

Are You Ready for the Challenge?

Meeting the Healthier US School Challenge Criteria

Lesson 4: Meeting the Menu Criteria

Lesson Introduction and Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Identify all menu criteria of the HealthierUS School Challenge.
2. Describe how structuring a menu relates to the Challenge menu criteria.
3. Evaluate sample weekly lunch menus and adapt to meet the Challenge menu criteria.
4. Relate Production Records to the HUSSC Criteria

Lesson-at-a-Glance

Time	Topic	Task	Materials
2 minutes	Introduction and Overview	Introduce lesson	
Objective 1: Identify all menu criteria of the HealthierUS School Challenge.			
5minutes	The HUSSC Lunch Menu Criteria	Review the HealthierUS School Challenge menu criteria. Conduct Activity 1 using Handout 4.1: Menu Criteria Windowpane.	Handout 1.2: <i>Criteria for the HealthierUS School Challenge</i> Handout 4.1: <i>Menu Criteria Windowpane</i>
Objective 2: Identify how menu structure relates to the Challenge menu criteria, evaluate menus and determine modifications to meet the Challenge criteria.			
45minutes	Menu Planning Structures, Evaluation and Modification	Discuss various types of menu planning structures; review menus and modify to meet HUSSC criteria Conduct Activity 2, using Handouts 4.2 and 4.3	Handouts 4.2: <i>Sample Weekly Menus #1-4</i> Handouts 4.3: <i>Evaluating the Sample Weeks' Menus Questions</i>

Are You Ready for the Challenge? Meeting the Healthier US School Challenge Criteria

Objective 3: Relate the Menu Production Record to the HealthierUS Challenge Criteria			
5minutes	Relate the Menu Production Record to the HealthierUS Challenge Criteria	<p>Discuss components of successful menu production.</p> <p>Facilitate discussion of Activity 3 question answers.</p>	Activity Handout Handout 4.6: <i>Relating the Menu Production Record to the HUSSC Criteria</i>
3 minutes	Lesson Summary	.	
60 minutes		If all objectives/activities are presented	

Are You Ready for the Challenge?

Meeting the Healthier US School Challenge Criteria

Lesson Plan

Introduction and Overview (5 minutes)

Say:

We've briefly discussed the criteria of the HealthierUS School Challenge. Now we are going to take an in-depth look at the menu criteria and discuss how the structuring of a menu can help you reach the goals of the Challenge. We'll also evaluate and modify sample school lunch menus.

The goal of the HealthierUS School Challenge's menu criteria is to make healthy choices available for all students. Regardless of the type of menu planning approach that is used or whether a school implements Offer versus Serve, the HealthierUS School Challenge menu criteria is not intended to work against it, but to encourage healthy choices and offerings within every menu planning approach.

Discuss the Menu Criteria of the HealthierUS School Challenge (5 minutes with Activity 1)

Materials Needed

Handout 1.2: *Criteria for the HealthierUS School Challenge*

Handout 4.1: *Menu Criteria Windowpane Activity*

Say:

Take out Handout 4.1 which looks like a windowpane. Each "pane" or square has a picture or graphic that visually represents a Challenge menu criterion. Using the Challenge Criteria in Handout 1.2, work quickly at your tables to identify the graphic or picture and write in its matching Challenge menu criterion. In approximately 3 minutes we will discuss the criteria as a group.

Do: Set your timer for about 3 minutes, then stop the activity.

Do: Facilitate a quick group sharing and discussion of the HUSSC criteria window panes.

Key Points for Instructor during Windowpane Activity:

- 5 different vegetable—offer at least 5 different vegetables on your menu each school week. These vegetables can be fresh, frozen, or canned. Canned may help keep your food cost down but remember, they are usually higher in sodium. When you are able, include fresh and frozen vegetables. Having a self-serve fruit and vegetable or salad bar or even offering pre-plated salads increases opportunities to include vegetables in your menus.
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Are You Ready for the Challenge? Meeting the Healthier US School Challenge Criteria

- Dry beans and peas served once a week; minimum of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup serving—the HUSSC requires that dry beans and peas be offered at least once a week.
- 5 different fruits—At least 5 *different* fruits must be offered each week. While oranges, apples, and bananas might be familiar to many of your students, your goal is to expose them to new fruits they may not have had the opportunity to experience in their homes. These can be fresh, frozen, or canned. Canned may help you keep your food costs down. Studies with children indicate it takes repeated exposure to a new food for children to begin to accept it.
- Whole grain—for the Gold awards, offer at least 1 whole-grain product each school day (**at least 2 must be different for variety**), and for the Bronze and Silver levels, offer whole-grain products 3 days a week (at least 2 must be different). The majority of whole grain food products served must have the whole grain(s) listed first in the ingredient statement.
- Low-fat milk—offer only low-fat (1%) and fat-free (skim) milk every school day. Remember that 2% milk is not low-fat—it is reduced fat milk.
- If you are going for the Bronze or Silver levels, you will need to offer at least one serving of fresh fruit each week. Those striving for the Gold will offer at least 2 servings of fresh fruit each week.
- Limit counting juice as a fruit or vegetable to 1 time per week.
- Every student has the opportunity to select a HUSSC lunch—the basic premise of the HealthierUS School Challenge is that every student has the opportunity to select a meal that meets the criteria of the Challenge.
- Dark green and orange vegetables—you will want to include dark green or orange vegetables 3 or more times a week. Two of the three must be different.

Structuring, Evaluating and Modifying Menus to Meet the Challenge Criteria

(30 minutes with Activity 2)

Say:

A basic HealthierUS School Challenge philosophy is that “every child has the opportunity to select a menu that meets the HealthierUS School Challenge.” This philosophy does not mean that every student has to *select* the menu options planned to meet the Challenge, just that if they wanted to select the healthier items, they could do so.

Are You Ready for the Challenge?

Meeting the Healthier US School Challenge Criteria

Sometimes the way menus are structured or served can unknowingly prevent a child from being able to select all the healthy foods included in your menus. The following examples illustrate:

Do: Read the examples.

Example 1: School XYZ allows students to select only one side dish from the following options: spinach salad, baked beans, and corn. The spinach salad is used to meet the dark green/orange vegetable criteria and the baked beans to meet the weekly dry beans/peas criteria. Since the student can only select one side, he/she would not be able to select both the spinach salad and the baked beans. Because of this, the student would not have the opportunity to select a meal that supports the HealthierUS School Challenge goals.

Example 2: One reimbursable meal serving line offers all the items needed to meet the HealthierUS School Challenge goals and the other reimbursable meal serving line does not. Students are not allowed to cross over from one line to another when selecting food for their meal. In this situation, students have the opportunity to select a HealthierUS School Challenge meal by selecting the meal serving line that offers the HealthierUS School Challenge items.

Example 3: The school offers a “food court” style of meal serving lines. Students can freely move between all lines and select a reimbursable meal. In this situation, students are able to select a HealthierUS School Challenge meal by selecting HealthierUS School Challenge items from any of the serving lines before passing through the point of sale.

While Example 2 and 3 are currently acceptable, the intent of the HealthierUS School Challenge is that schools should be actively moving toward offering meals that meet HealthierUS School Challenge criteria on all reimbursable meal lines.

Note that the menu submitted for the HealthierUS School Challenge certification has to be a **menu that has already been served to students—not just a planned menu**. USDA wants to be sure that your school is actually serving these healthy menus to its students.

Production records submitted for the 4-week lunch menu for every award level, except Bronze, assists with ensuring that the school is preparing enough food and that students have the opportunity to select those foods that meet HealthierUS School Challenge criteria. Production records should indicate actual daily meal count (students and adults); menu items (used to meet meal pattern requirements), planned portion size (by age/grade); quantity prepared for each menu item, a la carte items sold (if applicable), and leftovers.

Let’s review a selection of sample menus.

Activity 2

Materials Needed

Handout 1.2: *Criteria of the HealthierUS School Challenge*

Handout 4.2: *Sample Weekly Menus #1-4*

Are You Ready for the Challenge? Meeting the Healthier US School Challenge Criteria

Handout 4.3: *Evaluating the Sample Weekly Menus* Activities

Handout 4.4: Lunch Menu Worksheet for Silver/Bronze Award

Handout 4.5 – Lunch Menu Worksheet for Gold/Gold with Distinction Award

Say: Take out Handouts 4.2, *Sample Weekly Menus #1-4* and Handouts 4.3, *Evaluating the Sample Weekly Menus* questions and Handouts 4.4 and 4.5, *Lunch Menu Worksheets for the Silver/Bronze and Gold/Gold with Distinction awards*.

We'll use the menus and questions to practice evaluating menus to determine if the HUSSC criteria are met and if not, how they can be modified to meet the HUSSC criteria.

Menu #1 is a simple menu with limited options for students to make choices. Let's answer the questions for Menu # 1 together.

Do: Ask the questions about Menu #1 and allow participants to respond. Allow approximately 7 minutes for review and discussion.

Ask: How many of you have a similar menu in any of your schools?

Do: Allow participants time to respond.

Say: Now review Menu #2. This menu structure is also commonly used when a school wants to provide students with choices. Say: First, plug the menu components into the HUSSC Lunch Menu Worksheet for the Silver/Bronze award, Handout 4.4. Then, as a table determine answers to the questions for Menu #2.

Use the Comment column on the Lunch Menu Worksheet for notes as you evaluate the menu. This will provide information to back up your answers.

Do: Allow participants time to answer the questions about Menu #2 in their small groups. Review answers about this menu after participants have had time to work on the answers with their group. Allow 7-8 minutes for Menu #2.

Say: Let's move on to Menu #3. . . This menu includes serving sizes. Remember, meals meeting HUSSC criteria must meet the minimum serving sizes required for reimbursable meals in the National School Lunch Program as well as meeting the other HUSSC menu criteria.

Plug this menu into Handout 4.5, the Lunch Menu Worksheet for the Gold awards and then work as a table to answer the question. Again, use the Comment column on the Lunch Menu Worksheet to make notes of your evaluation; providing back up for your answers. In approximately 8 minutes we will review the answers.

Say: To complete our menu review, look at Menu #4. This is a "food court" style set up. First highlight all of the meal components used to meet the HealthierUS School Challenge. Review the menu and answer the questions for Menu #4. We will review your tables' answers in approximately 7-8 minutes.

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Relating the Menu Production Record to the HealthierUS Challenge Criteria

Approximately 7 Minutes with Activity 3

Materials Needed:

Handout 4.6: *Relating the Menu Production Record to the HealthierUS Challenge Criteria*

Say: Menus submitted for Silver, Gold and Gold with Distinction awards must be supported by the 4 weeks menu production records. These should be written legibly and indicate, at a minimum, actual daily meal count (students and adults); menu items (used to meet meal pattern requirements), planned portion size (by age and grade); quantity prepared for each menu item, a la carte items sold (if applicable), and leftovers.

Say: It is important that we promote selection of food items served to meet HUSSC criteria and making sure that we are not just putting an item on the menu to satisfy a criteria. This may mean sampling new menu items containing unfamiliar foods, involving students in recipe development or using spices and presentation that students enjoy to encourage them to select nutrient-rich food items.

To support this philosophy, menus and production records will be analyzed to determine if the menu features token items. Token items is defined as menu items taken or selected by less than 10% of the students eating lunch on any given day. Currently, only those schools applying for the Gold Award of Distinction will be penalized or downgraded if they have too many token items. A Gold Award of Distinction application must demonstrate that at least 10% of the students take the HUSSC items on a regular basis (at least 16 out of 20 days OR no more than 4 items can be selected in token amounts).

Activity 3:

Say: Work quickly as a table group and circle or underline the correct answer to each question on Handout 4.6 – Relating the Production Record to the HealthierUS School Challenge. We'll review your answers in approximately 3 minutes.

Do: Read each question and ask for a response.

Do: Reinforce each answer with supporting information.

Lesson Summary (3 minutes)

Ask for a sample of participants to share one idea they learned in this lesson they could use in their school nutrition operation.