» to *your credit*

Making the grade in your profession

By Sally Spero, SNS

Right On Schedule

» A formal work schedule may be your missing puzzle piece in maintaining an organized and efficient school meals operation.

The new school year has begun! The prep equipment has been cleaned and serviced. The storage areas are stocked with ingredients and supplies. You have a great team who work to meet the high expectations of hundreds (and, sometimes, *thousands*) of student customers who come through your school cafeteria(s) every day. You and your staff are ready for the next 180+ days of serving delicious and nutritious reimbursable meals. Or *are* you?

Does everyone on the team know and understand their individual daily, weekly and monthly responsibilities? The constraints of time, budget and labor make efficiency an absolute *must* for any K-12 school foodservice operation. Organization is critical. This is where a **staff work schedule** (or the lack of one) can make or break your program.

A staff work schedule is an often-overlooked component of effective personnel management. When such a system is properly implemented, it won't just increase staff efficiency, but can preempt the unexpected crises and conflicts that have a tendency to rise when responsibilities and processes aren't clearly spelled out.

Whether you are a manager, supervisor or director, you will find it valuable to establish a work schedule that guides all team members on the

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A SAMPLE K-12 FOODSERVICE WORK SCHEDULE

**This sample is based on a medium-sized production kitchen
that prepares meals and satellites them to other sites.**

TIME	CN LEAD	FS WORKER (2)	FS WORKER (2)	FS UTILITY
5:00			Start Time	
5:15			Take Temps	
5:30			B'fast/Lunch Prep	
5:45				
6:00	Start Time	Start Time		Start Time
6:15	Lunch Prep	B'fast/Lunch Prep		Cart Pick Up
6:30				Hot Food Prep
6:45				
7:00				
7:15				
7:30			Break (15)	
7:45				
8:00				
8:15				
8:30	Break (15)	Break (15)		Break (15)
8:45	Lunch Prep	Lunch Prep	B'fast/Lunch Prep	Hot Food Prep
9:00				Clean/Orders
9:15				
9:30	Load Carts		Load Carts	Load Carts
9:45				
10:00	Carts Leave #1	Carts Leave #1		Carts Leave #1
10:15	Carts Leave #2	Carts Leave #2		Carts Leave #2
10:30	Break (30)	Break (30)	Break (30)	Break (30)
10:45				
11:00	Paperwork/Product	Supper Prep		Hot Food Prep
11:15	Testing			Clean/Orders
11:30				
11:45	Load Carts	Load Carts		
12:00			Load Carts	Load Carts
12:15	Break (15)	Break (15)	Break (15)	Break (15)
12:30				
12:45				
1:00	Carts Leave #2	Carts Leave #2	Clean	Carts Leave #2
1:15	Food Prep	Food Prep		Hot Food Prep
1:30			End Time	Orders
1:45				
2:00	Clean	Clean		Clean
2:15				
2:30	End Time	End Time		End Time

flow of operational day, highlighting:

» how much time has been allotted for daily tasks;

» the length of time for scheduled breaks;

» important daily deadlines; and

» the responsibilities of each individual.

BREAK IT DOWN

If you're a brand-new manager or a veteran who has never employed this tool, getting started is simple: Create a chart using a spreadsheet program like Microsoft Excel® or using the "Table" tool in the "Insert" tab in Microsoft Word®. (Not comfortable with this kind of computer work? Draw a chart by hand on a blank piece of paper for your initial drafts; you can transfer the info to a computer later.) Break down your hours of operation into 15-minute segments. The hours begin when the first person arrives and end when the last person leaves for the day.

The first column of the chart will be a list of your 15-minute time increments, row by row. Each additional column in the table will be dedicated to each employee/position responsible for specific tasks.

The example on this page is for a production kitchen that satellites meals to other locations, but the principle is the same, whether the site is receiving packaged meals for retherming or both producing and serving meals or whether it has two employees or more than 10. Your operation may also use different titles for the positions in the sample. In this case, we've designated a "Child Nutrition Lead" (manager), "FS Workers" (cooks, servers, cashiers, assistants, dishwashers, etc.) and "FS Utility" (a position that may "float") In this sample, there are two separate pairs of FS Workers. You could create separate columns for each of the six individuals.

Now, it's time to start identifying all the tasks! Start building lists of the **main categories** of operational work, such as meal prep, meal service and clean-up, as well as deliveries, inventory, maintenance and special projects. What are the specific tasks related to each of these?

Next, identify time-sensitive **daily deadlines.** In our production kitchen sample, these are the "Carts Leave" notations. For a cafeteria, it might be "Breakfast Service Begins," "K-2 Lunch Begins," "3rd & 4th Grade Lunch Begins" and so on. These are the first spaces you should fill in on your chart.

Go back to your master lists. After identifying **important specific tasks** related to the major categories, managers should estimate how much **time** is involved for each. For example, perhaps your mornings start with an FS Worker checking temperatures of foods and confirming automated equipment logs to be sure there were no power failures overnight (or over the weekend). How much time should this process take and how many employees are expected to perform this task? Your management skills will come into play in determining this step for each task.

MANAGE THE MATH

Knowing your goal for **meals per labor hour (MPLH)** can be really helpful at this stage in developing your work schedule. To calculate the MPLH, you take the total meal equivalents (the conversion of all program food sales) served in a given time period and divide that number by the total planned productive labor hours (PPLH) for that same specific time period. The PPLH includes the amount of labor planned by a school nutrition operation for managers, kitchen staff, cashiers and even substitutes. (Paid hours for sick, personal or holiday leave are *not* included.) The MPLH is the key to ensuring you have the right balance of labor to maintain production efficiency and manage a financially sustainable site. *[Editors' Note: See "Crunch the Numbers," December 2017, to learn more about setting key performance indicators like MPLH.]*

Let's say that your site's goal is 15 MPLH. As you begin to tally up

» the *test*

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Completion of this test, with a passing score, will count as 1 Continuing Education Unit (CEU) in Key Area 3, Administration, Code 3210.

(Please Print)

Name: _____

SNA Member Number: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

1. Use of a staff work schedule can help boost team efficiency.
☐ True   ☐ False

2. Staff work schedules do not _____.
☐ chart time allotted for daily tasks
☐ help forecast daily meal counts
☐ detail break lengths
☐ track key daily deadlines

3. The hours of your operation should be broken into _____ -minute increments.
☐ 10
☐ 30
☐ 60
☐ none of the above

4. You can use the same type of work schedule for a three-person school kitchen and a large central production kitchen.
☐ True   ☐ False

5. _____ should be included in a staff work schedule.
☐ Employee pay rates
☐ Five-minute time increments
☐ All job positions on the team
☐ All of the above

6. Subtract the total meal equivalents served in a time period from the planned labor hours for that same period to get a meals per labor hour target.
☐ True   ☐ False

7. Staff work schedules chart _____.
☐ the vegetables included on the salad bar
☐ who is making the spaghetti sauce on Wednesday
☐ the time period when lunch should be prepped each day
☐ catering order details

8. Work schedules should be updated and distributed to staff every week.
☐ True   ☐ False

9. _____ could necessitate a change in the staff work schedule.
☐ Health inspection scores
☐ Increased or decreased meal counts
☐ New equipment
☐ None of the above

10. A team that's meeting its MPLH goals does not need to implement a staff work schedule.
☐ True   ☐ False

the time and personnel required to complete tasks, you can compare the total hours against your estimated meal counts and see if you are meeting your goal. If not, the work schedule will be a good signal to alert you to take a hard look at this plan and come up with solutions for improved efficiency.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

At this point, you should have your mostly blank chart with columns for 15-minute time increments and job positions. You have developed your lists of the major categories of daily work in your operation, identifying the top-line tasks associated with each category. For each of these tasks, you have calculated the amount of time it requires and the number of staffers responsible. You've confirmed that the total time for tasks for the day aligns with your MPLH goal. The chart also includes the key deadlines for the most important tasks.

Now, it's time to finish filling out your grid! Start by outlining broad areas of responsibilities for each job position. The work schedule will show who is (and isn't) accountable for certain tasks at particular times. It's also helpful to consider other factors beyond the amount of time a task "should" take. For example, you may have discovered that assigning teams to load meal carts at different intervals is a great way to avoid a "traffic jam" in your kitchen and provides a more efficient use of everyone's time.

Certain tasks will take longer than 15 minutes and you may not complete every time slot on the grid. This is perfectly acceptable, as long as everyone understands that empty slots are not license to fritter away time checking texts and social media updates. In fact, your work schedule should include clearly defined start, end and break times for each staff position.

Note that a work schedule provides *broad* outlines of tasks and times. It's used to offer a general structure that will guide your team's work flow. It's not intended to drill down to the detailed assignments associated with, say, preparation of specific menu items or completion of special projects.

Some kitchens have a weekly staff meeting to review the upcoming menu and make specific assignments. (Who is making the spaghetti sauce on Tuesday? Chef salads need to be completed on Wednesday afternoon to be ready for lunch on Thursday—who will take that on? What tasks need to be completed for Friday's catering order of a fruit plate?) Whether you use a meeting or a written weekly list, your process should be developed within the structure of the work schedule.

A TOOL TO USE

Ideally a work schedule is distributed at the beginning of the school year when everyone returns to work. It's also given to new employees when hired. But even though this article is being published after the start of the new school year, it's *never* too late to create a work schedule. In fact, it's not unusual to make changes to this schedule over time.

For example, you might be adding alternate breakfast service or after-school snacks mid-year. Such changes not only will add tasks to your grid, but may require rearranging others. Duties may change between employees, or there could be a departmental reorganization. Special circumstances, such as parent conferences or field trips, often mean adjusted serving times and you may need to make a special work schedule just for those occasions. Meal counts—increased or decreased—could necessitate a change in the schedule.

What *doesn't* change is the purpose of the work schedule. It is designed to help staff see the full scope of the operation, understanding what needs to get done, even when circumstances change. The work schedule also can serve as an effective human resources tool, especially when facing a "challenging" employee or circumstance. The chart can provide documentation

> » At its most fundamental, a work schedule **reinforces an understanding that *every* task in the operation**—no matter how small—**is part of the bigger picture of serving student customers.** »

to address workplace performance issues. It will help you avoid arguments about how long tasks "should" (or shouldn't) take, and clarify who is or isn't responsible. It spells out break times and lengths. It can be attached to performance evaluations or progressive improvement plans to record concerns and identify solutions.

If yours is an efficient team, meeting your MPLH goals and clicking without operational or personnel crises, you may think you don't need to develop a schedule like this to document what "everyone already knows." CN Lead Laura manages lunch preparations while Foodservice Worker Wendy readies breakfast. And as Laura and Wendy embark with the lunch carts, Foodservice Worker Wyatt cleans up from lunch preparations. It works day in and day out.

But even without crises to contend with, a work schedule offers several benefits. It can help you identify areas for improvement or show where there is room to focus on new projects or opportunities. The schedule also can smooth the way for new employees or substitutes. At its most fundamental, a work schedule reinforces an understanding that *every* task in the operation—no matter how small—is part of the bigger picture of serving student customers. While it may be time-consuming to develop, once your work schedule has been completed and implemented, you'll soon wonder how you ever got along without one! **SN**

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