

# Development of a Best Practice Guide for Increasing Middle/Junior High School Student Participation in and Satisfaction with the National School Lunch Program

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to develop a best practice (BP) resource that school nutrition (SN) directors can use for increasing participation rates and improving middle/junior high school student satisfaction in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

## METHOD

### PHASE I

- The National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) developed two surveys to assess middle/junior high school student participation in and satisfaction with the NSLP.
- Four practice areas identified in this research provided the framework for the best practice statements.
- An expert panel of SN directors (n=8) participated in a two-day work group to: review the wording of each best practice statement; classify statements under the appropriate research-based practice area; and group similar statements into goals.

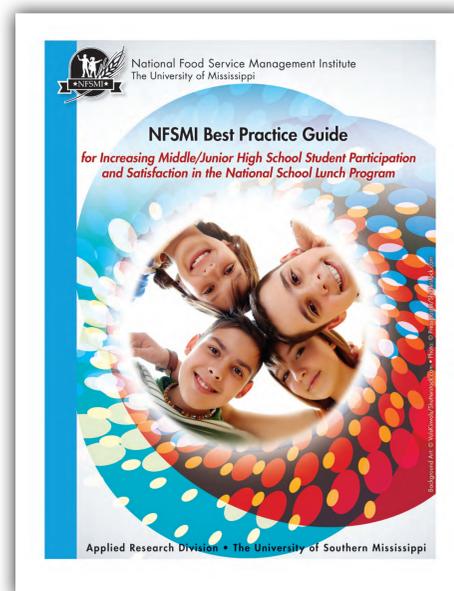
### PHASE II

- A best practice guide was drafted.
- Suggestions from the expert panel, such as definitions of key terms, instructions for using the guide, and evaluation scales were incorporated.
- The draft best practice guide was evaluated by a review panel of SN directors (n=18).
- The review panel evaluated appropriate grouping of statements into goals and practice areas; ease of use of assessment scales; formatting; and content validity of the resource.

## RESULTS

The NFSMI Best Practice Guide for Increasing Middle/Junior High School Student Participation and Satisfaction in the National School Lunch Program contains two components, a *Baseline Assessment* and a *Progress Review*, each with 86 BP statements grouped into 12 goals. The BP statements and goals support the following four practice areas:

- Choice
- Customer Service
- Food Quality
- Other

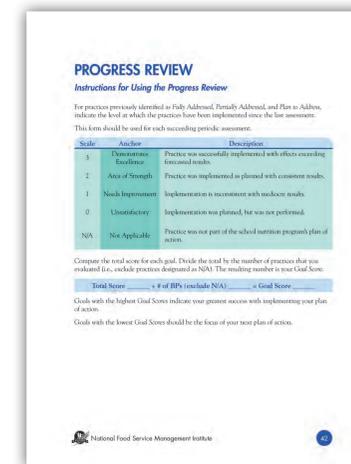
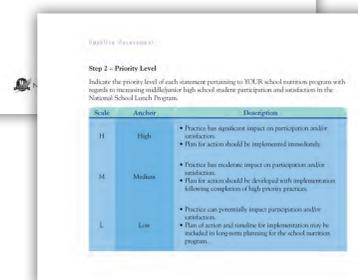
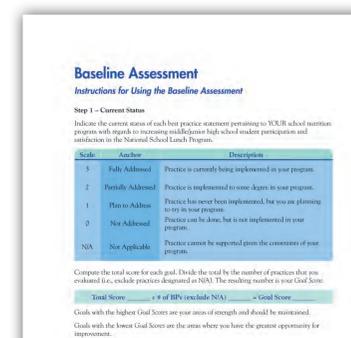


## THE BASELINE ASSESSMENT

- Guides identification of BPs that are applicable to an individual SN program.
- Instructs users to assess the current status and priority level of each BP statement.
- Current status is assessed with the following scale:
  - Fully Addressed
  - Partially Addressed
  - Plan to Address
  - Not Addressed
  - Not applicable
- Priority Level is assessed with the following scale:
  - High
  - Medium
  - Low
- Users are provided space to develop action plans based on Baseline Assessment results.

## PROGRESS REVIEW

- Measures implementation of action plans developed in the previous section.
- BP statements are evaluated using the following implementation status scale:
  - Demonstrates Excellence
  - Area of Strength
  - Needs Improvement
  - Unsatisfactory
  - Not Applicable
- Users are advised to perform a progress review annually.
- Results can be used to report program improvements to school administration or the community.



## DEFINITIONS

**Choice:** These are practices that address the selection of food offered to students, such as variety, student-friendly options, and healthy options.

**Customer Service:** These are practices that will address student concerns regarding staff attitude towards work, service efficiency, and staff behavior towards students.

**Food Quality:** These include practices that focus on improving the overall appeal of food to students (i.e., taste, appearance, aroma, and temperature).

**Other Factors:** These practices will include other factors that may affect and/or influence students' dining experiences.

## APPLICATION OF RESULTS

- This resource, along with the two NFSMI middle/junior high school surveys, provide SN professionals research-based tools to evaluate operational practices in middle/junior high schools.
- SN professionals can use the guide to identify best practices and strategies that can be included in a plan of action designed to maintain and/or increase middle/junior high school student participation and/or satisfaction.
- The best practice guide can be used by SN professionals to customize staff training that focuses on the best practices and strategies for each middle/junior high school.