

Manager's Corner

Buy American: The Role of the School Nutrition Staff

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Theresa Stretch, MS RDN, CP-FS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Aleshia Hall-Campbell, PhD, MPH



NUTRITION



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Institute of Child Nutrition

The University of Mississippi

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PURPOSE

Improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

VISION

Lead the nation in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

MISSION

Provide relevant research-based information and services that advance the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

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Professional Standards

FOOD PRODUCTION – 2100

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

2430 Purchase Food, Supplies, and Equipment

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.

Introduction

Manager's Corner: Buy American: The Role of the School Nutrition Staff is designed for managers to use in training their staff. Each lesson is roughly 15 minutes. *Manager's Corner: Buy American: The Role of the School Nutrition Staff* provides a method for empowering managers to train their staff. This lesson plan contains the following:

- learning objective,
- statement explaining the importance of the topic,
- list of materials,
- instructions on how to present the information,
- questions to ask staff, and
- an activity to strengthen or refresh the knowledge of the staff.

Lesson Overview—Questions

Objective: Identify the importance of the Buy American provision.

Why it is important: Using food products from local sources supports local farmers and provides healthy choices for children in the school meal programs while supporting the local economy. USDA encourages purchasing food products from local and regional sources when expanding farm to school efforts. The Buy American provision also supports working with local, or small, minority, and women-owned businesses as required by Federal regulations.

Materials included in this document:

- **Scenario: Product Substitution**

Instructions:

Ask the staff to answer the questions. Facilitate the activity.

Questions for the staff:

- **What is the Buy American provision?**

Answer: The Buy American provision requires schools to purchase, to the maximum extent practicable, domestic agricultural foods and products. This requirement is important because it supports the mission of the child nutrition programs, which is to serve children nutritious meals and support American agriculture.

- **What roles do the school manager and staff have in the implementation of the Buy American provision?**

Answer: The district is responsible for contract management and developing product specifications that include language reflecting the Buy American provision. The school nutrition manager and staff play an important role in implementing the Buy American provision. The manager and the staff are responsible for following the procedures established by the district. One way to do this is to ensure the product received is the intended product ordered and all product substitutions have been pre-approved.

Activity: Buy American Scenario

Activity Instructions:

- Read the scenario, Product Substitution. Ask the staff to respond to the question at the end of the scenario.

Scenario: Product Substitutions

A vendor substitutes domestic red seedless grapes with grapes from a Latin American country. The district staff noticed the substitution upon delivery. The staff has not received (from the director) confirmation of approval of the product substitution. The employee follows the standard operating procedures and the product was refused.

What should the manager do under these circumstances?

- Commend the employee for following the district's standard operating procedure.
- Document the name of the product, the vendor, the date of delivery, and the action taken.
- Take a picture of the case of the product.
- Use critical thinking skills to determine:
 - Does the vendor have a history of substituting products without approval?
 - What is the appropriate menu substitution that will contribute to a reimbursable meal?
 - Is the standard operating procedure reviewed on a regular basis?
 - Are other schools in the district experiencing similar challenges with this vendor?
- Determine an appropriate substitute that will meet the requirements of a reimbursable meal.
- Communicate the results to the director.

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