sharing Success**

Materials: Breakout Rooms, Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Instruct participants to brainstorm and share successes and challenges with menu surveys. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share

SAY: We have discussed planning, implementing, and assessing taste-test surveys. In your Breakout Room, you will share successes and challenges with taste-test surveys for 10 minutes. This may include key takeaways or things that you would do differently in your next survey or taste test after completing this training.

Instructor's Note: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms.

ASK: Who would like to share their successes and challenges with menu surveys and how they have implemented the results in their district?

DO: Allow participants time to share their answers. Thank the participants for sharing.

SHOW SLIDE: *Lesson 1 Summary*

SAY: To wrap up this lesson, we learned that:

- Menu and taste-test surveys allow the school nutrition staff to interact with a large number of students on a regular basis.
- Menu surveys provide an avenue for you to collect feedback and interest on current and future menu items.
- Taste-test surveys enable you to test the initial acceptability of new products and recipes.

DO: Encourage participants to take a 5-minute break before Lesson 2.

LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE

LESSON 2: STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING STUDENT ACCEPTABILITY

Objective: Recall how to form and manage a student nutrition advisory council in elementary, middle, and high schools.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Student Nutrition Advisory Councils (SNACs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Student Nutrition Advisory Council Brainstorm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Paper or notetaking method of choicePen/pencil

Objective: Identify activities that involve students in the recipe and menu development process.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Student engagement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sharing Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Paper or notetaking method of choicePen/pencil

LESSON 2: STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING STUDENT ACCEPTABILITY

SHOW SLIDE: *Lesson 2: Strategies for Maintaining Student Acceptability*

SAY: Our second lesson is all about strategies for maintaining student acceptability. In this lesson, we will discuss how to form and manage a student nutrition advisory council and discuss activities that involve students in the recipe and menu development process. Let's get started.

Objective: Recall how to form and manage a student nutrition advisory council in elementary, middle, and high schools.

SHOW SLIDE: *Student Nutrition Advisory Council*

SAY: A Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) is a group of students and other school representatives (teachers and staff) who are interested in advancing wellness in their school by engaging in the evaluation of their school meal program. School nutrition operators and other school representatives provide support, guidance, and act as a liaison to the school. Participating in a SNAC provides students a voice and a platform to engage in menu planning for their school. Student members work to:

- Create a student-centered, nutritious menu
- Improve student acceptability of meals
- Encourage students to make healthy choices

SHOW SLIDE: *Assembling a Council*

SAY: When assembling your council each school year, consider these questions to identify potential members:

- Who can support and guide the group in addition to school nutrition operators?
 - Ask the school administration for suggestions on teachers and staff who could support and guide the SNAC. Also, consider specialty teachers, counselors, afterschool program staff, coaches, and parents.
- How to identify potential student members?
 - Ask teachers and staff for student recommendations.
 - Ask your fellow nutrition operators for recruitment suggestions! Are there particular students that regularly participate and positively engage with school nutrition staff?
 - Strive for representation of the entire student body.
 - For older students, consider initially targeting those enrolled in health, family and consumer sciences, biological sciences, pre-nursing, and culinary arts classes.

SHOW SLIDE: *Managing a Council*

SAY: Once you have identified your council members, schedule the first meeting to set goals and organizational structure. Explain to the students the importance of their participation and how they will influence menu items and nutrition activities. Consider presenting information on the meal pattern and dietary requirements. USDA's *How School Lunch is Made* and *How You Can Help* is an excellent resource to share with middle and high school students.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the link can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Link for reference: [*How School Lunch is Made and How You Can Help*](#)

SHOW SLIDE: *Interest and Goals*

SAY: Ask them what their interests and goals are for the school nutrition program and SNAC. Share your program goals as part of the goal-setting process:

- Are you trying to increase participation?
 - Are you testing new menu items and recipes?
 - Do you want to develop a new menu, service line, or style of service?
 - Do you want to promote good nutrition?
-

SHOW SLIDE: *Organization*

SAY: The group should also establish how they will be organized:

- Who is the leader?
- Who will take notes?
- How frequently will the group meet and for how long? Meeting frequency and duration depend on the grade group and tasks they are interested in completing. Meetings do not need to be long, but they should be meaningful—be sure to have an agenda. Meeting times and locations will vary depending on your unique school environment and the activities the council would like to pursue.
- How will activities and follow-up items be communicated to the group?

SHOW SLIDE: Activity: Student Nutrition Advisory Council Brainstorm

SAY: Let's take some time to discuss incorporating a SNAC into your program.

Activity: Student Nutrition Advisory Council Brainstorm

Materials: Paper or notetaking method of choice, pen/pencil, Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Instruct participants to brainstorm benefits of having a SNAC and considerations to keep in mind when forming and managing a student nutrition advisory council. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share.

SAY: Now, it is time to brainstorm benefits of having a SNAC and considerations to keep in mind when forming and managing a student nutrition advisory council. Take 10 minutes to discuss this in your group.

Instructor's Note: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms.

ASK: What are three considerations to keep in mind when forming and managing a student nutrition advisory council?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat.

ASK: What are two benefits of having a student nutrition advisory council in menu planning?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat.

FEEDBACK: Thank the participants for sharing.

Objective: Identify activities that involve students in the recipe and menu development process.

SHOW SLIDE: *Student Engagement*

SAY: Getting students involved in recipe and menu development is important in school nutrition programs because it helps to create a sense of ownership and excitement around school meals, encourages students to try new foods, and allows for menus that reflect the unique tastes and preferences of the student body. When students have a say in what is being served, they are more likely to enjoy their meals, leading to increased participation in the school lunch program and better health outcomes for students overall. Now, let's discuss some examples.

- Discuss menu options and student preferences.
- Brainstorm creative names for menu items.
- Provide a “behind-the-scenes” kitchen tour.
- Ask students to participate in taste-testing new products and recipes.
- Distribute and collect menu surveys.
- Review menus from previous years to see if there are items that could be brought back or modified.
- Help plan promotions for National School Lunch Week and National School Breakfast Week.
- Promote school meals and healthy food choices—develop artwork, posters, and bulletin boards; write morning announcements/videos; create social media posts; etc.
- Take an active role in growing a school garden and harvesting the crops. The Team Nutrition Garden Resources page provides resources for educators, posters, and activities for elementary school children.
- Start a compost program.
- Brainstorm plate-waste reduction ideas. USDA's What You Can Do To Help Prevent Wasted Food booklet outlines tips to help school staff, parents, and students reduce the amount of food wasted at schools.
- Perform community service projects centered on healthy meals and healthy eating, such as helping maintain community garden spaces, hosting a healthful food drive, and sharing a meal with a senior citizen.
- Help facilitate a nutrition-based school assembly or fair. Consider including a cooking demo that highlights a variety of entrées offered by your program. Review USDA's School Lunch Resources for age/grade-appropriate information that can be shared with your audience.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the links can be found in the Participant's Workbook on the additional resources page.

Links for reference: [Team Nutrition Garden Resources](#), [What You Can Do To Help Prevent Wasted Food](#), and [School Lunch Resources](#)

Activity: Sharing Success

Materials: Breakout Rooms, Mute/Unmute, Raise Hand, Chat functions

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions: Divide participants into groups for Breakout Rooms of 3 participants each. Instruct participants to brainstorm and share successes and challenges with strategies for engaging students in the recipe and menu development process. Allow 10 minutes in the breakout rooms. End the Breakout Rooms. Instruct participants to use the mute/unmute or chat function to share.

SAY: We have discussed planning activities for student engagement. In your Breakout Room, you will share successes and challenges with strategies for engaging students in the recipe and menu development process for 10 minutes.

ASK: Who would like to share their successes and challenges with strategies for engaging students in the recipe and menu development process?

DO: Allow participants time to share their answers. Thank the participants for sharing.

SHOW SLIDE: *Lesson 2 Summary*

SAY: To wrap up this lesson, we learned that:

Student engagement helps to:

- Create a student-centered, nutritious menu
- Improve student acceptability of meals
- Encourage students to make healthy choices

DO: Encourage participants to take a 5-minute break before the Culminating Activity and Action Plan.



LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE CULMINATING ACTIVITY AND ACTION PLAN

Objective: Develop an action plan to incorporate customer feedback and preferences into school menus.

TIME ALLOWED	TOPIC	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
35 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Put it all together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Culminating ActivityAction PlanPost-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Action Plan handoutSMART Goals handout

CULMINATING ACTIVITY AND ACTION PLAN

SHOW SLIDE: *Culminating Activity and Action Plan*

SAY: Our final lesson today is unique. You will be using all of the student engagement sodium reduction knowledge and strategies that you learned to maintain student acceptability of lower-sodium meals. You will have 30 minutes to work independently to complete the culminating activity and your action plan. For the activity, you will be assessing your own staff and their knowledge and skills.

Objective: Develop an action plan to incorporate customer feedback and preferences into school menus.

SHOW SLIDE: *Activity: Independent Work Time*

Activity: Culminating Activity and Action Plan

Materials: *Action Plan* handout in Participant's Workbook, pen/pencil

Time: 20 minutes

Instructions: Instruct participants to analyze and assess their current level of student engagement to identify strategies to incorporate student engagement for sodium reduction success. Choose one or two strategies to focus on and plan how they will incorporate them into their program. Participants will write SMART goals targeted at incorporating more student engagement in their program. They will work independently for 20 minutes and then share their answers with the group.

SAY: It's your turn to practice. You will analyze and assess your current level of student engagement to identify strategies to incorporate student engagement for sodium reduction success. Choose one or two strategies to focus on and plan how you will incorporate them into your program. Then, you will write SMART goals targeted at incorporating more student engagement in your program. A SMART goal is a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objective designed to guide and evaluate progress effectively. You will work independently for 20 minutes and then share your strategies and action plans with the group.

Instructor's Note: Remind participants that the handout can be found in the Participant's Workbook.

DO: Start the timer on the slide and display on the screen. Allow the participants to work independently for 20 minutes. After the time is up, welcome the participants back to the group.

Instructor's Note: Feel free to turn off your camera and mute during the 20 minutes of independent work. Be ready to start back on time.

SHOW SLIDE: Activity: *Sharing Strategies and Action Plans*

Activity: Sharing Strategies and Action Plans

Materials: *Action Plan* handout, *SMART Goals* handout, pen/pencil

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions: Break participants into breakout rooms of 3-4 people. Instruct participants to share their identified strategies to implement to incorporate student engagement for sodium reduction success. Allow participants to share in the breakout rooms for 10 minutes. Then, bring the group together to share highlights and main points.

SAY: Welcome back! I cannot wait to hear about all the great student engagement strategies you have planned. I will be sending you into breakout rooms to share and discuss the identified strategies to incorporate student engagement for sodium reduction success. Then, we will come back as a group to share highlights and main points.

DO: Break participants into breakout rooms of 3-4 people. Allow participants to share in the breakout rooms for 10 minutes. Then, bring the group together to share highlights and main points.

SAY: Who would like to share first?

DO: Encourage participants to respond. Allow participants time to unmute and answer or post in the chat.

FEEDBACK: Thank the participants for sharing.

SAY: Wow, you all have identified some great strategies to reduce sodium in your menus. Best of luck in your sodium reduction journey.

WRAP UP



SHOW SLIDE: *Thank You!*

DO: Ask participants to complete the Post-Assessment. Ask participants to complete the evaluation. Thank participants. Ask if there are any questions. Answer participants' questions. Distribute the training certificates out at this time.

Instructor's Note: Paste the link to the post-assessment into the chat.

APPENDIX

The Shaking It Up! sodium resources provide tangible, practical guidance for school nutrition professionals to implement sodium reduction best practices and strategies in their school foodservice operations. The worksheets provide a deep dive into a sodium reduction topic and related strategies, feature scenarios or school success stories to demonstrate sodium reduction best practices, and include activities to test and reinforce key concepts.

Featured worksheets:

- Engaging Students in Menu Development

Featured tip sheets:

- Planning, Implementing, and Assessing Taste-Test Surveys
- Developing, Implementing, And Assessing Menu Surveys
- Assembling and Managing a Student Nutrition Advisory Council



ENGAGING STUDENTS IN MENU DEVELOPMENT

A thriving school nutrition program looks beyond the cafeteria and includes input from the entire school community. Key stakeholders in your community include school administration, teachers, staff, parents and caregivers, and students. Show your community that you value their opinion by asking for feedback and incorporating it into the menu. Students can participate in menu development and implementing healthier, lower-sodium items through various activities explored in this worksheet, including menu surveys, taste-test surveys, and joining the Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC).

MENU AND TASTE-TEST SURVEYS

Menu and taste-test surveys allow the school nutrition staff to interact with a large number of students on a regular basis.

Menu surveys provide an avenue for you to collect feedback and interest on current and future menu items. For example, you can use surveys to ask about specific menu items on days when your meal participation is lower. You can also use surveys to gauge the level of interest in items you are considering for the menu. Refer to ICN's [Developing, Implementing, and Assessing Menu Surveys](#) tip sheet to learn more about menu surveys.

Taste-test surveys enable you to test the initial acceptability of new products and recipes. For example, you might need to replace an entrée with a lower-sodium version and use a taste test survey to find out which products students find acceptable. Check out ICN's [Planning, Implementing, and Assessing Taste-Test Surveys](#) tip sheet to learn more about utilizing taste-test surveys.

STUDENT NUTRITION ADVISORY COUNCIL

A SNAC is a group of students and other school representatives who are interested in advancing wellness in their school by engaging in the evaluation of their school meal program. Participating in a SNAC provides students a voice and a platform to engage in menu planning. Student members, along with school nutrition operators and other school representatives (teachers and staff), work together to:

- Create a student-centered, nutritious menu
- Improve student acceptability of meals
- Encourage students to make healthier choices

Refer to ICN's [Building and Managing a Student Nutrition Advisory Council \(SNAC\)](#) tip sheet for more information on how to build and manage a SNAC, along with suggested activities.

SEEK ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Before interacting with students, always seek support and approval from your school administration.

Meet with your school principal or administrator to explain the importance of student participation in the school nutrition program. Pitch the benefits of school breakfast and lunch on student learning. Share information from the following resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [School Meals](#)
- Food Research & Action Center's [Benefits of School Breakfast](#) and [Benefits of School Lunch](#)
- United States Department of Agriculture's fact sheets on the [National School Lunch Program](#) and [School Breakfast Program](#) and information from [The School Day Just Got Healthier: School Administrators and Foodservice](#)

Educate your school principal or administrator on the meal pattern, dietary specifications (including sodium limits), and meal participation. Discuss the impact of healthy meals on the whole child, including physical and cognitive health and performance.

Plan to:

- Schedule time to collect menu feedback and engage students in taste-test surveys.
- Identify teachers and staff who will coordinate with you to promote and collect feedback for the program.
- Start or continue a SNAC; educate SNAC members about their local wellness school policy and encourage participation with their local wellness committee.
- Collaborate with student groups or activities that support your nutrition program.

Use the following table to prepare for a meeting with the administration.

Seek Administrative Support Activity	
1. Write your “pitch.” Try to capture the “who, what, where, when, why, and how” in one sentence.	<p>Pitch: <i>As the food service manager at XYZ Middle School, I would like support for administering taste tests in the hallway foyer following selected 6th, 7th, and 8th grade lunch periods to find lower-sodium entrées that are acceptable to the students.</i></p>
2. Outline the benefits for the students and the school’s nutrition program.	<p>Benefits:</p>
3. Specify the proposed activities.	<p>Proposed activities:</p>
<p>4. Remember to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to the administration’s comments, concerns, and suggestions; demonstrate willingness to adjust your plan accordingly. • Ask for suggested teacher/support staff to involve. • Thank the administration for meeting with you. Tell them how much you appreciate their support for your school’s nutrition program. • Promptly follow up with an email summarizing the discussion. • Inform administration of the activities’ outcomes. 	

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN MENU DEVELOPMENT

- Partner with your district’s culinary program.
 - Work with culinary teachers and students to create menu items or a full menu that meets the meal pattern and dietary specifications.
 - Hold a contest among students to develop recipes that can be incorporated into the school nutrition program.
 - Encourage participation in programs such as:
 - “Cooking up Change,” sponsored by the [Healthy Schools Campaign](#), which “challenges high school culinary students to create healthy, delicious meals that meet the real-life requirement of the National School Lunch Program—and taste great to their classmates.”
 - [ProStart®](#), sponsored by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, which is a two-year, industry-backed culinary arts and restaurant management program for high school students.
- Utilize “student influencers.”
 - Student influencers represent the best of your diverse student body (and regularly eat school breakfast and/or lunch) and are interested in advocating for your school nutrition program.
 - Listen to the [Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition’s](#) webinar recording of [Engaging Student Influencers for Product Selection, Menu Planning, and Program Promotion](#) for ideas of how other schools utilize student influencers.

ENGAGING STUDENTS IN MENU DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS STORY

Julie Anderson, Family and Consumer Sciences and Health Educator

In March 2022, Wisconsin Team Nutrition hosted its 10th annual [Whipping Up Wellness, Wisconsin Student Chef Competition](#). Teams of three to five students in grades six through twelve from across Wisconsin competed to develop nutritious, student-friendly recipes featuring local foods that could easily be incorporated into their school nutrition program. In addition to several other requirements, this year's breakfast or lunch entree or side dish recipe needed to include broccoli, carrots, potatoes (all varieties except sweet), or winter squash as a main ingredient. Students were also encouraged to develop a recipe that contained less than 10%

of calories from saturated fat and 480 mg of sodium per serving. Recipes were scored on creativity, recipe presentation, use of Wisconsin agricultural products, school food service reproducibility (including affordability), and level of application completion. Qualifying recipes were featured in the annual *Whipping Up Wellness Cookbook*, and one overall champion was selected. This year, 56 teams submitted recipes and 24 recipes are featured in the [Whipping Up Wellness Wisconsin Student Chef Competition 2022 Cookbook](#).

The 2022 champion, *Yummy Tummies* of New Glarus High School New Glarus School District, won with their *Creamiest Vegan Chickpea Curry* recipe, featuring local carrots as a main ingredient. Their recipe contained 7.34% of calories from saturated fat and 463 mg of sodium per serving, meeting the recommended nutritional requirements. The team, led by Julie Anderson, a Family and Consumer Sciences teacher at New Glarus High School, consisted of a freshman, sophomore, and senior foreign exchange student. Julie requires her introductory culinary students to compete in the student chef competition for their final class project. She explained, "The students are given one week (five days) to work on the project, including picking their groups, brainstorming an original recipe, developing the recipe, conducting a nutritional analysis, and putting together a grocery list."

To help bridge the *Whipping Up Wellness* competition to the school nutrition program, Julie shared the winning recipe with the New Glarus School District Food Service Director, Rebecca Derke. Rebecca will work with her food service team to scale and cycle it into the menu for next school year. Julie has also attempted to engage her culinary students in the school nutrition program by encouraging their participation in the high school *Student Food Committee*. The committee, which was started by Rebecca pre-pandemic (but paused during the pandemic), consists of food service team members, Julie, and any students that want to join. The committee meets in the kitchen after school once a month to sample dishes and provide feedback. Rebecca also asks the students what foods they want to see more and less of as they attempt to incorporate more foods made from scratch into their menu.

Julie's relationship with the school food service team and her students participating in the *Whipping Up Wellness* competition and *School Food Committee* are just a few examples of how the school community can participate in menu development that focuses on incorporating healthier, lower-sodium items.

New Glarus School District

Location: New Glarus, WI

Enrollment: 1,000+; 1 elementary school, 1 middle school, 1 high school

Website: [New Glarus School District](#)

Engaging students in menu and taste-test surveys and Student Nutrition Advisory Councils will help you grow your school nutrition community and program!

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10/04/2024

Planning, Implementing, and Assessing Taste-Test Surveys

Numerous tools help to determine students' meal preferences—taste-test surveys are one option. Student taste-test surveys provide menu planners and production staff feedback on menu item popularity. This information can also be shared with brokers, manufacturers, and distributors. Taste-test surveys are used to convey student preferences for the items sampled. Menu planners can decide whether to add these items to the menu based on the results and student feedback. Here are some considerations while planning, implementing, and assessing taste-test surveys.

Planning

- Determine the purpose of the taste-test:
 - ▶ Is it to sample a potential new menu item?
 - ▶ Is it to gather student feedback on three to four versions of one menu item for bid purposes?
- Ensure the potential menu items you want to sample are appropriate for your program.
- Plan to test no more than three or four items with any one group of students to avoid overwhelming them.
- Decide:
 - ▶ Who will participate in the testing – specific grades, meal periods, student groups, etc.?
 - ▶ When and where will you hold the testing – during a meal period in the cafeteria, in a classroom, etc.?
 - ▶ Who is going to set up and facilitate the testing?
 - ▶ How much time is available for the taste-test?
 - ▶ How will you gather your survey results – paper surveys, QR codes, etc.?
- Develop a summary sheet to record the survey results.

Menu Item Considerations

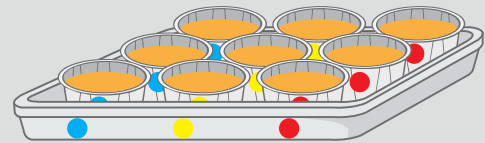
- Does it meet the nutrition standards?
- Does it meet the budget or desirable price point?
- Is it available for delivery?
- Do you have the equipment to properly prepare the product?
- Does your staff have the time and skill to prepare it properly?
- Do you have adequate storage for the item?
- Is it appetizing (appearance & plate coverage)?
- Will it hold well on the serving line?



- Before assessing the taste-test results, decide on an “acceptability” rate to help you determine whether or not to modify or menu the item.
 - ▶ For example, Wisconsin Team Nutrition used an 85% acceptability rating when conducting student taste tests of recipes featuring local agricultural products. Recipes that did not meet the 85% acceptability rating were modified based on constructive student feedback obtained from the [Wisconsin Team Nutrition Taste Test Ballot](#).

Implementing

- Use disposable soufflé cups or boats for the samples. Students may pick up the samples from the serving line, or cafeteria staff may take them into the dining room, a classroom, or another designated area.
- Use color-coded dots or numbers to prevent biased answers instead of labeling the samples with their description ("current," "new," "low sodium").
- Provide a taste-test ballot for each item sampled.
- Display a sample plate of the complete serving for reference, ideally with other meal components, so students can see what the served meal will look like.
- Follow food safety and sanitation standards. Keep hot samples hot and cold samples cold and cover as needed.
- Explain to the students that you value their opinion and want their feedback to encourage them to participate and share their ideas.
- Provide sample items in a manner that promotes customer acceptability. For example, if testing a sauce, accompany it with an appropriate “food partner.”
- Note verbal comments made during the taste test that may also be helpful in menu development.



Taste-Test Resources

- Check out USDA Team Nutrition's [Taste-Testing Event Resources](#) page for posters, stickers, and social media graphics that can be downloaded, printed, and ordered by schools that participate in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs.
- Wisconsin Team Nutrition provides a [sample taste-test ballot](#) for middle and high school students on ICN's [Child Nutrition Sharing Site](#).

Assessing

- When assessing a recipe, refer to the product evaluation phase—formal evaluation procedures outlined in the [USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs](#).
 - ▶ Generally, if the product or recipe is found acceptable ...
 - Menu and assess student satisfaction of the item three times on the serving line before incorporating it into a cycle menu.
 - You may need to modify how often the item is offered within a cycle menu; students can even become tired of the most popular items.
 - Continue to monitor your production records and plate waste for the item; adjust your menu accordingly.
 - ▶ If the product or recipe is not found acceptable ...
 - You will likely need to reject the product (do not purchase it).
 - You might be able to revise the recipe based on constructive student feedback if descriptors regarding taste, texture, etc. were included in the taste-test survey. Refer to the [Wisconsin Team Nutrition Taste Test Ballot](#) for ideas. Upon revision, the recipe would need to be retested.
 - You should verify that the recipe was prepared correctly to ensure the steps were followed. For example, if they were tasting a chicken product plain, and the feedback was that there was not enough breading, they could try preparing it in a sauce and re-testing.

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06/01/2023

Developing, Implementing, and Assessing Menu Surveys

Developing and Implementing Menu Surveys


Menu surveys allow you to collect feedback from students on current and future menu items. Students can be surveyed in various locations, including the cafeteria, classrooms, after-school programs, etc. Design the survey questions so that the responses can guide action afterwards. When planning the survey, identify the students' grade level and select age appropriate questions and methods for distributing and collecting surveys.

EARLY ELEMENTARY STUDENTS (PRE K–3RD GRADE)


Implementation Ideas	
Survey Type	Description
Paper-and-Pencil	Words: YES (I like it!) / NOT SURE / NO (I do not like it.) or Graphics: "Thumbs Up / Thumbs Down" or Emojis: "Smiley Face / Neutral Face / Sad Face". For example- At a table, provide the survey questions and allow students time to answer. Use simple answers such as YES/NOT SURE/ NO or utilize graphics (thumbs up/thumbs down) or emojis (smiley face/sad face).
Technology	Ask students to complete the survey via a computer or tablet. This can be done in coordination with a classroom teacher or a technology/librarian/media teacher.
Tokens	At a table, provide the survey question, tokens, and two or three collection boxes. The question should be displayed in large, easy-to-read font. Each collection box should be marked with a response (words or graphics). Ask students to drop a token into the collection box that represents their response.
Words/Graphics	At a table, provide the survey question, printed out words/graphics to represent possible responses, and a collection box. The question should be in easy-to-read, large font. Ask students to select the graphic representing their response and drop it into the collection box.

Paper-and-pencil survey example:


Today we served a new menu item, chili-mac. Did you like the chili-mac?



I liked it!



I did not like it.



Not sure.

I did not try it.

OLDER ELEMENTARY (4TH AND 5TH GRADE) AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

For older elementary and middle school students, read the implementation ideas below.

Implementation Ideas	
Survey Type	Description
Paper-and-Pencil	Use "Yes/No" questions with one to two open-ended questions about your current menu options and menu items you are considering adding to the menu.
Technology	Ask students to complete the survey via a computer or tablet. This can be done in coordination with a classroom teacher or a technology/librarian/media teacher.
<p>For both the paper-and-pencil and technology surveys, consider these open-ended questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you like most about [menu item]? • What do you NOT like about [menu item]? • What would you change about [menu item] to improve it? • Why would you like to see this [menu item] on the menu? • What food or beverage would you like to see added to the menu? 	

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Adapt the implementation ideas listed for middle school students. Generally, you can ask more questions and ask for more details!

Implementation Ideas	
Survey Type	Description
Paper-and-Pencil	Use student council members (or other student leaders) to interview students and record comments on a survey tool. Ask teachers to recommend student leaders that may be interested in leading or participating in this activity.
Technology	<p>In the cafeteria, post a QR code linked to a short survey that students can complete using their smartphones.</p> <p>If school policy allows, ask students to answer questions and post suggestions on social media.</p>
<p>Provide older students with more detailed evaluation tools that include ratings and a broader range of questions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The portion size, flavor, appearance, and texture of menu items • Products to accompany menu items, such as sauces, dips, or toppings • Preferred fruit and vegetable sides for specific entrées • Favorite menu items from restaurants they would like to see on the school menu 	

Rating survey example:

USDA Team Nutrition has an example of a [rating survey](#).

What do you think of the portion size of the [menu item]?

1	2	3	4	5
Too small		Just right		Too big

How does the food look on your tray?

1	2	3	4	5
Not appetizing		Appetizing		Very appetizing

How does the [menu item] taste?

1	2	3	4	5
Too bland		Just right		Too much flavor

ALL AGE/GRADE GROUPS**Provide Non-food Incentives**

Provide non-food prizes and awards or hold a prize drawing for those who complete and return surveys. Individual prizes might include water bottles, Frisbees™, balls, jump ropes, movie passes, or donated local vendor incentives that promote active, healthy lifestyles. Please note that survey incentives are not an allowable cost to the non-profit school food service account. Consider reaching out to your Parent Teacher Association or local businesses to donate items.

If your school has a Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) or similar organization, this would be a great activity for group members!

Check out ICN's [Assembling and Managing a Student Nutrition Advisory Council](#) tip sheet to get started!

Assessing Menu Survey Feedback

Once surveys are collected from students, it's time to analyze the feedback to see if changes need to be made to the menu.

- To validate the survey results, talk to a few students who provided feedback to gather more information and insight. Teachers can help make sure younger students' genuine opinions are reflected appropriately.
- Listen to your customers and look for themes in their responses. For example, have numerous students mentioned a menu item was too bland or too spicy? Don't be discouraged by unfavorable feedback. All feedback is valuable when assessing ways to make the menu the best it can be.
- Menu preferences and likes/dislikes can vary, so menu changes should require a number of responses.
- Survey responses may include ideas that could improve several menus—such as offering a variety of fresh toppings for burgers, chicken patties, and sandwiches.
- If an entrée isn't well-liked, consider what it is paired with. Would it be more acceptable with different side items? Could it be enhanced with a low sodium sauce?

Incorporating Menu Survey Feedback

When you decide to incorporate your students' feedback and update your menu, keep the following information in mind:

- Appeal to their senses when making menu modifications – it has to **look** good, **smell** good, AND **taste** good to be a popular menu choice and gain student acceptance.
- Share student survey responses with the entire operations team. The team can help generate ideas to improve menu items. This builds buy-in from the staff and encourages everyone to work towards the common goal of improving the menu for the students.
- Make sure the menu item presentation is attractive. Plate it appropriately (right side up, proper spacing, and separated if necessary). Check out USDA's [School Meals Trays, Many Ways](#) for presentation ideas.
- Consider advertising nutrition information. A number of menu planning and nutrient analysis software programs allow you to post the nutrition information of your online menus. Only [USDA-approved nutrient analysis software](#) is considered an allowable cost to the non-profit school food service account.
- Consider providing nutrition education about the foods on your menu through fact sheets, posters, and learning activities.
- For an unpopular entrée or side:
 - ▶ Made from a recipe, consider modifying it or trying a new recipe. Be sure to taste test (with your students) and standardize new recipes before putting them in your menu rotation. Refer to the [USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs](#) for a tutorial of the recipe standardization process.
 - ▶ That is a heat-and-serve product, consider procuring a different variety or brand. Ask your distributor for samples to hold a taste-test with students. This will help confirm acceptability before it is added to the menu.
- Continue to evaluate your menu items' success by monitoring participation trends and production records.

- USDA's [Team Nutrition Resources for Schools](#) offers nutrition education for children and families, among other resources.
- Check out Iowa's Team Nutrition [Nutrition Education Tools](#) used to educate students about local Iowa foods.

- Use USDA Team Nutrition's [Taste-Testing Event Resources](#), including posters, stickers, and social media graphics that can be downloaded, printed, and ordered by schools that participate in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs to plan and host a successful taste-testing event.
- Check out ICN's [Planning, Implementing, and Assessing Taste-Test Surveys](#) tip sheet to learn more about utilizing taste-test surveys.

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06/08/2023

Assembling and Managing a Student Nutrition Advisory Council

A Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) is a group of students and other school representatives (teachers and staff) who are interested in advancing wellness in their school by engaging in the evaluation of their school meal program. School nutrition operators and other school representatives provide support, guidance, and act as a liaison to the school. Participating in a SNAC provides students a voice and a platform to engage in menu planning for their school. Student members work to:

- Create a student-centered, nutritious menu
- Improve student acceptability of meals
- Encourage students to make healthy choices



Assembling a Council

When assembling your council each school year, consider these questions to identify potential members:

- Who can support and guide the group in addition to school nutrition operators?
 - ▶ Ask the school administration for suggestions on teachers and staff who could support and guide the SNAC. Also, consider specialty teachers, counselors, afterschool program staff, coaches, and parents.
- When identifying potential student members:
 - ▶ Ask teachers and staff for student recommendations.
 - ▶ Ask your fellow nutrition operators for recruitment suggestions! Are there particular students that regularly participate and positively engage with school nutrition staff?
 - ▶ Strive for representation of the entire student body.
 - ▶ For older students, consider initially targeting those enrolled in health, family and consumer sciences, biological sciences, pre-nursing, and culinary arts classes.



Managing a Council

Once you have identified your council members, schedule the first meeting to set goals and organizational structure. Explain to the students the importance of their participation and how they will influence menu items and nutrition activities. Consider presenting information on the meal pattern and dietary specifications. USDA's [How School Lunch is Made and How You Can Help](#) is an excellent resource to share with middle and high school students. Ask them what their interests and goals are for the school nutrition program. Share your program goals as part of the goal setting process:

- Are you trying to increase participation?
- Are you testing new menu items and recipes?
- Do you want to develop a new menu, service line, or style of service?
- Do you want to promote good nutrition?



The group should also establish how they will be organized:

- Who is the leader?
- Who will take notes?
- How frequently will the group meet and for how long? Meeting frequency and duration depends on the grade group and tasks they are interested in completing. Meetings do not need to be long, but they should be meaningful—be sure to have an agenda. Meeting times and locations will vary depending on your unique school environment and the activities the council would like to pursue.
- How will activities and follow-up items be communicated to the group?

Suggested Council Activities

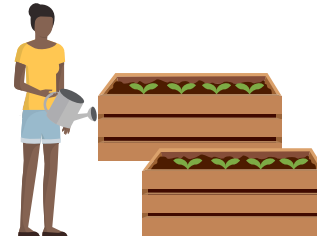
Once the goal is set, then plan the activities. For example, if the group decides that the goal is to increase participation, then promoting National School Lunch Week would be a great activity.

Suggested activities include:

- Discuss menu options and student preferences.
- Brainstorm creative names for menu items.
- Provide a “behind-the-scenes” kitchen tour.
- Ask students to participate in taste testing new products and recipes. Check out USDA's [Taste-Testing Event Resources](#) page for posters and stickers, social media shareable graphics, ballots, and event ideas and tips.



- Distribute and collect menu surveys.
- Review menus from previous years to see if there are items that could be brought back or modified.
- Help plan promotions for National School Lunch Week and National School Breakfast Week.
- Promote school meals and healthy food choices—develop artwork, posters, and bulletin boards; write morning announcements/videos; create social media posts; etc.
- Take an active role in growing a school garden and harvesting the crops. The [Team Nutrition Garden Resources](#) page provides resources for educators, posters, and activities for elementary school children.
- Start a compost program.
- Brainstorm plate-waste reduction ideas. USDA's [What You Can Do To Help Prevent Wasted Food](#) booklet outlines tips to help school staff, parents, and students reduce the amount of food wasted at schools.
- Perform community service projects centered on healthy meals and healthy eating, such as helping maintain community garden spaces, hosting a healthful food drive, and sharing a meal with a senior citizen.
- Help facilitate a nutrition-based school assembly or fair. Consider including a cooking demo that highlights a variety of entrées offered by your program. Review USDA's [School Lunch Resources](#) for age/grade-appropriate information that can be shared with your audience.



Celebrate and Share Accomplishments

Throughout the school year, be sure to internally review, evaluate, and celebrate the accomplishments of the group. In addition to utilizing social media, share the group's activities with the school community in a designated school space, such as a bulletin board or display case. Also, consider writing an end-of-year report outlining the group's activities and accomplishments with the school administration and local wellness committee.



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10/04/2024

LINKS:

RESOURCE TITLE	LINK
Assembling and Managing a Student Nutrition Advisory Council	https://theicn.org/resources/2339/worksheets/125390/assembling-and-managing-a-student-nutrition-advisory-council.pdf
Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 7 C.F.R § 210, 215, 220, 225, 226 (2024)	https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for
Developing, Implementing, And Assessing Menu Surveys	https://theicn.org/resources/2339/worksheets/126040/developing-implementing-and-assessing-menu-surveys.pdf
Engaging Students in Menu Development	https://theicn.org/resources/2339/worksheets/125386/engaging-students-in-menu-development-2.pdf
How School Lunch is Made and How You Can Help	https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/How_School_Lunch_Is_Made.pdf
ICN's Ground Rules for Training	https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/ground-rules-for-training-mini-posters/
Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (77 FR 4088)	https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2012/01/26/2012-1010/nutrition-standards-in-the-national-school-lunch-and-school-breakfast-programs
Planning, Implementing, and Assessing Taste-Test Surveys	https://theicn.org/resources/2339/worksheets/125391/planning-implementing-and-assessing-taste-test-surveys.pdf
School Lunch Resources	https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/school-lunch-resources
School Meals Trays, Many Ways	https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/school-meals-trays-many-ways
Shaking It Up: Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors	https://theicn.org/shaking-it-up/
Successful Approaches to Reduce Sodium in School Meals	https://www.fns.usda.gov/nsfp/successful-approaches-reduce-sodium-school-meals-study
Team Nutrition Garden Resources	https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition-garden-resources
Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium (87 FR 6984)	https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/07/2022-02327/child-nutrition-programs-transitional-standards-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium
USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs	https://theicn.org/cicn/usda-recipe-standardization-guide-for-school-nutrition-programs/
USDA-approved nutrient analysis software	https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/usda-approved-nutrient-analysis-software

RESOURCE TITLE	LINK
What You Can Do To Help Prevent Wasted Food	https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/PreventFoodWaste20.pdf
Montana Team Nutrition’s Test Schools K12 Taste Test Survey Results	https://theicn.org/cnss/view/approved-public-resources/entry/2745/
Wisconsin Team Nutrition Taste Test Ballot	https://theicn.org/cnss/view/approved-public-resources/entry/2669/
USDA’s Team Nutrition Resources for Schools	https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/school
Iowa Team Nutrition’s Nutrition Education Tools	https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/nutrition-programs/team-nutrition



SMART GOALS

A SMART goal is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

“S” stands for specific. State exactly what you want to accomplish. Ask yourself these questions:

- What do I want to accomplish?
- When will this happen?
- Where will this happen?
- Why am I setting this goal?

“M” stands for measurable. How will you evaluate whether or not you have met your goal? Ask yourself these questions:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know it's accomplished?
- What is the goal line?

“A” stands for achievable. Is your goal something you can accomplish? Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I prepared to make the commitment necessary to reach my target?
- Am I willing to make major changes in my routine and work environment?
- Do I need approval before major changes can be made?
- Is there a more achievable goal that I would be willing to work toward?

“R” stands for relevant. How does this goal align with your job responsibilities? Think about these questions:

- Do I have the resources I need?
- Does it make sense for my program?
- Does it align with my job responsibilities and staff needs?

“T” stands for time-bound. What timeframe would create a sense of urgency? Ask yourself:

- What can I do today to reach my goal?
- What can I do a week from now?
- What can I do a month from now?

To learn more about effective goal setting, visit <https://theicn.docebosaas.com> to enroll in our Effective Goals Setting Using SMART Goals iLearn course.



ACTION PLAN

Instructions: Using the knowledge and skills you learned, complete the following application action plan.

List the most useful knowledge and/or skills you gained during this training.

What are some steps you can take to apply what you have learned?

What barriers do you think you might face at your job when trying to apply what you have learned from this training?

ASSESSMENT

1. When developing taste and meal preference survey tools, what should you consider?
 - a. Age appropriateness for students
 - b. Nutritional content of the meals
 - c. Availability of ingredients
 - d. Feedback from parents

2. What is the purpose of assessing results from meal preference surveys?
 - a. To determine the popularity of menu items
 - b. To gather feedback from students
 - c. To make informed decisions about menu planning
 - d. All of the above

3. How can customer preferences be incorporated into menus and recipes?
 - a. By including popular menu items
 - b. By adjusting seasoning and flavors based on feedback
 - c. By offering alternative options for specific dietary needs
 - d. All of the above

4. Which is not the purpose of customer feedback surveys on existing menus and recipes?
 - a. To gauge customer satisfaction
 - b. To identify areas for improvement
 - c. To gather suggestions for new menu items
 - d. To compare different school cafeterias

5. How can menus and recipes be modified based on customer feedback?
 - a. By adjusting portion sizes
 - b. By incorporating healthier ingredients
 - c. By addressing specific dietary restrictions
 - d. By changing the serving times

6. What is the main role of a student nutrition advisory council?
 - a. To provide input and feedback on school meals
 - b. To assist in menu planning decisions
 - c. To advocate for student preferences
 - d. **All of the above**

7. Which activity involves students in the recipe and menu development process?
 - a. Conducting taste-tests
 - b. Participating in menu planning discussions
 - c. Providing feedback on existing menus
 - d. **All of the above**

8. When developing taste-test surveys, how many food items should you typically test at a time?
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. **Three or four**
 - d. Five or more

9. How can taste-test survey results be recorded?
 - a. **By creating a summary sheet**
 - b. By taking notes during the taste test
 - c. By conducting individual interviews with participants
 - d. By posting the results on social media

10. Why is it important to incorporate student preferences in menu planning?
 - a. To decrease student satisfaction with school meals
 - b. **To encourage higher meal participation**
 - c. To force healthier eating habits
 - d. To increase food waste in the cafeteria

RESOURCES

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