

Creating and Fostering Positive Experiences in School Nutrition Internships

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7/15/2013 AT 2:15 P.M.



Objectives

1. Learn how to foster positive school nutrition experiences for students and interns
 2. Gain insights into how to promote the school nutrition profession to students
 3. Discuss ways of developing new linkages between dietetic education program directors and school nutrition directors
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Project Goal

Heighten awareness of both school nutrition directors and dietetics education program directors of the potential for school nutrition operations as training sites/experiences for dietetic students/interns

Background

- ▶ School nutrition directors are retiring!
- ▶ School nutrition programs are growing in complexity
- ▶ Professional standards
- ▶ Exposing dietetics students to school nutrition can be a win-win

Project Steps


- ▶ Survey of dietetic educators
 - ▶ Focus groups with dietetic interns
 - ▶ Expert work group of school nutrition directors, state agency professionals, and dietetic educators
 - ▶ Resource was drafted, reviewed, and edited
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Survey of Dietetic Educators

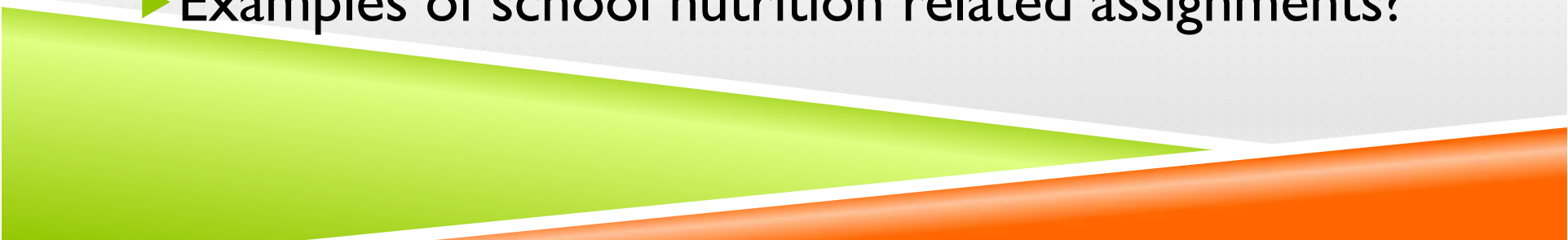
Survey was sent to program directors of all accredited supervised practice programs

Program Type	N
Coordinated Programs	53
Dietetic Internships	243
TOTAL	296


Instrument

- ▶ 21 question instrument developed by research team and pretested with small group of dietetic educators
 - ▶ IRB approval obtained from Kansas State University
 - ▶ After final revisions, survey was administered by K-State's AXIO survey system
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Examples of Questions

- ▶ Do you use school nutrition sites for any supervised practice learning experiences?
 - ▶ Who did you initially contact to establish the supervised practice?
 - ▶ Do you have a matrix of school nutrition experiences linked to ACEND Core Competencies?
 - ▶ Examples of school nutrition related assignments?
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Examples of Questions

- ▶ Is school nutrition discussed as a career choice?
 - ▶ Challenges in offering school nutrition rotations?
 - ▶ Number of graduates employed in school nutrition?
 - ▶ Awareness of NFSMI as a source for resources?
 - ▶ Willingness to share examples of assignments?
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Data Collection

- ▶ Preliminary e-mail sent to survey participants 3 days in advance of survey distribution
- ▶ Message identified researchers, purpose of study, and provided informed consent information
- ▶ Advanced message allowed time to correct e-mail address if message was undeliverable
- ▶ Survey deployed via a link in the final e-mail message

Response

Program Type	N	Returns	Percentage
Coordinated Programs	53	24	45%
Dietetics Internships	243	114	47%

Selected Results

- ▶ **96%** of coordinated programs and **91%** of dietetic internships used school nutrition for some supervised practice experiences
- ▶ **Benefits of working with school nutrition programs**
 - ▶ Introducing school nutrition as a career
 - ▶ Learning experiences can help meet multiple competencies
 - ▶ Chance for students to apply theoretical concepts in a real-world setting
 - ▶ Chance for students to work with a “healthy population”


Selected Results

- ▶ **Challenges of works with school nutrition programs**
 - ▶ Identification of qualified preceptors
 - ▶ Differences in university and school district schedules
 - ▶ Lack of consistency in experiences
 - ▶ Lack of student preparation in financial management and business concepts

MNT in School Nutrition?

- ▶ Modifying recipes
- ▶ Responding to food allergies and food sensitivities
- ▶ Planning modified diets
- ▶ Assisting with nutrition care for students with diabetes, inborn errors of metabolism, etc.

Student Focus Groups

- ▶ 2 focus groups with Coordinated Program students and dietetic interns
 - ▶ American Dietetics Association (ADA) Food & Nutrition Conference
 - ▶ Dietetic educators on Dietetic Educators of Practitioners (DEP) listserv assisted in identifying students attending FNCE
 - ▶ 90 minutes in length
 - ▶ 17 participants (8 CP and 9 interns)
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Institutions Represented


Focus Group #1

University of Connecticut
San Francisco State University
Loyola University
Pennsylvania State University
Georgia State University
Utah State University
University of Texas, Austin
Framingham State University


Focus Group #2

Meredith College
Washington State University
Syracuse University
University of Central Oklahoma
North Dakota State University
Kansas State University
University of Alabama
Eastern Michigan University
University of Texas School of
Public Health, Houston

Focus Group Questions

- ▶ Share a childhood memory of meal time at school
 - ▶ Do the words “school lunch”, “school foodservice”, or “school nutrition” leave you with a positive or negative impression?
 - ▶ Do you know any Registered Dietitians (RD) who work in school nutrition programs?
 - ▶ What have you learned about school nutrition programs during your dietetics education?
 - ▶ What would be the positive aspects of completing supervised practice experiences in a school nutrition setting?
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Focus Group Questions

- ▶ What might be the negative aspects of completing supervised practice experience in a school nutrition setting?
 - ▶ Would you like to see school nutrition experiences in your supervised practice program? What kinds of experiences?
 - ▶ What challenges might an RD face working in school nutrition?
 - ▶ What rewards might an RD experience working in school nutrition?
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Focus Group Findings

- ▶ Mixed emotions about childhood meal experiences at school, leaving an overall negative impression
- ▶ Few knew any RDs who worked in school nutrition
- ▶ Participants introduced to school nutrition in dietetic education programs via lectures, guest speakers and field trips
- ▶ Participants who completed some school-based supervised practice indicated mostly positive experiences which changed their attitudes about school nutrition as a possible career

Focus Group Findings

- ▶ Most negative experiences occurred when participants were used as foodservice workers for extended periods of time with little opportunity to learn more about the manager's and/or director's job responsibilities
 - ▶ Major concern was, "How can I learn about MNT in a school setting?"
 - ▶ Participants believed that school nutrition is a great career choice for a Registered Dietitian
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Expert Panel

- ▶ 7 individuals with extensive experience in school nutrition and/or dietetics education
- ▶ 1 1/2-day meeting was convened by National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI), Applied Research Division in Hattiesburg, MS

Expert Panel Activities

- ▶ Review of *Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) Core Competencies for Entry-Level Dietitians* and the *NFSMI Competencies for District-Level School Nutrition Professionals*
- ▶ Identification of key learning experiences and objectives which could be achieved in a school nutrition setting
- ▶ Identification of information needed by school nutrition program directors, dietetic educators and students

Expert Panel Activities

- ▶ Development of proposed template for assignments
- ▶ Discussion of proper sequencing of learning activities and possible evaluation strategies
- ▶ Discussion of barriers to success and how to overcome barriers
- ▶ Review of existing resources available from NSFMI and School Nutrition Association (SNA)

Development of Assignments

- ▶ 37 assignments were developed for the following broad categories:
 - ▶ Introduction to School Nutrition
 - ▶ Celebrating School Nutrition
 - ▶ Foodservice Management
 - ▶ Management
 - ▶ Nutrition Education
 - ▶ Nutrition and Wellness

For Each Activity:


- ▶ Suggested ACEND & NFSMI competencies
- ▶ Prerequisite knowledge needed
- ▶ Student learning outcomes
- ▶ Student assignments
- ▶ Evaluation criteria
- ▶ Competency assessment strategies
- ▶ Suggested references or resources
- ▶ Length of time anticipated to complete the assignment



School Nutrition Experiences for Dietetics Students

National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
www.nfsmi.org
Applied Research Division
The University of Southern Mississippi

Recommendations for Dietetics Programs

- ▶ Introduce school nutrition early and often in dietetics programs
 - ▶ Assignments are suggestions for how ACEND competencies may be approached and can be modified to meet the needs of dietetics programs
 - ▶ Some assignments may be appropriate for class projects in didactic programs
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Recommendations for School Nutrition Programs

- ▶ All levels of staff can be involved with dietetics students
- ▶ Dietetics students in supervised practice can contribute:
 - ▶ Help with projects
 - ▶ Brainstorm new ideas
 - ▶ Assist staff
- ▶ Seeing students become excited about the importance of school nutrition for children's success can energize all staff

Our Goal for this Resource:

- ▶ Encourages new linkages between dietetic education program directors and school nutrition directors
 - ▶ Dietetic educators who want school nutrition experiences for their students
 - ▶ School nutrition directors who want dietetic students in their school district
- ▶ Can be a starting point for discussing new collaborations
- ▶ Determine the most appropriate assignments for both the students and the school nutrition program