



Best Practice Guide for Increasing Student Participation and Satisfaction with the National School Lunch Program

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to identify and confirm best practices suitable for increasing participation rates and improving middle/junior high school student satisfaction in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

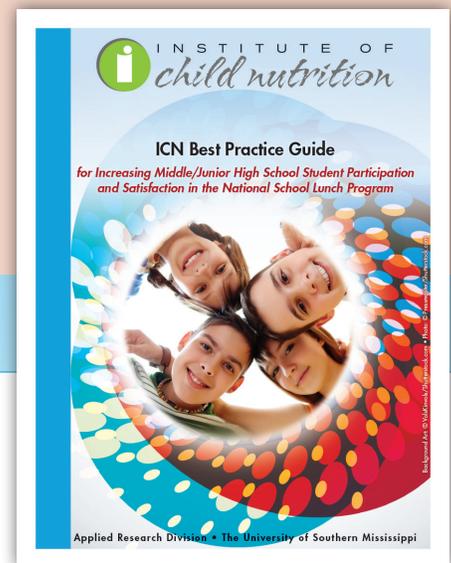
METHOD

Phase I

- Two surveys were developed 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: *Choice, Customer Service, Food Quality* and *Other Factors*.
- A modified best practices research method was utilized for the development of this resource.
- An expert work group of school nutrition (SN) directors arrived at consensus on: the wording of each best practice statement; the classification of statements under the appropriate research-based practice area; and grouping of similar statements into goals.

Phase II

- The practice areas, goal statements, and practice statements were formatted into a draft best practice guide.
- 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 nationwide review panel of SN directors. 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.



THE RESOURCE

- The *ICN Best Practice Guide for Increasing Middle/Junior High School Student Participation and Satisfaction in the National School Lunch Program* contains two components, each with 86 best practice statements grouped into 12 goals:
 - ◆ The *Baseline Assessment* guides the identification of best practices that are applicable to an individual SN program, and instructs users to assess the current status and priority level of each best practice statement.
 - ◆ The *Progress Review* measures implementation of action plans developed during the *Baseline Assessment*. Results can be used to report program improvements to school administration or the community. Users are encouraged to conduct a *Progress Review* on a yearly basis to establish benchmarks and to document continued program adjustments and improvements.
 - ◆ The best practice statements and goals in both sections support the four practice areas: *Choice*, *Customer Service*, *Food Quality*, and *Other Factors*.

PRACTICE AREA DEFINITIONS

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

Customer Service: Practices that address student concerns regarding staff attitude towards work, service efficiency, and staff behavior towards students.

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

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

PRACTICAL USE OF THE RESOURCE

- This guide, along with the two ICN middle/junior high school surveys, provides SN professionals research-based tools to evaluate operational practices in middle/junior high schools.
- School nutrition 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 participation and/or satisfaction.
- The guide can be used by SN professionals to customize staff training to focus on the best practices and strategies needed for their schools.

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