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FOOD 232

Mr. Oberkircher

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Introduction: Interviewee Background and Responsibilities

Julie Tucker, RD, CDN graduated with a bachelor's degree in nutrition from Cornell University. She completed her internship through Syracuse University. She works for Broome-Tioga BOCES developing and promoting the Rock on Café. The Rock on Café is a program offering foods that kids like, but meet the USDA HealthierUS Schools Challenge. Right now, 15 districts of Broome-Tioga BOCES are participating in the program. Broome-Tioga BOCES runs 13 of the districts food services and the other two districts pay for their services. The food service directors and Julie only design the menus for the elementary school, but the high schools use the elementary school as a base.

This is her third year as a Registered Dietitian and as the Rock on Café dietitian. I asked her why she decided to go into school food service? She said that when she was completing her internship at SU, she was involved in school foodservice and enjoyed it. She knew she wanted to go into community nutrition, so when she found this job soon after becoming registered, she applied and was hired for the position. Her responsibilities as the Rock on Café dietitian are to help create menus with the foodservice directors for 15 districts of Broome-Tioga county, promote the Power up for Breakfast program, staff training, look/find new products, and apply for awards. Her position is half foodservice and half community.

The goal of the Rock on Café is to provide meals for students that they like, but are healthier while still being affordable and convenient. In 1995, 15 districts became bid groups.

In 2001, the Power up for Breakfast program began which was funded by the United Health Services to promote eating breakfast. In 2005 and 2006, the wellness policy by the government came into effect, so the schools needed to offer healthier foods. In 2006, BOCES hired a Registered Dietitian and then in 2006-2008, they hired a consulting dietitian. Then in 2007, the Rock on Café program began.

Juile believes that it would be great if other districts participated in this or another program to promote breakfast and healthier eating. If students are not eating well at home and not at school either then they are not getting the nutrition they should. So far, it seems to be successful, but they have to compromise so the students will buy food. The biggest challenge is the budget. Schools should consolidate and work with one program to save money. It is not necessary either for an individual school to have their own program. This program took a year to develop, but was in progress before then, so did take time to implement this program. It would be difficult to start because communication between food service directors is important. The food service directors she works with oversee the districts (one oversees 4 districts and the other oversees 6 districts) and each district had a supervisor. Communication between all the directors, supervisors, and the dietitian is difficult to manage.

Menu Development/Modification/Extension Techniques

When developing the school menu the menu is developed each month. She meets with the food service directors and supervisors to develop the menu at least a month in advanced. They also meet with student groups to get input before they implement a menu. They want to make sure the menu will work because they do not want to lose money since they have a strict budget. Creating the menu can be challenging because it is difficult to not be repetitive. Many students will not eat certain vegetables such as legumes, so they cannot put them on the menu. They have to put foods on the menu that children may eat or they lose money. She said whole grains actually go over well, but knows she must stay with the basic vegetables that are familiar to children. She does try to introduce them to new or different foods, but it is difficult. Many children that have never ate or seen a certain vegetable that does not look good, will not eat it. But for variety, she may try to do this once in a while.

All the menus for each school are the same, so she does not create different menus. School menus are usually cyclical, but they do not stick to a cycle schedule even though they tend to use the same menu items over again. The advantage of using a cyclical menu is that it is easier to project food use. The disadvantage is it may not have as much variety or change. It is difficult to use new products. They do not stick to a cycle menu because then Julie would not be able to introduce a new product or food to the menu. For inspiration for new menu items she looks in magazines, cookbooks, the internet, people, and students. Before they introduce a new item to the menu, the item is tested then tested by a student group.

The menu is semi-selective. The elementary schools have more options in more categories than the high school students. The high school students have less options for sides, but have an option for the meal prepared for that day or soup, salad, or a sandwich. The menu pattern was

determined by comprising with students on healthier options and options not as healthy, but know they like. For example, chicken nuggets and the fruit and yogurt munchable were offered in the same week in April. Since chicken nuggets are popular that will be a high volume sale day. The next day might have less sales since the fruit and yogurt may not be as popular, but it is healthy and chicken nuggets off set the sales. They do this to buy what is affordable and to still generate revenue. They do a lot of research and keep track of what goes well and what does not go well. Also, they get input from students. They meet students expectations by selecting foods they will like, but make healthier. For example, a homemade pizza with low fat cheese and added whole grains if a whole grain crust is healthier. They will eat it since they know they like pizza. Also, it usually is served with a salad.

To gather the information of the target market: students, she uses the USDA and state guidelines, ADA and information from the schools. She does not have to accommodate for cultural food preferences by state regulation, but they do. For holidays, they serve special foods. Since the majority of students are Muslim, they serve pork. Also, they serve fish for lent. For students that have modified diets she works with them individually. Students that must have gluten-free diets because of celiac disease must have a note from their doctor. She uses standardized recipes for gluten-free diets. For students that have allergies, she works with individually to develop their meals.

The budget is limited. They have to spend under \$1 for a meal, so this is challenging especially when buying healthier foods. Their services is separate from the school, so they do have more money than a school budget would allow, but still have a tight budget. They do have to pay for labor and give health benefits to employees. In considering equipment and service capabilities, what influences the menu most is the equipment. When they make pizza, they run out of pans or

do not have enough pans to make round pizzas (homemade pizzas). The style is a cafeteria-style, but some are self serve which is usually not an issue on what they should or not serve on the menu. All the items they have are the foods kids like and easy for self-service too.

The menu is evaluated every month. Every month, Julie does nutritional analysis on the menus for each menu item. She sees the averages over a month to meet guidelines. In the appearance of the menu, the menu is designed to appeal and attract students attention to want to eat the school lunch. The menu is balanced so will like the majority of the items. They try to make it look good by the colors and pictures. Also, adjectives are given to menu items to make them more appealing. For example, on baseball day, the menu items offered were a home run hamburger on a bun, stadium fries, and batter up broccoli with dip. Names to these common foods give a twist on the food and because batter up broccoli sounds good then they might try it.