

Orientation to School Nutrition Management

Program Accountability, Integrity, and the Role of the Director

Participant's Workbook

Time: 2 hours

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Institute of Child Nutrition

The University of Mississippi

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Introduction

Leadership and Accountability

Four areas of accountability are explored in this lesson: school nutrition program knowledge, skills, abilities, and integrity. You are asked to look at accountability as a concept that includes finances, regulations, other kinds of accountability, and accountability tools. Four types of accountability are briefly examined: nutrition, program access, financial, and wellness. Two primary requirements for accountability in the role of school nutrition director are:

1. Understand that the role of school nutrition leader includes accountability for many varied responsibilities.
2. Recognize that accomplishing program goals entails attaining required knowledge and skills and applying them with integrity.

Role of the Director

As the leader of the school nutrition program, the director must lead the program, recognize the purpose and goals of the program, and accept responsibility to fulfill the purpose and goals. The director is accountable for the program to a variety of stakeholders and must use program knowledge, skills, abilities, and integrity to meet the standards set for effective functioning as a school nutrition director. Accountability and integrity are components integral to the role of the school nutrition director.

Functional Areas and Competencies

Functional Area 9: Program Management and Accountability

Competency 9.1: Establish a system to ensure nutrition, financial, and regulatory accountability of the school nutrition program.

Competency 9.2: Provide leadership to position the school nutrition program as an integral component of the school district.

Source: *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for District-Level School Nutrition Professionals in the 21st Century* available on the ICN website: <http://theicn.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=284>

Lesson Objectives

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

1. Describe the leadership role of the school nutrition director in achieving the purpose and goals of the school nutrition program.
2. State the school nutrition director's areas of responsibility for leadership and accountability.
3. Identify the skills needed to provide leadership and ensure accountability for the school nutrition program.

Lesson Plan

Activity: Group Name

Instructions: Each table is a group. Name your group by giving it a name that describes its members or some desirable trait. An example might be The Kitchen Crew or the Magic Meals. Write it on the blank card stock paper on your table and fold it with the name to the outside.

Activity: Defining Accountability and Integrity

Instructions: Four sheets are posted on the wall. Two have *accountability* and two have *integrity* written at the top.

- Using your marker, write the first two words that come to mind under the titles on the flip chart paper.
- You only need to write on one sheet per topic.
- You have about 4 minutes to complete this activity, and then we will discuss your responses.

Objective 1: Describe the leadership role of the school nutrition director in achieving the purpose and goals of the school nutrition program.

Activity: Leadership and Accountability

Instructions: As the instructor reads a statement about leadership and accountability, say “**Yes**” aloud if you agree with the statement. If you disagree, say “**No.**”

1. The leader of the district school nutrition program is the district director. _____
2. The leadership of the district school nutrition program is shared by the district superintendent and the school nutrition director. _____
3. The person accountable for the district school nutrition program is the school nutrition director. _____
4. The state school nutrition office is accountable for the district school nutrition program. _____
5. Accountability and leadership are two separate things: the school nutrition director may be the leader of the program but may not be accountable for the program. _____

Activity: Job Description

Instructions: Read the following job description and note the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for this job, and highlight the key areas of responsibility. As you read, compare this job description to your own and ask yourself the following questions:

- How do these areas compare to your own job description?
- Would revisions make your job description more complete?
- Are there responsibilities listed in the example that are not required of your position?

*******JOB DESCRIPTION*******

From North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/work4ncschools/employment/jobdescrip/childnutdirjob.pdf>

Please note: This specification has been designed to represent the general nature and level of work found in positions in this class. As such, it is not intended to contain all of the duties and qualifications required of an employee in a single position (job). Consequently, it is not to be perceived as a position (job) description or as identification of essential functions as required by ADA. Always contact the school system in which you are interested for a finalized job description.

POSITION: Child Nutrition Director

SALARY GRADE: Negotiable

NATURE OF WORK: An employee in this class is responsible for the administration of the Child Nutrition Program within a school district. The Child Nutrition Programs include the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Programs, the After School Snack Program, the Seamless Summer Food Service Program and other programs available through the US Department of Agriculture. Work is directed through the interpretation of federal and state regulations and a variety of nutritional, operational and financial policies and procedures established by the US Department of Agriculture and the NC Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education. This employee exercises considerable discretionary judgment and analysis in the identification and resolution of problems. The employee receives general direction from the LEA's Superintendent or other designated administrator of operational and/or support services. The Child Nutrition Director is responsible for the oversight of the Child Nutrition Program on behalf of the local Board of Education and directly supervises Child Nutrition personnel including, but not limited to, supervisors, accountants/bookkeepers, data management personnel, school nutrition managers, support staff, and other school nutrition personnel.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF WORK

Personnel Management

- Prepares job descriptions
- Interviews candidates for employment
- Makes hiring decisions on behalf of the LEA
- Prepares required documents for personnel decisions
- Supervises personnel within the Child Nutrition Program
- Develops/Implements employee performance management system
- Maintains appropriate personnel records
- Conducts appropriate staff meetings
- Determines staff training/development needs
- Develops/Implements appropriate staff training and development
- Establishes staffing formula for schools to ensure optimal productivity
- Balances labor and food costs to promote operational success

Financial Management and Recordkeeping/Reporting

- Projects annual operating budget and manages the budget on a monthly basis
- Develops, implements and monitors internal controls to ensure financial accountability and program integrity
- Establishes inventory management and control systems
- Projects operating costs based on meal equivalents
- Projects revenues and expenditures
- Prepares justification for budget requests
- Recommends meal and a la carte sales prices
- Tracks revenues and expenditures by object codes
- Implements and monitors a reliable system of cash management
- Oversees payment of invoices in an accurate and timely manner
- Maintains fixed asset inventory
- Prepares required reports
- Retains appropriate financial and participation records

Purchasing and Contracting

- Develops and revises (as needed) the district's Child Nutrition Program procurement plan and ensures the plan is consistent with Federal, State and local procurement regulations and policies
- Develops and submits product bid specifications for all foods and supplies to prospective vendors
- Evaluates bids and product quality prior to awarding contracts
- Recommends vendors to receive product contracts
- Monitors the Terms and Conditions of the contracts to ensure Contractor compliance
- Oversees testing of products
- Develops and submits Requests for Proposals for non-food items including equipment, technology/software, and services
- Conducts Competitive Negotiations with potential vendors as needed
- Enforces the districts Procurement Code of Ethics to ensure integrity in the procurement process and prevent potential conflicts of interest

Food Production and Service

- Establishes, implements, and evaluates policies and procedures for quality standards and quantity control
- Provides leadership in developing recipes following USDA guidelines
- Ensures production records are completed accurately each day in each school within the district
- Plans menus for breakfast, lunch, snack, summer, and catering programs
- Ensures meals and/or snacks served to students meet USDA requirements
- Establishes quality control procedures to ensure high quality school meals program
- Plans/oversees special events catering

Compliance

- Implements free/reduced price meal program in a manner that protects and preserves the civil rights of all students
- Ensures an accurate meal counting/claiming system throughout the district
- Ensures compliance with Federal laws, State General Statutes, policies of the NC State Board of Education, and policies/priorities of the local Board of Education

- Develops, implements and monitors the district's mandated HACCP Plan and ensures each school is inspected at least quarterly by the local Department of Health
- Contributes to the nutrition and nutrition education components of the district's local wellness policy; serves as part of the district's Coordinated School Health Team
- Conducts routine on-site reviews of all facilities operated by the districts
- Implements Corrective Action when needed to address any deficiencies identified within the district's Child Nutrition Program
- Monitors the district's agreement with the NC Department of Public Instruction/State Board of Education to ensure the district is in compliance with the provisions of the legally-binding Agreement
- Monitors the district's use of Federal funds to ensure they are used only for allowable purposes

Equipment/Facility Management

- Evaluates and projects facility and equipment needs for the Child Nutrition Program
- Coordinates maintenance and repair of equipment and facilities with internal and external sources
- Conducts follow-up on completed repairs and maintenance

Marketing and Public Relations

- Develops social marketing plans to involve students, parents, school personnel and community partners in the district's Child Nutrition Program
- Seeks and responds to student, parent, media, community, and other concerns
- Maintains relationships with community agencies and collaborates to achieve mutual goals
- Prepares appropriate newsletters, news releases, and brochures to inform, involve and engage the community in various Child Nutrition initiatives

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Thorough knowledge of food systems management, including the purchasing, receiving, storage, preparation, and service of meals to students
- Thorough knowledge of the principles of optimal nutrition as applied to students
- Thorough knowledge of Federal and State regulations, policies of the NC Department of Public Instruction/State Board of Education pertaining to the operation of the Child Nutrition Program and various nutritional, operational and financial procedures as prescribed by the US Department of Agriculture

- Considerable knowledge of fiscal control and the budget management practices
- Considerable knowledge of Federal and State regulations governing the procurement of food, supplies, equipment, technology, and services in the Child Nutrition Program
- Considerable knowledge of personnel management practices
- Considerable knowledge of principles of adult learning
- Working knowledge of facility/equipment maintenance procedures
- Ability to develop and provide training programs for school nutrition personnel
- Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing
- Ability to establish and maintain positive working relationships

SUGGESTED TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE A degree from a four year college or university in foods and nutrition, dietetics, home economics, business administration or related field with at least five years experience in food service in a commercial or institutional setting and two years experience at the management or administrative level, or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

.....

Activity: Office Organization

Organization is a key to efficiency. Using a piece of flip chart paper, work as team to make a list of the most important files you need and other characteristics of a well-organized office.

Activity: Calendar of Responsibilities

Work with your team and develop a calendar of "Responsibilities". Begin your Calendar in June and include as many activities as possible for each month of the 12 month year. For June, you might begin with "Close financial reports for the school year" or "Award Fall Bids". Not all operations will participate in the same programs or follow the same monthly schedule, but there should be a number of similarities that will help you in organizing the responsibilities of your position in an efficient calendar format. This calendar will change each month and each year as your responsibilities and their timelines change. It is a good resource in staying organized for an efficient operation.

MONTH	RESPONSIBILITIES				
June					
July					
August					
September					
October					
November					
December					
January					
February					
March					
April					
May					

Activity: Key Resources

Make a list of the key resources you would use as the school nutrition director.

Sources may include regulatory information, personnel management, and any areas of responsibility for the school nutrition director.

Objective 2: State the school nutrition director's areas of responsibility for leadership and accountability.

Activity: (Group Lesson) Accountability, Integrity, and the Role of the Director

You will work in the groups listed below. Circle the name of your group as you are assigned a number.

1. Collaboration
2. Training
3. Leadership
4. Responsibility in Use of Resources
5. Role of the Director in School Wellness and Healthy School Environment
6. Functional Areas and Competencies of School Nutrition Directors
7. Passion for School Nutrition and the Well-Being of Children

The space below is for notes on your group's topic.

Activity: The Four Kinds of Program Accountability

Four major areas of accountability for which the school nutrition director is responsible are nutrition, financial, program access, and school wellness. The next activity will focus on to whom the school nutrition director is accountable and for what is the director accountable.

Instructions: These are the responsibilities of each group for completing the chart:

1. Groups 1 and 2 will complete the part of the chart on nutrition accountability.
2. Groups 3 and 4 will complete the part of the chart on financial responsibility.
3. Groups 5 and 6 will complete the part on program access accountability.
4. Group 7 will complete the part on school wellness accountability.

Each group needs a leader and a recorder/reporter. The leader in each group is the person who has the most experience as a school nutrition director, and the recorder is the person with the second most experience as a school nutrition professional. The duty of the leader is to facilitate the discussion and move it along. The duty of the recorder or reporter is to record responses on the flip chart paper and report your group answers to all the participants.

What You Will Do in Your Groups

1. Define your assigned accountability. This may be a brief definition, a description, or what you think of when you talk or think about this type of accountability.
2. Complete the second column with at least one example. Think about what you will be doing when you are being accountable in that particular area. What is one thing you do to show nutrition, financial, program access, or school wellness accountability?
3. Briefly state one group or person to whom you are accountable and one specific thing you are accountable for to that person or group.

Instructions: Fill in the chart during the discussion.

Type of Accountability	Definition/ Characteristics	Example(s)	Accountable to Whom Accountable for What
<p>1. Nutrition</p> <p><i>Groups 1,2</i></p>			
<p>2. Financial Responsibility</p> <p><i>Groups 3,4</i></p>			

3. Program Access <i>Groups 5, 6</i>			
4. School Wellness <i>Group 7</i>			

Objective 3: Identify the skills needed to provide leadership and ensure accountability for the school nutrition program.

Activity: Accountability Tools

Instructions: Identify some basic tools of accountability.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Activity: Knowledge

The following are examples of knowledge needed in the School Nutrition Accountability Tool Box. Add three other examples of knowledge needed to the list.

1. Knowledge of the purpose of school nutrition programs and why we have them.
2. Knowledge of the requirements of your job as the school nutrition leader.
3. Knowledge of nutrition basics.
4. Knowledge of how school nutrition works – district, state, and nationwide.
5. Knowledge of how people in your community feel about school nutrition.
6. Knowledge of who is and is not participating in the programs.
7. Knowledge of how to organize and lead your nutrition team.
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Activity: Skills and Abilities

Instructions: List an example of each skill or ability in the first column. Complete the second column with an example of where that skill or ability is needed in school nutrition.

Skill or Ability	Example of Where Skill or Ability Is Needed in School Nutrition
1. Observation skills and abilities	
2. Seeking skills and abilities	
3. Communication skills and abilities especially listening, writing, and speaking	
4. People skills and abilities	

5. Computer skills and abilities	
6. Financial skills and abilities	
7. Assessing and evaluating skills and abilities	
8. Reporting skills and abilities	
9. Data collection skills and abilities	

Activity: Professional Integrity

Instructions: List the ideas you had about integrity at the beginning of the class.

1. Professional integrity has to do with your *beliefs* about your profession that guide your actions from day to day as school nutrition director.
2. Professional integrity is a matching up of the *inside* beliefs, with the *outside* actions and words.
3. Professional integrity is built on *personal integrity* and our basic beliefs about *fairness and honesty*.
4. Professional integrity is about making the right choices for the good of the overall program and acting in a manner that is fair and responsible to both the program and your employees.

Examples of Professional Integrity

1. Treating fairly all the people with whom you work, including employees, students, teachers, administrators, vendors, and other community stakeholders
2. Being honest with yourself and in all dealings with others
3. Keeping your word
4. Doing your best
5. Being sincere in your dealings with others
6. _____
7. _____

Activity: Nutrition Integrity

Each group is assigned the Key to Excellence that matches their group number. Column 1 identifies the Key to Excellence, column 2 is a simple way to state the goal, and column 3 is for examples of the goal. Each group should complete the second two columns for their assigned goal(s).

Keys to Excellence

Keys to Excellence	Simple Ways to Say or State the Goal (as though you were explaining it to teachers or managers)	One of More Examples (what it could look like in your schools)
1. (Group 1) Menus are planned to ensure a balance between optimal nutrition and student acceptance.	When planning our menus we look first at what is nutritious, and then we ask which of those things will our students eat.	At least four different fresh fruits are served every week, and there are two or more choices of vegetables every day at lunch.
2. (Group 2) Purchasing practices for foods and beverages include written specifications that reflect quality, safety, nutritional value, customer acceptance, and cost.	We have written standards for the food we buy; first it has to be high quality; it also has to be safe, good for you or nutritious, available at the best price we can get, and food we know our customers will eat.	When we buy ground beef, it has less fat than that usually used by fast food or other restaurants. We are buying more whole wheat products now because they are more nutritious.

<p>3. (Group 3) A student-centered environment, conducive to healthy eating habits and social interaction, is provided.</p>		
<p>4. (Group 4) Food setup and service options are provided that encourage healthy choices and minimize the time students wait for service.</p>		
<p>5. (Group 5) School meals, snacks, and à la carte foods contribute to healthy eating habits.</p>		
<p>6. (Group 6) School food and nutrition personnel provide opportunities to reinforce classroom nutrition education.</p>		
<p>7. (Group 7) The school food and nutrition program is a resource for meeting the community's food and nutrition needs.</p>		
<p>8. (Group 1) School food and nutrition personnel work with the school community and allied organizations to promote nutritious food and nutrition education.</p>		

<p>9. (Group 1) School food and nutrition program management staff work to develop partnerships with industry and commercial and non-profit food service operations to support and promote the program.</p>		
<p>10. (Group 2) Training and employee orientation are available to school food and nutrition personnel, and the training responds to the district's goals and workers' needs.</p>		
<p>11. (Group 2) School food and nutrition personnel are accepted as partners in the education of children.</p>		

Adapted: School Nutrition Association. (2007). *Keys to excellence*. National Harbor, MD: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolnutrition.org/Content.aspx?id=2406>

Activity: Review

List one thing related to each topic that you noted during the course of the lesson.

1. Collaboration

2. Training

3. Leadership

4. Responsibility in Use of Resources

5. Role of the Director in School Wellness and Healthy School Environment

6. Functional Areas and Competencies of School Nutrition Directors

7. Passion for School Nutrition and the Well-Being of Children

Follow-Up Suggestions

1. Think about all the different kinds of knowledge school nutrition leaders need. What is one area of knowledge you feel you need to work on immediately and why?
2. What is one skill you think you need to improve that would definitely improve your leadership and accountability? What is one action you could take to improve that skill?
3. What is one thing you could do to make sure you treat people fairly? What about making sure you apply employment rules and policies fairly? Are you familiar with those rules and policies in your district?
4. Which of the nutrition integrity goals do you most need to work on?
5. How could you use the nutrition integrity goals as a training tool?

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Accountability	Firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic value; an unpaired condition; the quality or state of being complete or undivided
Compliance	Meeting certain rules or laws or conforming to certain accepted standards that govern the school nutrition program and providing information to show that the rules, laws, and standards have been met
Financial accountability	Effective and efficient use of financial resources in accordance with school nutrition policies and regulations to achieve the purpose and goals of school nutrition programs
Nutrition accountability	Demonstrating responsibility for and ensuring that applicable nutrition guidelines, policies, standards, and practices are a priority in implementing the school nutrition program
Nutrition integrity	Standard or "level of performance" that assures all foods and beverages available in schools are consistent with the <i>Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i> and when combined with nutrition education, physical activity, and a healthy school environment, contributes to enhanced learning and the development of lifelong, healthy eating habits" (School Nutrition Association, 2003)
Program integrity	Acting in agreement with or being faithful to the core values of one's profession
Program access accountability	Demonstrating compliance with policies and regulations that govern the notification of students about their eligibility to participate in the school nutrition programs and the conditions guiding their notification and participation
School wellness accountability	Demonstrating the role of school nutrition in school wellness on a continuing basis, including but not limited to compliance with local, state, and federal regulations on wellness policies

Supplemental Resources

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- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2010). *National school lunch cash payments*. Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/06slcash.htm>

Pre//Post-Assessment

1. Which of the following statements about leadership and the role of the school nutrition director is false?
 - a. The superintendent is the leader of the school district, but leadership for the school nutrition program is assigned to the school nutrition director.
 - b. The state school nutrition office is accountable for the district school nutrition program.
 - c. School nutrition directors cooperate and work with the state office.
 - d. Leadership encompasses both accountability and responsibility.

2. Key resources for the school nutrition director include
 - a. USDA website
 - b. ICN
 - c. School District Procurement Director
 - d. All of the above

3. School nutrition program directors are accountable for
 - a. Program access
 - b. School wellness
 - c. Financial stability
 - d. All of the above

4. Nutrition accountability deals with
 - a. Meeting the USDA nutrition requirements that are based on the *Dietary Guidelines* and the RDA
 - b. Providing accurate information on meals to support reimbursement from USDA
 - c. Ensuring every household has the opportunity to apply for reduced or free meals
 - d. Providing information on goal for nutrition education

5. A specific area of professional integrity that is important in school nutrition is
 - a. Writing menus that communicate well with parents
 - b. Observing how food looks
 - c. Working through conflicts with employees
 - d. Maintaining nutritional integrity



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