

Manager's Corner

Forecasting: The Role of School Nutrition Staff

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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.

Introduction

Manager's Corner: Forecasting: 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: Forecasting: 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 role of school nutrition staff in the accurate forecasting of foods.

Why it is important: Accurate forecasting of foods is important because it helps to ensure all students will be served the same menu item on the same day. It allows vendors to plan in advance the quantity of foods needed in the course of the month, semester, and year. It also allows managers to control inventory and food costs.

Materials included in this document:

- **Scenario: The Day They Ran Out of Chili**

Instructions:

Ask the staff to answer the questions included in this training. Facilitate the activity.

Questions for the staff:

- **What are the benefits of forecasting?**

Answer: Forecasting the specific type and quantity of food a school nutrition operation needs can provide a variety of benefits.

- **What can you, school nutrition staff, do to help me, the school nutrition manager accurately forecast foods?**

Answer: Many factors contribute to accurately forecasting foods and the school nutrition staff plays a vital role in the process. These factors include accurately completing production records, batch cooking to help reduce waste, preparing the quantity and correct portion size, and communicating when a class is going on a field trip.

Forecasting: The Day They Ran Out of Chili

Activity Instructions:

- Read the scenario. The Day They Ran Out of Chili to the staff. Ask the staff to respond to the questions at the end of the scenario.

Scenario: The Day They Ran Out of Chili

A principal contacts school nutrition staff while the manager was out of the office and passionately communicates that several students stated they did not receive the vegetarian chili, which had been on the school lunch menu that day. The principal reminds the individual on the phone that, "this is the third time the kitchen has not had enough vegetarian chili for the last meal service." The principal requests an explanation within 30 minutes. The production record indicates to prepare 250 servings of vegetarian chili.

The manager was immediately contacted and informed of the situation. After reviewing the past production records, the manager is puzzled since the projection of 250 servings appeared to be more than enough for all meal services.

The manager investigates the situation and learns:

- On a previous production record, a staff did not complete the production record until the next day.
 - The staff noted on the record that there were no servings left.
 - The staff forgot to note the shortage of chili for the last meal service and did not receive the vegetarian chili.
 - The staff keeps a personal notebook of the number of servings of food. When the manager asked the purpose of the notebook, a staff replied, "This helps me remember the number of servings of certain items, so when I don't have time to complete the production record the day of the service; I can just refer to my notes and use this number."
- **What can be done to help avoid this scenario in the future?**
 - Possible responses:
 - Complete production records on a daily basis.
 - Record accurate information.
 - Communicate to the manager any excess or shortages of menu items.
 - Retrain employees on how and when to complete production records.

- **What is the impact of providing inaccurate information on a production record?**

- Possible responses:

- Production records are a requirement of the school meals program and are part of an Administration Review.
- The substitution may not meet the requirements of a reimbursable meal.
- Inventory becomes inaccurate due to using another product that was reserved for another meal.
- Meal participation may decrease due to unhappy customers.

References

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2019). *School nutrition S.T.A.R. procurement and inventory management instructor's manual*. University, MS: Author.

United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Professional standards for school nutrition professionals*. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/professional-standards>



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