



Job Profile

of School Food Service Cook/Managers in Minnesota

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In many organizations there are key persons who perform both managerial and skill-level duties. In Minnesota school food service, these are known as cook/managers.

The importance of the work done by cook/managers cannot be overemphasized. These are truly the "people in the middle." In addition to working as onsite managers to implement the goals and directives of their supervisors, cook/managers also work with food production and service people. They often have ongoing contact with students, teachers, and others in the school buildings.

In a continuing attempt to define the job tasks associated with school food service in Minnesota, the present study reports findings concerning the cook/manager position. Following the format of a previous report on school food service directors, this report provides a job profile which can be used as the basis for developing a more formal description of the cook/manager position in Minnesota. The validity or accuracy of this profile also is examined.

Background

An earlier report, "Job Profile of School Food Service Directors of Minnesota," was completed and published during 1982.² Shortly

thereafter, members of the School Food Service Directors of Minnesota (SFSD) expressed interest in conducting the same type of study to identify and validate the job tasks of the cook/managers. Following extensive discussion, a research program was developed and funded.

Development of job profile

In early 1983 a one-day workshop on task analysis was held for cook/managers. The 35 participants identified the tasks they performed, grouping similar tasks into job categories and naming each category according to content. Eleven job categories containing over 100 tasks were generated.

About four weeks later, a committee of six cook/managers met to edit this output. The original job categories and tasks were revised to eliminate duplication and improve clarity, and a descriptive title was written for each category. The resulting profile contained eight categories consisting of four to eight tasks each. It was the consensus of the committee that the completed document included *all* the tasks performed by cook/managers, and that all tasks included were performed by at least *some* cook/managers. That is, the committee felt

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that the document was a complete and accurate profile of the cook/manager position.

Categories of tasks were incorporated into a questionnaire. After a pilot test, questionnaires were mailed to selected cook/managers throughout Minnesota.

Survey methodology

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each task to their job as High, Medium, Low, or Don't Do. They also were asked to estimate the percent time which they typically spent performing tasks within each of the 8 categories. In addition, they were asked to check the type of school in which they worked, to whom they reported, and how many employees they supervised.

Mailing labels were obtained from the Minnesota Department of Education for all public school districts and for all nonpublic schools in the state. Color-coded questionnaires, each with a return address and postage-paid envelope, were mailed with a cover letter explaining the survey.

For districts with a school food service director, four questionnaires were provided, three to be distributed to cook/managers in that district, and one to be completed by the director. In this way, directors' perceptions of the job profile were obtained for comparison with the responses of the cook/managers themselves. For districts without a director, two questionnaires were provided the superintendent, to be distributed to cook/managers in that district. Nonpublic schools received a single questionnaire, mailed to the person responsible for the school, to be given to the person in the cook/manager position.

All replies were anonymous except for the color code which identified the respondent as a director, a cook/manager from a district with a director, a cook/manager from a district without a director, or a cook/manager from a nonpublic school.

Numerical values of 0 (Don't Do) to 4 (High Importance) were assigned for each task after questionnaires were returned. Task importance was analyzed by location and kind of facility for all tasks within categories. Median percentage times were calculated for categories.

Results

Generally speaking, districts with directors tended to be in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. Smaller districts without directors tended to be in outstate areas. These locations will be referred to as metro area and outstate, respectively.

Table 1 contains a breakdown of survey responses by location and by type of facility for cook/managers. The number of directors who responded is also included. Findings are based on these numbers.

Performance of tasks

Categories and tasks used in this study are shown in the Complete Job Profile. Three-fifths of the tasks were performed by at least 85 percent of the respondents, although performance depended both on the nature of the task and on where the cook/manager was employed. Table 2 groups the tasks in descending order of performance.

Locations. Tasks in Category I (planning, preparation, and service of food) were widely performed, as were those in Category III (ordering, receiving, and storage) and Category IV (sanitation and safety). Metro area cook/managers were less likely to perform some of the planning of menus and meal patterns, forecasting, recipe testing, and merchandise inspection tasks than were cook/managers in outstate or nonpublic schools, perhaps because they are more likely to work with a school food service director. The metro area cook/managers also reported less involvement with providing food service information to the media and with initiating student participation in the food service (Tasks VI-2 and VI-4), again probably because of the presence of a director.

Although most tasks were performed by at least some of the respondents, two categories contained tasks which were done noticeably less often. These were Category II (records) and Category VII (employee training).

Table 1. Survey respondents by location and kind of facility.

	Metro	Outstate	Nonpublic	Total
Elementary	41	77	108	226
Secondary	58	69	4	131
Satellite	20	13	1	34
K-12	6	218	4	228
Directors				35
Total	125	377	117	654

Table 2. Job tasks performed by cook/managers in Minnesota.

Category	Percent of respondents performing task			
	>85%	70%-80%	50%-70%	25%-50%
I	1,3,4,5,6,7,8	2		
II	6	1	4,5	2,3
III	2,3,4	1		
IV	1,2,3,4,5,6			
V	1,2,3,4		6	5
VI	5	1	2,3,4	
VII	1,5,7,8	3	2,4	6
VIII	4	1,2	3	

Handling money (Task II-2) and handling free and reduced meals (Task II-3) were performed by the fewest cook/managers, particularly those in outstate areas. Cook/managers in nonpublic schools were more likely to handle the free and reduced meals, but less likely to process special events (Task II-4). Conducting staff meetings (Task VII-6) was also not done by many respondents, regardless of location.

Cook/managers in nonpublic schools reported less involvement in employee training, job rotation schedules, performance review, and promotion of continuing education activities for their employees (Tasks VII-1,3,4,7). This same group was also less likely to perform those tasks listed in Category VIII (self-growth). In addition, nonpublic-school cook/managers reported less involvement with labor relations (Tasks V-5 and V-6) than did outstate cook/managers; both groups reported considerably less involvement than did metro area respondents. These last findings are all probably due to location factors, i.e. access to continuing education activities and interaction with unionized employees.

Kind of facility. Cook/managers in satellite operations reported that they were less likely than centrally located staff to perform many of the tasks listed in the profile. This is to be expected, since many of these tasks deal with planning and serving meals, activities which might not be carried out by satellite operation cook/managers unless they were located in a facility which had students onsite. These satellite-operation cook/managers also were likely to be more involved in labor relations but less involved in public relations.

Cook/managers in elementary schools reported less involvement in special events than did those in secondary or K-12 schools. The cook/managers in K-12 schools did report heavy involvement in public relations activities, however, particularly in furnishing information about menus, nutrition, and federal guidelines. Finally, cook/managers in secondary schools reported as much involvement with labor relations as did satellite-operation cook/managers; those in elementary schools reported less activity.

The kinds of job tasks performed varied by location and by kind of facility. This serves to emphasize the importance of flexibility in writing job descriptions for school food service cook/managers in Minnesota and probably in other states as well. Not all cook/managers do exactly



Complete Job Profile

This is an all-inclusive list. It should be tailored to the individual school district.

- I. Supervise and Assist in the Planning, Preparation, and Service of Food
 1. Assist in menu planning.
 2. Assist with forecasting participation rates.
 3. Maintain meal patterns, considering quality, quantity and cost.
 4. Do a work schedule, combining advance planning methods, equipment utilization, serving procedures and clean-up schedule.
 5. Assemble and test new recipes.
 6. Supervise and assist in the daily meal preparation and service, maintaining quality and quantity standards.
 7. Promote a pleasant manner by personnel during serving.
 8. Provide timely meal service in accordance with student time schedules.
- II. Collect Information and Maintain Operational Records
 1. Prepare or maintain daily cost and evaluation sheets for foodservice, doing calculations as necessary.
 2. Supervise and assist in ticket sales, cashiering or bank deposits.
 3. Supervise and assist in issuing and recording free and reduced meals.
 4. Process necessary records for special events, such as banquets or other functions involving service of food.
 5. Maintain records of employees' meals, hours worked, and accidents.
 6. Maintain or supervise perpetual inventory records and values of food, supplies and equipment, separating government and purchased items as appropriate.
- III. Assume Responsibility for Ordering, Receiving and Storing Food and Non Food Materials
 1. Use information from menu planning meetings.
 2. Be responsible for ordering/requisitioning food and supplies.
 3. Inspect and record all government or purchased merchandise received, notifying appropriate people as to quantity and quality.
 4. Check and maintain proper storage temperatures for all food items, rotating stock periodically.
- IV. Maintain, Supervise and Assist with Sanitation and Safety Standards and Regulations
 1. Observe Federal, State and local safety and sanitation regulations.
 2. Enforce appropriate hygiene and grooming standards.
 3. Ensure proper procedures for cleaning and sanitizing and maintaining operation of equipment.
 4. Maintain appropriate standards of food handling during preparation and service.
 5. Insure proper notification and assistance in case of accidents or injuries.
 6. Inspect areas of work and food preparation on a regular basis, checking both safety and sanitation.
- V. Establish, Promote and Maintain Positive Interpersonal Relations with Coworkers
 1. Maintain a smiling, pleasant appearance when and where appropriate.
 2. Encourage employees to be cooperative and courteous to coworkers, students and building staff.
 3. Promote and maintain effective communications among all employees.
 4. Be considerate and fair to each coworker, especially in disciplinary matters or employee problems.
 5. Maintain appropriate union labor relations.
 6. Inform employees regarding negotiations, meetings and job postings.
- VI. Promote Positive Public Relations with Students, Building Staff and Community
 1. Participate in nutritional education and activities in schools and community.
 2. Provide information about the school foodservice, such as menus or nutrition information, to local newspapers or other media.
 3. Invite and encourage community involvement through special school and community events.
 4. Initiate student involvement in the foodservice, such as in menu planning, tasting parties, Y.A.C., and scholarship fund.
 5. Serve as a role model by maintaining a positive attitude towards students and staff.
- VII. Provide Training and Promote Continuing Education for Employees
 1. Training employees in food preparation, safety, sanitation, and use and maintenance of equipment.
 2. Assist in preparation of job descriptions for use in selecting and training employees.
 3. Implement or maintain job rotation schedules to facilitate employee training and development.
 4. Promote employee growth through the use of job evaluations and performance reviews.
 5. Create awareness of Federal guidelines for child nutrition.
 6. Conduct staff meetings.
 7. Encourage employees to attend workshops, conventions, foodservice chapters and professional groups, and certification classes.
 8. Encourage reading of professional journals and letters.
- VIII. Establish and Maintain a Professional Self-growth and Development Program
 1. Establish goal for achieving recertification.
 2. Attend appropriate classes and conventions to acquire recertification.
 3. Participate in professional organizations.
 4. Be aware of changes in environment which could affect job performance.

the same things. Supervisors and planners must consider the job in question.

Directors' perceptions. In general, directors' responses tended to agree with those of the cook/managers. In cases where they differed, directors' responses were more similar to those of the metro area cook/managers than to those of the other two groups.

Directors did, however, report that they believed cook/managers had greater involvement in employee training and self-growth than was actually reported by any group in the study. Directors also unanimously said that they believed that *all* cook/managers would be performing 15 of the 47 tasks; these tasks were primarily in the food production, sanitation and safety, and interpersonal relations areas. However, not all cook/managers reported performing these tasks. Tasks which the directors unanimously said would be performed were often not done by up to 30 (5%) of the cook/managers responding.

Time spent on tasks

Although the cook/managers varied in the kinds of tasks they said they did, it is useful to consider the approximate amounts of time which they reported devoting to the eight categories in the job profile. The categories, which are made up of clusters of similar kinds of tasks, are presented in Table 3. The median percentage time represents the "middle" of the range of times reported; exactly half the cook/managers reported working more and half reported working less. It is similar to an average, but is not affected by small numbers of people who are quite different from the rest.

Cook/managers reported spending 40-50 percent of their time planning, preparing, and serving food (Category I). The next greatest amounts of time went to ordering, receiving, and storing food and non-food materials (Category III) and to record keeping (Category II), which each took about 10 percent. The five remaining categories each received about 5 percent of the cook/managers' time.

Location. Table 3 emphasizes the fact that cook/managers in all groups devote similar percentages of time to each category. They are often performing different tasks within the category, but it adds up to about the same amount of time. There is only one exception to this. Cook/managers in nonpublic schools devoted more time to record keeping (Category II), while apparently devoting less time to planning, preparation, and service of food (Category I).

Kind of facility. As with location, cook/managers in different kinds of schools devoted about the same percentage of time to a category. In the satellite operations, the cook/managers reported spending a lower percentage of time in planning, preparation, and service of food (Category I) than did cook/managers in elementary, secondary or K-12 schools. K-12 cook/managers spent more time in Category III (records) than did the other three groups.

In most cases, the directors' estimates were quite close to the cook/managers' reports. Directors did, however, underestimate median time spent on planning, preparation, and service of food (Category I) and on self-growth (Category VIII).

Summary of Findings

The 47 tasks which were originally identified by cook/managers were all performed by at least some of the survey respondents. Most universally performed tasks dealt with food preparation and service (Category I), sanitation and safety (Category IV), and interpersonal relations activities (included in several categories). Least performed tasks dealt with handling money (Category II) and employee training (Category VII).

Location of the cook/managers did affect tasks performed. Metro area respondents tended to report less involvement than either outstate or K-12 cook/managers in planning, forecasting, testing, and inspection. This could be because most school food service directors are also located in metro area schools. The kind of facility also affected

Table 3. Median percentage time¹ spent on job categories by cook/managers in different locations, with perceptions of directors.

Category	COOK/MANAGERS			DIRECTORS
	Metro	Outstate	Nonpublic	
			<i>median %</i>	
I. Supervise and assist in the planning, preparation and service of food	50.07	49.87	40.36	40.50
II. Collect information and maintain operational records	9.74	9.94	14.63	9.83
III. Assume responsibility for ordering, receiving and storing food and nonfood materials	10.13	10.46	10.15	10.25
IV. Maintain, supervise and assist with sanitation and safety standards and regulations	5.22	5.41	5.38	5.32
V. Establish, promote and maintain positive interpersonal relations with coworkers	5.22	5.28	4.84	5.17
VI. Promote positive public relations with students, building staff and community	4.87	5.03	4.80	5.04
VII. Provide training and promote continuing education for employees	4.72	4.76	4.59	4.63
VIII. Establish and maintain a professional self-growth and development program	4.84	4.84	4.54	2.63

¹Unlike means, medians will not total 100 percent.

a cook/managers' tasks. Cook/managers in satellite operations reported less involvement with tasks ordinarily associated with onsite food service, record keeping, and involvement with students, staff, and community.

Although location and kind of facility did seem to affect which tasks were performed, neither factor seemed to affect percentage time devoted to each category of tasks. Thus, tasks were differentially performed within the cluster in the category.

Directors' perceptions of what the cook/managers were doing or should be doing were fairly close to what the cook/managers reported doing. Directors did tend to overestimate involvement in training for employees and in continuing education for the cook/managers' personal growth. Correspondingly, directors tended to underestimate time spent on food preparation and service.

Acknowledgments

This work was initiated and directed by elected officers of the Minnesota School Food Service Association and School Food Service Directors of Minnesota. Additional support was given by Minnesota State Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs, Vocational Education, and Nutrition Education and Training sections. The Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Minnesota, funded the survey, data analysis, and production of this publication.

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