Successful Smarter Lunchrooms Implementation Through Coach-Guided Assessment & Technical Assistance

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Summary & Objectives

Objective: To increase the use of Smarter Lunchrooms (SL) strategies, which focus on reimbursable meals, fat-free and low-fat milk, fruits, and vegetables, in Massachusetts schools.

Description: A cadre of SC coaches conducts three-hour school visits that consist of: observation, photographic and scorecard assessment, debrief and goal-setting with the director or manager, and training and evaluation with the school nutrition staff. The coaches offer technical support and SL resources to help schools meet their goals and then return for a follow-up assessment. School-wide collaboration was encouraged to integrate the SL initiative into school wellness efforts for student success.

Evaluation: The goal of 50 schools enrolled in the MA SL Initiative was met with 100% retention. Evaluative feedback reveals schools are highly satisfied with training and assistance by SC coaches. The change in SL scorecard assessment scores along with production and sales records for total reimbursable meals, a la carte items, milk, fruit and vegetables, and the percent of goals completed are used to evaluate success.

Methods

Initial Assessment

Average SL Score

Coached Goal Setting: Top 10 SL Goals Selected by Schools

1) Daily fruit options are written legibly on menu boards in all service and dining areas
2) Daily targeted entrées have been provided creative or descriptive names
3) Menu boards featuring today’s meal components are visible and readable with all service areas
4) Available vegetable option have been given creative or descriptive names
5) All vegetable names are written and legible on menu boards
6) White milk is promoted on menu boards legibly
7) Menu boards featuring today’s meal components are visible and readable with all service and dining areas
8) All targeted entrée names are written and legible on menu boards
9) Posters displaying healthful foods are visible and readable within all service and dining areas
10) A dedicated space/menu board is visible and readable within all service areas

Strategies Most Often Used to Meet Goals

Top 5 Challenges Faced During Implementation of SL Goals

1) Time
2) Cost
3) Focus on Other Goals
4) Buy-in from Staff
5) Change in Management

Technical Assistance Used by Schools during Coaching Program

Discussion: Schools receiving the SL coach-guided approach and technical assistance were successful in setting goals and completing or partially completing goals two-thirds of the time. Scorecard numbers increased by 31%. Lack of time was identified as a primary barrier for schools.

Conclusions & Applications: The unique coach-guided concept of this initiative facilitates an increase in SL strategies used in schools. Trained and experienced SL coaches provide fresh ideas and collaborate with directors to set goals that specifically match initial SL scorecard results with the schools’ needs and resources. The continued technical assistance adds support and reminders critical for follow-through and goal completion given limited time availability of school nutrition professionals. This program’s success can serve as a best practices model for other states implementing Smarter Lunchrooms strategies.

Results

Schools’ Goal Completion with SL Coach-Guided Approach

Before and After: Dining space is branded and student art work

Solution: All vegetable names are written and legible on menu board

Available Vegetable Options Have Been Given Creative or Descriptive Names

Daily Fruit Options on Menu Boards in All Service and Dining Areas

Menu Board Highlighting the “Targeted Entrées”

A Daily Vegetable Option is Bundled into Grab and Go Meals

Available Vegetable Options Have Been Given Creative or Descriptive Names

Bundling Fruits and Vegetable with Meals

Vegetables Served

Menus more visible throughout school

Use of additional resources

Creative names for menu items

Email communication

Problem solving

Phone call

Menu boards

Bundled into Grab and Go Meals

A Daily Vegetable Option is Bundled into Grab and Go Meals

A Daily Vegetable Option is Bundled into Grab and Go Meals

Schools’ Goal Completion

34% Yes
59% No
7% Partially

Note: All results based on partially completed data (58%)

Vegetables Served

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