



CULINARY TECHNIQUES FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS: TRAIN THE TRAINER PARTICIPANT SURVEY

A PUBLICATION FOR CHILD NUTRITION PROFESSIONALS FROM THE NATIONAL FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

OVERVIEW

Culinary Techniques for Healthy School Meals (Culinary Techniques) is a training program for school nutrition programs that focuses on the principles of food preparation, development of culinary skills, and implementation of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. It is designed for school foodservice managers to use with school foodservice staff (typically foodservice assistants) and includes video lessons, written materials, and hands-on culinary practice for each of thirteen hour-long lessons. The basic goal of the educational program is to improve the quality and nutritional content of school meals by teaching foodservice assistants the techniques covered in the series.



To implement the *Culinary Techniques* program, the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) provided a series of Master Trainer Workshops. These workshops, held in twelve states, were targeted to school nutrition professionals responsible for training school foodservice staff. The Master Trainer Workshops were designed to prepare participants to conduct coaching workshops for school foodservice managers. The coaching workshops, in turn, were designed to prepare school foodservice managers to coach their foodservice assistants through the lessons.

This issue of *NFSMI INSIGHT* presents findings from a survey of participants in twelve Master Trainer Workshops held from September 1996 to November 1997.

RESEARCH

The NFSMI sponsored research to examine the effectiveness of the Master Trainer Workshops for the *Culinary Techniques for Healthy School Meals (Culinary Techniques)* program. The researcher examined whether the program accomplished its intended objectives and also identified lessons learned through the evaluation.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study was to examine whether the Master Trainer Workshops served their intended purpose and to identify lessons learned.

METHOD

A mail survey instrument consisting of Likert-type scale, forced choice, and free response items was pilot tested with a small sample of Master Trainer Workshop participants. The questionnaire also was reviewed for face validity by NFSMI staff and other training professionals. After appropriate technical corrections, it was administered via United States mail to the 452 participants in the Master Trainer Workshops held from September 1996 to November 1997. A thank you note was sent approximately six weeks later. This follow-up included a reminder for non-respondents to complete the questionnaire. Five participants returned uncompleted surveys indicating that they had retired which reduced the overall population to 447. A total of 134 responses was received, yielding a response rate of approximately 30 percent. At this response rate, caution must be taken in generalizing from these survey results. Therefore, data from the questionnaire responses are presented as representative of the subset of participants who responded to the survey, not the entire universe of participants.

RESULTS

The survey indicated that the Master Trainer Workshops succeeded. The workshops attracted the target audience, met goals, and motivated respondents. However, several opportunities for improvement were identified.

STRENGTHS OF THE MASTER TRAINER WORKSHOPS

Based on the survey responses, it appears that the Master Trainer Workshops succeeded in a number of ways. The successes include:

- Attracting the target audience (67 percent of respondents had experience training foodservice managers);
- Meeting the goals of most participants (91 percent of respondents indicated that the workshop they attended had met their goals in attending);
- Receiving positive overall ratings from most participants (85 percent of respondents rated the workshop they attended as “excellent” or “good”);
- Motivating 58 respondents to conduct coaching workshops and preparing them to do so (94 percent felt “very well prepared” or “sufficiently prepared”); and
- Motivating and preparing 46 respondents to use the *Culinary Techniques* lesson series to train foodservice assistants.

ATTRACTING THE INTENDED AUDIENCE

The Master Trainer Workshops appear to be attracting their intended audience: persons responsible for training foodservice managers. Sixty-two percent of participants responding to the survey had more than ten years of experience in school foodservice, and 67 percent had experience in training school foodservice managers. As Figure 1 reflects, virtually all

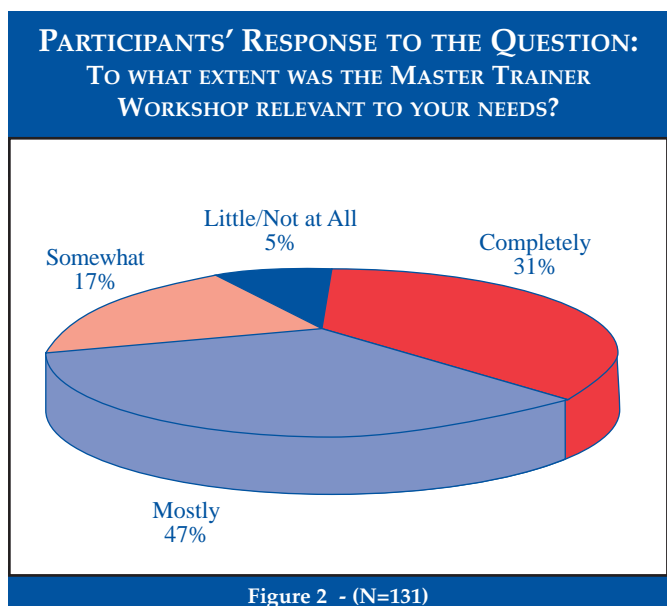
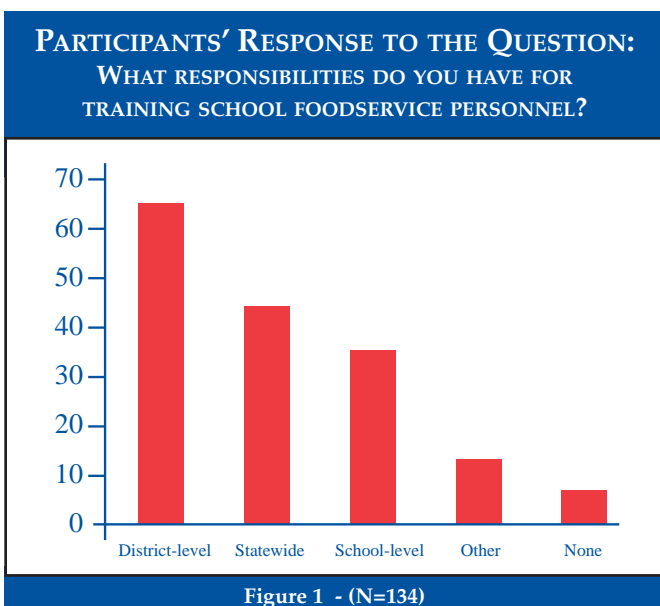
participants in the workshops had some responsibilities for training foodservice staff. These responsibilities ranged from state-level responsibilities to school-level responsibilities.

MEETING THE GOALS OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Most Master Trainer Workshop participants responding to the survey felt that the workshop was relevant to their needs and met their goals in attending. Seventy-eight percent of respondents stated that the workshop was “completely relevant” or “mostly relevant” to their needs (Figure 2). As Figure 2 reflects, only five percent of respondents rated the workshops as having little or no relevance.

Similarly, 91 percent of respondents answered “yes” to the question: “Did the workshop address your goals?” Seven percent of respondents answered “no” to this question and two percent answered “somewhat.” Of the respondents answering “no,” two-thirds were school foodservice directors who had more than 15 years of experience in school foodservice. (It should be emphasized, however, that most respondents meeting these criteria indicated that the workshop did meet their goals.)

Finally, as Figure 3 indicates, 87 percent of respondents answered “yes” to the question: “Would you have attended the Master Trainer Workshop if



STRENGTHS OF THE MASTER TRAINER WORKSHOPS CONT.

you had known what you do now about what it was going to cover?" Twelve percent answered "no." One percent of respondents answered "maybe."

OVERALL RATINGS OF THE WORKSHOPS

Respondents to the survey were asked to rate the workshop overall (Figure 4). As shown in Figure 4, a strong majority of Master Trainer Workshop participants responding to the survey rated the workshop as "excellent" or "good."

- 47 percent rated it as "excellent,"
- 38 percent rated it as "good,"
- 13 percent rated it as "fair,"
- Two percent rated it as "poor."

MOTIVATING PARTICIPANTS TO CONDUCT TRAINING

Fifty-eight participants responding to the survey reported that they conducted at least one coaching workshop (16 of these respondents had not intended to do so prior to attending the Master Trainer Workshop). Moreover, according to respondents' self-reported data, an estimated 5,038 school nutrition

managers, 766 foodservice assistants, and 511 other school division personnel participated in the coaching workshops. According to the respondents' self-reported data, these staff members represented an estimated 4,300 schools and 837 school districts. Almost all Master Trainer Workshop participants who conducted a coaching workshop felt either very well prepared (46 percent) or sufficiently prepared (48 percent) by the Master Trainer Workshop.

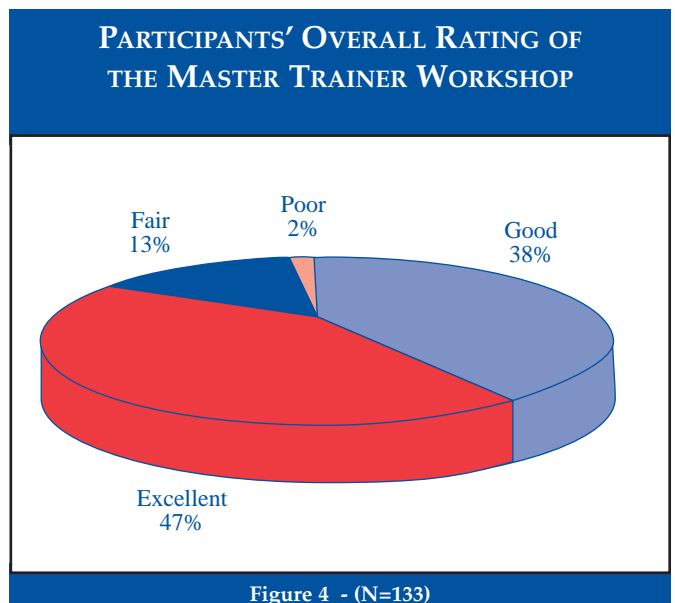
Forty-six of the Master Trainer Workshop participants responding to the survey (34 percent) reported using the *Culinary Techniques* lessons to teach foodservice assistants. An estimated 4,780 foodservice assistants were trained by the 37 respondents, who reported data on the number of foodservice assistants trained.

RESULTS FROM THE TRAINING CONDUCTED BY WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Most participants reported being "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with their training sessions:

- 50 percent of respondents were "very satisfied,"
- 41 percent were "somewhat satisfied,"
- Seven percent were not sure or had a mixed view.

Respondents, who had used the *Culinary Techniques*



STRENGTHS OF THE MASTER TRAINER WORKSHOPS CONT.

lesson series to train foodservice assistants, reported a variety of positive impacts in the quality of the food served. A majority of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that, as a result of the training:

- The nutritional value of food served has improved;
- The food served is more likely to meet the quality standards for appearance, flavor, texture/consistency, and service temperature;
- Students seem to like the food better; and
- Participation has increased.



LESSONS LEARNED

While the Master Trainer Workshops met the primary goals established for them, there were a number of lessons learned as a result of the evaluation. These included:

- More clearly emphasize in Master Trainer Workshop promotional materials that the intended audience are persons responsible for training school foodservice managers (30 percent of the survey respondents came to the workshop expecting to learn specific culinary techniques);
- Combine the *Instructor Manual for a Coaching Guide for School Nutrition Managers* and *A Coaching Guide for School Nutrition Managers* into one manual;
- Re-examine the practicality of assuming the ongoing use of the *Quality Scorecards*;
- Tailor some of the video presentations to less than optimally equipped kitchens;
- Identify Master Trainer Workshop participants, who arrive at the workshop with no plans to conduct training, and work with them to understand the importance of training.

OTHER LESSONS LEARNED FROM THIS SURVEY INCLUDE

- State agency staff members are the key recruiting source for the Master Trainer Workshops;
- Workshop participants who come intending to conduct training are the ones most likely to do so.

PRACTICAL USE OF THIS INFORMATION

This study of the success of the Master Trainer Workshops illustrates the challenges involved in evaluating training. A mail survey allows the researcher to gather a large volume of data from participants regarding the program that they have attended and its impact. Mail surveys offer several advantages, including:

- Ease of administration (a mail survey takes less time to administer than a telephone survey);
- Flexibility in time for the respondent (as opposed to having to be available at a specific time for a telephone interview);
- A “safer” format in which to offer feedback (some respondents find it awkward to offer feedback, particularly negative feedback in a one-on-one format);
- Eliminate the need to transcribe telephone interview findings or personal interview findings.

THIS EVALUATION ALSO HIGHLIGHTS SOME OF THE POTENTIAL CHALLENGES IN MAIL SURVEY ADMINISTRATION. THE CHALLENGES INCLUDE:

- Obtaining a sufficient response rate from which to generalize survey findings, and
- Administering the mail survey soon enough after the activity being evaluated to ensure that participants have good recall of the events in question.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

RESOURCES:

NFSMI, *Culinary Techniques for Healthy School Meals Master Trainer Workshops: Report of Survey Findings*, University, MS.

NFSMI, *Culinary Techniques for Healthy School Meals*, University, MS.

NFSMI, *Instructor Manual for a Coaching Guide for School Nutrition Managers*, University, MS.

NFSMI, *A Coaching Guide for School Nutrition Managers*, University, MS.



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