Best Practice Guide for Improving High School Student Participation and Satisfaction in the National School Lunch Program

PURPOSE
The purpose of the project was to develop a resource identifying research-based best practices for improving high school student participation and satisfaction in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

METHOD
Phase I
- Four practice areas that affect high school student participation and satisfaction were identified based on results from the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) Non-Participation and School Lunch Experience surveys.
- Draft best practice statements were developed from previous NFSMI research findings and pertinent foodservice, school nutrition, and marketing literature.
- Eight SN professionals were chosen to participate in an expert panel work group session to (1) review the wording of each best practice statement, (2) classify statements under the appropriate research-based practice area, and (3) group similar statements into goals.
- Expert panel members reviewed the results of the work group session and confirmed the list of best practice statements using a guided evaluation.

Phase II
- The best practice guide was drafted utilizing suggestions from the expert panel with regard to definition of key terms, instructions for using the guide, and evaluation scales.
- A final guided evaluation was completed by a review panel composed of exemplary SN directors previously involved in pilot testing the Non-Participation and School Lunch Experience surveys (N=11).
- The review panel evaluated the following:
  (1) appropriate grouping of best practice statements into goals and practice areas,
  (2) use of assessment scales,
  (3) formatting, and
  (4) general content validity of the resource.

DEFINITION OF BEST PRACTICE AREAS
- Food Quality: Practices that focus on improving the overall appeal of food to students (i.e., taste, appearance, aroma, and temperature).
- Staff: Practices that address student concerns regarding staff attitude towards work, service efficiency, and staff behavior towards students.
- Program Reliability: Practices that reflect the school nutrition program’s ability to meet NSLP regulations and student expectations on the delivery of food and services in a consistent, timely, and reliable manner.
- Marketing and Communications: Practices that affect the program awareness of students and other stakeholders regarding services offered through the NSLP. This also includes practices that affect and/or influence the students’ dining experience and perception of the NSLP.

APPLICATION
- SN professionals can use the Baseline Assessment to identify best practices applicable to their SN program, as well as strategies that can be included in a plan of action designed to maintain and/or increase high school student participation and/or satisfaction.
- A periodic Progress Review will measure how effectively the plan of action has been implemented to address challenges identified during the baseline assessment.

BASELINE ASSESSMENT EXCERPT

DEFINITION OF BEST PRACTICE AREAS

APPLICATION

PROGRESS REVIEW EXCERPT