An E-Learning Culinary Training Program: Increasing Confidence Among Wisconsin School Nutrition Professionals During COVID-19

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**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Wisconsin Team Nutrition provided subgrants for 32 School Food Authorities (SFAs) to attend the Quality Meal Improvement (QMI) training series during the summer of 2020. The QMI training series includes courses on school meal preparation, presentation, and promotion as well as a hands-on culinary skills course.

The courses were originally intended to be held in-person at regional locations throughout Wisconsin. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all courses were conducted virtually during the summer of 2020.

Wisconsin Team Nutrition collaborated with content experts to develop the e-learning courses using the Rise 360 platform. The virtual courses were live July 1, 2020, and participants had until August 31, 2020, to complete the courses.

Expanding upon Wisconsin’s Goal Oriented Achievement Learning Skills training program, this work was supported by Wisconsin’s FY 2019 Team Nutrition Training Grant for Innovative State Training Programs.

**DESIGN**

The objective of this study was to evaluate the QMI culinary training, a hands-on curriculum for school nutrition professionals, using outcome evaluation techniques.

The QMI subgrant training participants completed a post-training survey and a six-month follow-up survey. The immediate post-survey focused on course satisfaction and changes in culinary skill confidence. The six-month follow-up survey focused on the usefulness of the training. The electronic survey links were emailed to school nutrition directors at each SFA who were then asked to ensure completion among staff who participated in the program. The post-survey was adapted from Montana Cook Fresh School Nutrition Institute. Both surveys included elements from the Kirkpatrick Model for evaluation of training programs.

**Survey Timeline**

- July/August: Participation in e-learning course
- September: Completion of post-survey
- February: Completion of follow-up survey

**IMMEDIATE POST-TRAINING RESULTS**

Survey focused on the usefulness of the culinary skills course and their dicing onion skills.

**Post-Survey**

Respondents (n=99) were school nutrition managers, directors, and staff from 29 of the 32 funded Wisconsin school nutrition programs, yielding at least one response from 91% of the funded SFAs.

- Over ¾ of respondents were satisfied with the e-learning culinary course.
- ¾ of respondents indicated the course improved their chopping broccoli skills and their dicing onion skills.

**Follow-Up Survey**

Respondents (n=77) were school nutrition managers, directors, and staff from 32 Wisconsin school nutrition programs, yielding at least one response from 100% of the funded SFAs.

- Almost ¾ of respondents indicated that they had used the knowledge from the culinary skills course during the six months following course completion, with the most common uses being knife skills in the kitchen, preparing a recipe with a fresh vegetable, and offering a variety of vegetable options.

**E-LEARNING COURSE FEATURES**

Demonstration Videos

Still Images Demonstrating Techniques

Numbered Steps with Written Instructions

Test Your Knowledge Activities

Instructions to Apply What You Learned

Chef Sam POTATO

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**Six Month Follow-Up Results**

Follow-Up Survey

Respondents (n=77) were school nutrition managers, directors, and staff from 32 Wisconsin school nutrition programs, yielding at least one response from 100% of the funded SFAs.

- “I am so much more aware of my knife skills and try at home and work to use them. I didn’t like cutting onions because it always took so long. Now I can chop an onion in very little time.”
- “I’ve been creating new recipes that need to use more skills in the kitchen: measuring, dicing, chopping, and roasting.”

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **USDA Team Nutrition:**
  1. Promote e-learning culinary skills training opportunities
  2. Explore the outcomes of e-learning culinary courses
  3. Facilitate continuous quality improvement for states and school nutrition programs

- **WI Team Nutrition:** continue to offer and update the e-learning course. In an updated course, provide greater emphasis on the activities that had the least post-training confidence levels:
  1. Using herbs and spices in recipes
  2. Offering a weekly variety of recipes

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to the Wisconsin SFAs for participating in the program and completing the evaluation activities.