

# Expanding a Movement: A Case Study of the Compton Farm to School Project

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April 2004

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## Executive Summary

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This study explores in-depth the steps taken during implementation of the first stages of the Compton Farm to School Project. The Compton Farm to School Project is placed in the context of the rapidly expanding Farm to School Movement, which has spread to a diverse range of school districts throughout the country. The study serves as guide for future farm to school project efforts and has significance for anyone interested in providing for the health of our children and the sustainability of our nation's family farmers.

Of all occupations in America, farming is facing the greatest decline, with African-Americans disproportionately hard hit by farm failure (Azuma & Fisher 3). As the food market has become more globalized and centralized, our connections to farmers and the environment in which our food comes have decreased. Furthermore, the school cafeteria has become a microcosm of the fast food nation we have become. School food services programs, expected to generate a profit and cut labor costs, outsource to large commercial food companies and contract with fast food companies. In schools, obesity and overweight is increasing at an alarming rate.

The farm to school initiative, which seeks to bring local produce into schools, emerged as a response to the above issues. The first pilot farm to school projects were initiated in Florida and North Carolina. Pioneering projects were also created in California and this study highlights two such programs in the Santa Monica-Malibu and Ventura Unified School Districts. These case studies help to put the Compton Farm to School Project in a broader context because comparisons between the two established programs and the Compton Farm to School Program can be easily made. The Compton

Farm to School Project has not benefited from all of the circumstances that have characterized several farm to school programs initiated at an earlier stage of the farm to school movement; however the project's success illustrates that barriers can be overcome with the commitment, motivation, and problem solving abilities of project leaders.

Implementing a farm to school project is a highly complex and multifaceted process. Barriers to farm to school include the culture and expectations of food service directors; lack of knowledge and confidence about farm to school; financial concerns, including limited financial resources to pay for new infrastructure and possible increased staff and food costs; transportation, delivery, and other logistical issues; and a disconnect between the cafeteria and the classroom. The Compton Farm to School has utilized its opportunities and overcome barriers. The project implementation process that occurred in Compton is as follows:

1. Fulfill initial project requirements:

- Gain support from the Nutrition Services Department and staff
- Demonstration of the Nutrition Service Director's commitment to the project

2. Phase One

- Identify fundraising approaches and needs
- Access cafeteria infrastructure
- Evaluate existing labor capacity
- Communicate with schools
- Develop garden task force

### 3. Phase Two

- Conduct an outreach and marketing campaign
- Forge partnerships with local farm organizations and farmers' markets
- Create opportunities for student education and leadership
- Address staff training and other final preparations

Lessons learned from the Compton Farm to School Project that can guide future efforts include:

- Support and leadership must come from the district, the food service department, schools, teachers, community members, farmers, and farmer organizations.
- Food services must adopt a farm to school philosophy. The food service director's commitment and motivation has a large impact on the success of a project.
- Direct communication and a strong working relationship must be established between the district and local farmers. Together the district and farmers should develop an approach that is flexible and accommodating to each other's needs, business systems, and schedules.
- All involved must understand the importance of their role. Staff leadership training is recommended.
- Students should be engaged through experiential nutrition, food, and food systems based education.
- Strong communication and understanding of the diverse groups of people involved is crucial.

This study also examines recommendations for the expansion of farm to school.

These recommendations include:

- Designation of the Compton Farm to School Project as an official pilot demonstration site.
- Continued campaign work for farm to school legislation, Senate Bill 1755. Secure support for the inclusion of its provisions in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Legislation and the appropriation of funds for the proposed seed grant program.
- Federal and State legislation that would create bonus incentives for meals that incorporate locally grown products from family farms.
- The creation of farm registry with lists of family farmers in each US community.
- A Farmer Outreach Campaign.
- A Food Service Director Outreach.
- More documentation and marketing of project successes to further legitimize the farm to school approach with food service directors, government legislators, and the health community.

# Section I: A History of Farm to School

## Farm to School Background

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Farm to school is a concept that includes a wide range of projects that bring fresh, locally grown produce into schools. Farm to school creates a “win-win” opportunity in which: 1) students receive fresh fruits and vegetables; 2) local family farmers increase their markets, profit revenue, and connections to their surrounding community; and 3) school districts invest in the health and education of their students. An ultimate goal of farm to school is to foster the development of lifelong healthy eating habits and connections with food growing and preparation. Examples of farm to school programs include individual items, locally produced food in all school meals, and complete farmers’ market salad bars. For several school districts the term “farm to school” refers to a whole schools approach to a school food program, which incorporates parents, teachers, students, food service staff, and community members in the process of linking local food production with the school cafeteria, classroom, and garden through food, nutrition, and food systems based education. Food service directors across the nation have initiated a farm to school program in order to bring healthy, nutritious food into schools in a way that is economically viable and advantageous to all involved.

The first farm to school pilot projects began in 1996 and now just eight years later, 400 school districts in twenty-two states have a farm to school project (Joshi, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004). The Farm to School Movement has emerged full blown, as also witnessed by the impressive Farm to Cafeteria conference in October of 2002 that took place in advance of the Community Food Security Coalition annual meeting (Gottlieb 13). The Farm to School Movement has become a Farm to Cafeteria Movement, with new initiatives focused on prisons, hospitals, and other institutions (Gottlieb 13).

Launching a farm to school program is a large and complex undertaking. Many logistical and administrative barriers to implementing a farm to school project exist; however, these barriers can be overcome, as illustrated by the success of many programs throughout the nation. As many farm to school programs across the nation have reached a stage of expansion and institutionalization, the focus for farm to school activists has become not so much a matter of whether or not farm to school programs can succeed, but a question of how to sustain as well as expand farm to school in all types of school districts, including those in working class and diverse communities. This report seeks to answer that question, through a case study of the Compton Farm to School Project.

## Why Did the Farm to School Initiative Emerge?

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The farm to school initiative was developed in light of the following issues:

1. The obesity and overweight epidemic
2. The nation's fast food culture
3. The small farmer crisis
4. The disconnect between consumers and farmers
5. The commercialization of the school food environment
6. The direct correlation between academic success and good nutrition

### **Important Facts**

- Obesity and overweight is increasing at an alarming rate.
- The prevalence of overweight and obesity in children, adolescents, and young adults ages 2 to 19 years old has increased dramatically since the 1960s. The percentage of overweight children (ages 6-11) increased from 4 percent in 1965 to 13 percent in 1999 and the percentage of overweight adolescents (12-19 years of age) increased from 5 percent in 1970 to 14 percent in 1999 (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhanes/databriefs/overwght.pdf>).
- Obesity disproportionately affects minority populations. Among boys, the highest percentage of overweight occurred among Mexican Americans. Among girls, the highest percentage of overweight occurred among non-Hispanic blacks followed by Mexican Americans. The lowest percentage of overweight occurred among non-Hispanic white girls (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhanes/databriefs/overwght.pdf>).

- While obesity has been declared an epidemic, hunger and food insecurity have been called America's "hidden crisis," and although seemingly contradictory, often co-exist in the same families and the same individuals. ([www.frac.org/pdf/hungerandobesity.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/hungerandobesity.pdf)). A lack of adequate resources for food could result in weight gain in several ways: 1) the need to maximize caloric intake; 2) the trade-off between food quantity and quality; 3) overeating when food is available; and 4) physiological changes may occur to help the body conserve energy when diets are periodically inadequate ([www.frac.org/pdf/hungerandobesity.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/hungerandobesity.pdf)).
- The need for improving the health of Americans is clear: medical costs, lost productivity and other expenses associated with nutritional problems add up to \$71 billion a year (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/why.html>).
- Good nutrition is especially important for school children for a variety of reasons: 1) nutrition is related to physical well-being, growth, development, and readiness to learn; 2) widely disseminated research demonstrates the connection between academic performance and good nutrition; 3) even moderate under-nutrition can have lasting effects on children's growth and obesity; and 4) unhealthy eating habits that contribute to health problems tend to be established early in life while young people that have unhealthy eating habits tend to maintain these habits as they age (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/why.html>).

### **Why Focus on School Food?**

School nutrition programs are often inappropriately blamed for current childhood and nutrition problems while a multitude of factors contribute to the increasing rates of overweight in children, such complex interactions of societal, economic, demographic, and environmental changes that act as barriers to physical education and limit access to healthy food (Nestle 175). However, “with 95% of students enrolled in schools and eating one or two school meals a day,” the school nutrition program has a significant opportunity to positively affect the nutrition of our nation’s children (Azuma and Fisher 6). Addressing the issue of school food is critical because of the direct correlation between academic performance and nutrition. To invest in the future success of our children, our nation must also invest in the health of our students.

### **Issues Concerning School Food Services**

As the attention around the obesity epidemic increases, school food has come under the intense scrutiny of parents, health professionals, school boards and legislators (Kalb 6). Farm to school seeks to enhance healthy school options in the school cafeteria in light of the following issues:

- Due to budgetary problems within American public schools, most school food service operations are now expected to be fiscally self-sufficient or to generate revenue for the school’s general budget and as a result food services and schools feel pressure to sacrifice nutritional value for revenue generation.
- School cafeterias have become increasingly commercialized. To cut labor costs, meals are increasingly not prepared on site. Instead, districts buy from a distributor pre-packaged, highly processed foods that require little staff time. As

a result, many schools now even lack the infrastructure to prepare meals in their kitchen.

- Schools have become a microcosm of the fast food nation we have become. Fast food companies, which see unparalleled marketing opportunities within schools, have established a beachhead in schools throughout the nation. In California, according to a mail-survey of California school district food service directors, 90 percent of high schools sell fast food and 72 percent permit advertising of brand-name fast food and beverages on campus (Gottlieb and Joshi 1).
- The main school lunch program now has to compete with highly profitable but unhealthy “a la carte” or competitive foods. In order to generate revenue for school districts, schools, and school programs such as band or sports, schools are increasingly selling “a la carte” items, such as french fries, ice cream, pizza, and other snacks that are exempt from federal nutritional guidelines for school meals. Many food service directors are concerned with this trend, as they fear that competitive foods will undermine the profitability of the School Lunch Program, which depends on an adequate sales volume to meet costs (Azuma and Fisher 7).

### **Farm to School Addresses the Small Farmer Crisis and the Disconnect Between Consumers and Farmers**

The current Farm to School Movement has emerged in large part because of a desire to address the US family farmer crisis.

#### **Important Facts:**

- Of all occupations, farming is facing the greatest decline, with the number of mid-sized family farms dropping by 74,440 between 1993 and 1997 (Azuma and Fisher 3).

- Although the reasons for these drastic declines are very complex and most are beyond the scope of this paper, one common theme is that the consolidation of farms and technological advancements in farm equipment dampen employment growth (US Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Quarterly).
- African-American farmers have been the hardest hit by farm failure, and are twice as likely to go out of business than White farmers (Azuma and Fisher 3).
- As a handful of companies gain control over the nation's major commodities markets, farmers have been forced to sell their crops at the price set by the virtual monopolies.
- As the food market has become more globalized and centralized, our connections to farmers and the environment in which our food comes have decreased, leading to a general lack of awareness among average American consumers about where our food comes from.

### **What Can Farm to School Do?**

Farm to school presents an important opportunity for local farmers to expand into a previously untapped market and consequently to increase local farmers' incomes. Moreover, farmers see farm to school programs as an investment in the future. Children influence household choices in the grocery store and when children learn to like fresh foods at school through a farm to school program, the results are increased purchasing and consumption community.

([www.caff.org/programs/farm2school.shtml](http://www.caff.org/programs/farm2school.shtml)). Additionally, farm to school programs help children develop a taste for healthy fruits and vegetables that can last through their lifetime as consumers.

Farm to school programs can increase students' awareness and respect for family farmers. In connection with providing local, fresh foods to students, many farm to school programs educate students about food, nutrition, and their relationship to food production systems. The goal is to help students develop strong connections with food growing and preparation.

## Farm to School Expansion

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In the 1990's some food service directors already served farm fresh produce; however these programs were isolated and not part of a larger movement. Now just eight years after the first farm to school pilot projects, 400 school districts in twenty-two states have a farm to school project (Joshi, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004). The farm to school movement is revolutionizing school food.

### **Pioneering Partnerships and Projects**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) played and continues to play a large role in initiating and supporting farm to school projects. In the mid-1990's USDA piloted two farm to school projects in Florida and North Carolina. These projects were developed out of a partnership between USDA and the Department of Defense (DoD), which enabled the national school lunch program to piggyback on the DoD 's existing distribution system for produce. Through this program, schools use their commodity funds to purchase fresh produce from the DoD (Azuma and Fisher 47). Out of this collaboration emerged the pilot Florida and North Carolina farm to school projects as well as many others, as part of the DoD Fresh Program. As part of the DoD Fresh Program, the DoD acts as a broker, taking orders from school districts and purchasing produce from state or local farmers. Farmers deliver the produce to state-run warehouses and departments, such as the State Department of Agriculture, deliver the products to schools (Azuma and Fisher 48).

The DoD Fresh Program exists in Florida, North Carolina, New Mexico, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Georgia, and New Jersey (Joshi May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004). In

California a group of farmers and other people interested in supporting farm to school initiated a DoD Fresh Program, but this project is still in an initial stage of development.

Other pioneering projects were created in California during the late 1990's. The Occidental College Community Food Security Project (CFSP), in conjunction with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District in Southern California, launched an early initiative. This innovative program combined a farmers' market salad bar program with food, nutrition, and food system education. The Santa Monica-Malibu program has received much media attention and has been influential in informing and facilitating a number of other innovative farm to school programs across the country.

### **Farm to School Outreach and Support**

USDA has actively supported the expansion of farm to school. The Department organized and hosted several meetings and conferences, such as town hall meetings in North Carolina in January 1998 and Virginia in April 1998, that stimulated interest in farm to school projects among food service directors and small farmers,. USDA published "Small Farms/School Meals Initiative Town Hall Meetings: A Step-by Step Guide on How to Bring Small Farms and Local School Together," based on these two meetings (USDA 2).

In another important step in the nascent farm to school movement, the Community Food Security Coalition and the USDA began to collaborate in the late 1990's. A gathering co-hosted by the Community Food Security Coalition and the USDA that took place December of 1999 was important in establishing farm to school regional workshops and new funding options for farm to school projects. These

workshops helped generate interest and knowledge about the feasibility of farm to school and have helped expand the farm to school movement.

Farm to school won a major victory with the 2002 Farm Bill, which states that the USDA should encourage schools to incorporate local purchasing if practicable (Gottlieb 6). In 2002, USDA sent out a memo to food service directors around the country informing them of this option (Gottlieb 6). In another effort to encourage and guide food service directors, the USDA is preparing a three volume how-to-manual that will serve as a technical step-by-step guide for integrating the use of fresh produce into school food programs. These manuals provide very specific technical information about 1) tricks of the trade, including how to create the salad bars and theme bars, and how to develop menu plans; 2) how to attract student customers through promotion and focusing on salad bar presentation; and 3) how to prepare quality meals using fresh cut produce, including how to buy and prepare fresh produce.

### **Current Federal Legislation**

With momentum building among parents, communities, health professionals, food service personnel, school boards, anti-hunger and food policy advocates, and legislators to improve children's health, recent progress has occurred to help broaden the national public policy debate on child nutrition by focusing on the win-win result of incorporating farmers into the school food system (Kalb 6). These efforts have been aided by Senator Leahy's (D-VT) introduction on January, 2003 of the "Assistance to Farm to Cafeteria Projects" in S. 995, Senator's Leahy's "Child Nutrition Initiatives" Act (Borron 1). This proposed legislation called for the creation of a \$10 million competitive grant fund for schools to develop farm to cafeteria projects (Borron 1). In the House, Representatives

Fred Upton (R-MI) and Ron Kind (D-WI) have since introduced nearly identical legislation: House Resolution 2626, the “Farm to Cafeteria Projects” Act (Borron 1). On March 24th, 2004 the House of Representatives approved, by an overwhelming bipartisan vote (419-5), its child nutrition reauthorization bill, the Child Nutrition Improvement and Integrity Act (H.R. 3873), which included farm provisions in the bill (Vollinger 1). By doing so the House approved the entire farm to school language. No money, however, was attached, and therefore the grant was not funded as of May 2004.

Although funding is not yet appropriated, the approval of the farm to school provisions within the House demonstrates the strong national support for farm to school. Over 175 organizations endorsed the farm to cafeteria legislation, which helped it to receive strong bipartisan support in the House of Representatives (Borron 5). Those in the farm to school and community food security movement have a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on the recent policy victory. However, more work needs to be done. At the time that this study was being completed, farm to school activists were still lobbying US. Senators to co-sponsor S. 1755, the Farm to Cafeteria Projects Act, and support the inclusion of its provisions in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (Borron 1).

This legislation is important because it could increase legitimacy for the farm to school model, and as a result, additional funding from the government and foundations could occur (Barron 5). Moreover, farm to school funding and support will increase with expanded efforts to continue to build a critical mass of projects, document farm to school project successes, increase collaboration with the nutrition and health communities, and provide support for schools-food service directors, school board members, teachers, and administrators.

## Examples of Established California Farm to School Programs

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### **Background on Farm to School Programs**

A wide range of successful farm to school program models has been implemented throughout the country. Eastern farm to school projects, like those in Northern Florida and North Carolina often focus on replacing non-local/regional/state produce with fresher (Azuma and Fisher 13). Many California programs focus on combining a salad bar program with food, nutrition, and food based education.<sup>1</sup> Examples of established California farm to school projects include those in the Santa Monica-Malibu and Ventura.<sup>2</sup>

The case studies of the Santa Monica-Malibu and Ventura programs that follow help to situate the nascent Compton Farm to School Project in a broader context. Comparisons between the two established programs and the Compton program can be easily made. The Compton project also includes a salad bar and a food, education, and food systems based education component. However, the Compton program does not benefit from all of the favorable circumstances that are associated with the Santa Monica-Malibu and Ventura programs; for example, no farmers' markets exist in Compton and the Compton program, thus far in an initial stage, lacks the parent and community leadership found within the other two programs. The Santa Monica-Malibu and Ventura programs have gone through several stages of development and can provide lessons that are very important to all other farm to school projects. However, this study is not

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<sup>1</sup> However, not all farm to school project in California have adopted the salad bar model. The Healdsburg Farm to School project, located in Northern California, is an example of a project that does not have a salad bar program but instead uses locally grown produce in all types of meals, including sandwiches, hot entrees, and salads (May March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> The author recommends reading about the nationally recognized Davis Unified School District program. Refer to <http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/> for information about the Davis Crunch Lunch Program.

suggesting that any farm to school model is better than the other. Each school district must determine what farm to school method will work best given the district's specific circumstances.

### **Some Elements of a Successful Farm to School Project**

Successful farm to school projects include the following:

1. Partnerships between local farm organizations, farmers' markets, and other individuals with similar goals of supporting local agriculture (Azuma Fisher 1).
2. Organized groups of parents and community members that serve as advocates for farm to school.
3. Support for and interest in the project from: the district, the food services department, schools, teachers, parents, students, community members, and farmers.
4. Collaborative relationships between project organizers and district and food service administration.
5. Direct communication and strong working relationships between the district and farmers is especially crucial.

#### **1. The Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District Program**

On September 16, 1997 the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) launched the Farmers' Market Fruit and Salad Bar, a new and innovative program designed to increase students' consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and link the school lunch program to environmental, community food security, and nutrition education objectives (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 2). Earlier that year, in the spring of 1997, the Occidental College Community Food Security Project (CFSP) (which in 1997

was based at the University of California Los Angeles) approached the Southern California-based SMMUSD Food Service staff to discuss the possibility of piloting a Farmers' Market Salad Bar at McKinley Elementary School. This discussion occurred at a pivotal time in the life of the district's already existing salad bar program. While these traditional salad bars, which offered processed, conventionally grown, and sometimes canned foods, were successfully introduced in the early 1990's, participation quickly declined, and the program appeared in danger of being dropped because of food waste and lack of participation (Azuma and Fisher 13). In the mid-1990's, as students in the SMMUSD were complaining of wilted lettuce, dried out carrot sticks, and limited choices, the activists of the CFSP were exploring innovative direct marketing methods that could increase opportunities for small farmers as well as extend the healthy kids/healthy foods concept to more communities and institutions (Azuma and Fisher 14). With input from SMMUSD food services, the farmers' market managers and farmers (it was decided to use two of the city's four farmers' markets, the Wednesday and Saturday markets), the City, the principal at McKinley, parents, and teachers, the Farmers' Market Salad Bar program took shape (Azuma and Fisher 14).

The pilot program at McKinley, which the Occidental CFS Project managed in the first year, generated impressive results as seen through the high participation in the salad bar program. After a one-week run in the summer child-care program, the program was formally launched about two weeks into the school year, on September 16th, 1997 (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 5). Students were given the option of either selecting the Farmer's Market Salad Bar meal, (which included offerings from all five food groups) or the hot meal. Despite the hot meal offering of the day, pizza, participation in the

Farmers' Market Salad Bar was far higher than anticipated on the first day (nearly half of the meals served) (Azuma and Fisher 15). The results, from the outset, indicated significant participation well above the numbers of students selecting the salad bar in previous years (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 5). In fact, on average more than three times the number of children selected the Farmers' Market Salad Bar option than in previous years when the produce was pre-cut and purchased through a produce broker (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 5).

The expansion of the farm to school project occurred during 1998-1999, at a time when SMMUSD Food Services experienced a fiscal shortfall. However, the SMMUSD Board voted to extend the farm to school program in the 1998-1999 school year. With lessons learned from McKinley and a second pilot program at Franklin Elementary School, the SMMUSD was able, in the Spring of 1999, to implement an ambitious and rapid start-up schedule for Farmers' Market Salad Bar Programs at each school site designated in the district's Nutrition Network grant (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 9). Also, with funds from the Nutrition Network grant, Food and Nutrition Services was able to fund salad bar site coordinators at each school site for three hours a day, a position that remains today for every school site. By May of 1999, Farmers' Market Salad Bars were operational every day at nine schools (Azuma and Fisher 15).

The SMMUSD farm to school program demonstrates that with support from the district, district staff, schools, parents, and community members, farm to school programs can be expanded even in times of a food services financial shortfalls and a district budget crisis. In 1998-99 food services experienced a fiscal shortfall and the food service director needed to cut costs in each aspect of the food service operation, including the

Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. The next year, a budgetary crisis in the district created additional financial stresses (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 10). Despite this, food services provided a \$138,000 surplus in 199-2000, due in part to the increased sales and reduced costs associated with the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program, indicating the cost-effectiveness of a fresh food approach (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 10). In fact, the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program continues to be financially self-sufficient (in part because children pay \$2.25 per meal, more than in most districts) (Donna Richwine, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

Due to the financial viability of the program, a strong nutrition education component, the shift in mission in food services at SMMUSD, the high student participation in the program, and the strong support from many parents, teachers, community residents, and agencies throughout the Santa Monica- Malibu district, the program continued to grow. By the 2000-2001 school year, Farmer's Market Salad Bars had become available at all the district schools (Azuma and Fisher 15). The school board approved a change in the name and mission of the department to Food and Nutrition Services, due to the successful implementation of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program (Azuma and Fisher 17). Rodney Taylor, the once skeptical food service director, whose title changed to Nutrition Services Director as the department also changed its philosophy and mission, now describes himself as a farm to school "convert" who continues to play a significant role in generating interest in farm to school at a national level even after his departure from SMMUSD to the Riverside Unified School District in 2002.

Tracie Payton Thomas was another key player in SMMUSD farm to school program. In December 1998 the School Food Board hired Tracie Payton Thomas as the full-time Food and Nutrition Coordinator for the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. Thomas conducted outreach and marketing for the new program and served as the liaison between the district and the farmers. She was responsible for the ordering, pick-up, and delivery of the farm goods at the farmers' markets. Thomas's strong advocacy and outreach skills were instrumental in identifying the support mechanisms necessary for the program's expansion. Her role as effective liaison between the Food Services administrators, cafeteria staff, the site coordinators, the principals, teachers, and parents was also very important for the long-term success of the project. (Azuma and Fisher 15).

While the SMMUSD Farm to School Program was institutionalized across the district in 1999-2000, the program today is at a stage of smoothing out its kinks to make it more sustainable (Richwine, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004). In the beginning Thomas picked-up produce deliveries from the markets. After this arrangement ended, the farmers delivered to the district for approximately two years. Now the district is trying to figure out the best method of delivery and transportation, one that will be sustainable and as easy as possible. Another change in the SMMUSD project is that the two key nutrition service administrators, Rodney Taylor and Tracie Thomas, whose dedication to the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program was crucial to the success of the program, have left the district to start farm to school projects in other Southern California school districts. With the program already institutionalized, it continued to function normally during the 2004 spring semester despite the absence of a permanent nutrition service director. As of March 2004 the district had not hired a permanent food service director to replace

Thomas who departed in November of 2003 to work for the Compton Unified School District.

Donna Richwine, who was hired in 2001 as the SMMUSD nutrition consultant, now works as the district's Nutrition Specialist and oversees the salad bar program, which includes a large nutrition education component. She sees her primary role as getting more students to eat from the salad bars. Although increasing participation has been a challenge (participation in the program has been steady at approximately 30%). Richwine plays an important role in promoting the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program and a number of education programs related to the salad bar that seek to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables that SMMUSD children consume. At least eight Farmers' Market Salad Bar Education Programs (which connect the farm and garden, the cafeteria, and the classroom) exist and teachers have the option to take part in any or all of these programs. Programs include the widely popular Farmers' Market Tours, Harvest of the Month, Farmers' Market Salad Bar Gardens Co-op, and Santa Monica High School Garden Visits (See appendix for a description of each nutrition and food systems educational program). All of these programs have been developed to make it as easy as possible for teachers to include nutrition and food system education in their curriculum. Richwine often teaches the lessons herself and contacts professionals, such as chefs and farmers, to have them teach lessons as well. The nutrition and food system education component of the SMMUSD Farm to School Program helps to bridge the gap between food systems, the cafeteria, and the classroom, while contributing to the support and success of the program.

The SMMUSD Farm to School Program demonstrates unique strengths, including exceptionally strong support from the City of Santa Monica, parent and community members, as well as the convenience of having four operating farmers' markets within the boundaries of the City, the program. As an example of community support, during the pilot program, the farmers' market managers provided needed logistical support that also helped the program to be a success. Furthermore, parents such as Robert Gottlieb, who is also a member of the Community Food Security Coalition, had a major role in initiating the UCLA-Occidental Community Food Security Project. The development of the SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program occurred in large part because of the range of programs and interest in the community regarding environmental, food, and nutrition issues (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 3). The City of Santa Monica had already adopted a "Sustainable City" program, which included the provision that the City was committed to establishing school gardens. In addition, the City has provided matching funds for the program.

Despite these many unique circumstances that worked to the advantage of the SMMUSD Project, the farmers' market salad bar program proved to be a model that could be replicated without all of these specific circumstances. This program paved the way for the expansion of farm to school, with new programs developing based on their district's set of specific circumstances and characteristics. However, the SMMUSD was not without its many challenges, including those it is still addressing. Financial constraints, including those within the district as a whole, are a constant concern but one that food services directors can overcome with careful management and purchasing decisions. The SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program has strengthened a farm

to school movement that is capable of facilitating a veritable revolution in the school lunch program.

## **2. The Ventura Unified School District Program**

The Healthy Schools Program is an example of a farm to school program in a semi-urban setting surrounded by an agricultural area. When Sandy Van Houten was hired as the Director of Nutrition Service for the Ventura Unified School District in May of 2001, there was only one school in the district that had a salad bar. The pilot salad bar at Juanamaria Elementary School was the result of the hard work and coordination between a parent, Pat Malloy, and Jim Churchill, a local farmer. These two initially set the foundation for dramatic changes not only in the practices, but also the philosophy of the Ventura Unified School District. Now three years later there is a complete farm-to-school program in Ventura, called the Healthy Schools Project, which includes a farm fresh salad bar and a school garden in every school. The salad bar program had been implemented in fourteen elementary schools as of February 2004, with plans to shortly implement programs for the remaining three school until all seventeen VUSD elementary schools would have an established farm to school program. The Healthy Schools Project is testimony to the hard work and dedication of Nutrition Service Department administrators and staff, teachers, parents, community members, and the staff of the Community Alliance for Family Farmers (CAFF) who helped launch and facilitate the development of the program

The initial stage of the Healthy Schools Project included both addressing logistical barriers to the program as well as promoting the idea and philosophy behind farm to school. When Sandy Van Houten first joined the Nutrition Services at Ventura

the Department was reluctant to make changes in the way it operated, especially in regards to new procurement procedures. This is a typical barrier to establishing a farm to school program. School districts that have been doing business for a long period of time are naturally reluctant to completely change their way of doing business. However, the program advanced, due to continuing support among employees of the district, parents, community advocates, the district's superintendent, and with major technical support from the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF).

While increasing support for farm to school, the district and CAFF began to address logistical barriers to the program. Kitchen equipment had to be purchased in order to process the food. Prior to the farm to school program, the Nutrition Services Department purchased pre-prepared produce. Therefore, having cafeteria staff cut and prepare the produce was a major change. However, with very enthusiastic staff committed to the idea of farm to school, the issues of staffing did not pose a significant barrier. The process established by Van Houten included the following steps:

- Organizers of the Healthy Schools Project begin to work with the school at least six weeks prior to the launching of the salad bar at that specific school.
- A full two-day training period of the staff is an important part of the project.
- The Salad Bar Coordinator comes to the school every day during the first few weeks that the salad bar is in operation.

Crucial to the program has been motivation of the staff specifically hired to develop the program. This includes Marilyn Goodfry, the Healthy Schools Project Coordinator who joined the program in March of 2002 and Tammy Nulso, the Salad Bar Coordinator who joined the program in May of 2002. There are currently four part-time

nutrition educators and two very recently hired garden coordinators. To pay for the addition of staff and for other expenses relevant to the program, Van Houten and Goodfry wrote and received five grants, such from the Nutrition Network and received funds from tobacco settlement. The acquisition of grant monies has proven to be crucial to the success of the program and the program's expansion. The increase in staff is only one indicator that the Healthy Schools Program is expanding and changing.

The Community Alliance for Family Farmers (CAFF), which is a non-profit organization that seeks to foster family-scale agriculture, plays a very large role in developing and running the elaborate distribution system of the Healthy Schools Project. Judy Bloom, a forager employed by the Community Alliance for Family Farmers (CAFF) facilitates the connection between farmers and the district. Bloom, collects invoices from the district, ensures that the correct produce is delivered to Food Share (the refrigerated centralized district holding site), and facilitates payment to the farmers (Stevens Thomas, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2004). CAFF has also helped to organize the Grower's Collaborative, a group of farmers that has centralized the services that farmers offer to VUSD. The Grower's Collaborative is still a pilot program but plans are for it to be a viable non-profit business in the near future.

Salad bars are only part of the Healthy Schools Program. The nutrition and food system-related education aspect of this farm to school program has been particularly developed in part due to the dedication of staff such as Marilyn Goodfry, and a very active network of parent volunteers. Parent volunteers serve as salad bar monitors who tell children about the various foods in the salad bar and encourage students to try new things. Currently there are approximately two parent volunteers in each of the fourteen

elementary schools, but in some schools, such as Poinsettia Elementary School, there are many more parents involved. Teacher-in-service training is another component of the nutrition education component of the program. Some schools make this training mandatory for staff while other schools make it part of their regular staff meeting. During these training sessions, which range in length from half an hour to an hour and a half long, Marilyn Goodfry introduces the educational programs available for teachers to utilize, such as the taste tests. In an important part of the program's nutrition education component, Goodfry will come once a week to classes, at a teacher's request, to integrate fresh fruit and vegetable taste tests with the regular curriculum. Another aspect of the nutrition education component of the program involves encouraging healthy food sales in the schools. For example, there are smoothie sales at the high schools and healthy food and school fairs.

School gardens are also an important part of the Healthy Schools Program at many of the fourteen elementary schools. School gardens exist at nearly all of the elementary schools; however, to some extent the utilization of the garden as part of nutrition and food system-related education is hit and miss. The leaders of the Healthy Schools Program have more expansive plans for the future and envision the current progress as only the beginning to an even more holistic program. Plans to start a composting program that the recently hired garden coordinators can manage is part of this process. The vision is that the garden coordinators will help increase the linkages between the farm, the cafeteria, and the classroom in a way that teaches students to be stewards of the earth (Goodfry March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

A couple of issues still need to be addressed in order to continue to maintain and strengthen the program. These include improving the financial viability of the program. At this point the program runs slightly in the red when labor costs are taken into account. Van Houten believes that the project will soon be cost neutral or generate a profit. Another issue that Van Houten wants to address is the communication with farmers in order to better define the meaning of “local.”

Despite some unresolved issues and concerns, this program is an important success as measured by the high level of continuing participation by students and the strong support and commitment to the philosophy of farm to school among all involved. The Healthy Schools Program is testimony to what can happen when the food service director, food service staff, parents, students, school administrators, students, and community members are all committed to the philosophy of farm to school. In Ventura, it was not only a community group that pushed the project or the food service director that was responsible for the entire project; rather it became a well-coordinated collaboration of many types of people working together for a successful farm to school project.

Section II:  
Issues and Barriers of Setting  
Up a Farm to School  
Program

## Culture and Expectations of Food Service Directors

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The expectations and culture of food service directors pose an obstacle, but also provide a possible opportunity to the expansion of farm to school. Due to budgetary problems within American public schools, most school food service operations are now expected to be fiscally self-sufficient or generate revenue for the school's general budget. As a result of these expectations and a food service culture focused on profit, school food services directors feel pressure to sacrifice nutritional value for revenue generation.

The culture of school food service directors is illustrated in the industry's widely disseminated magazine, the *Food Service Director*. This publication, which claims to be "the source for operational excellence," publishes articles that highlight successful food service directors and their programs. An analysis of *Food Service Director* publications from 1999-2004 found that the issue of profit is a recurring theme. *Food Service Director* illustrates that the culture of school food service judges success by the profit that food service directors can generate or the budget that they can manage rather than the impact that they can have on the health of children.

The April 1999 edition of *Food Service Director* includes articles entitled "Sales top 30% at student sweet shop" and "Focus on future customers in today's school lunchrooms," an article that states that fast food and other large food companies are targeting school children (Murray 50). The latter article explains that the food industry targets school children because "capturing a young market ensures the life of a product and the company well into the future" (Murray 50). This article illustrates that food service directors are surrounded by a culture that praises marketing strategies that fast food companies employ in order to hook children to pizza, hamburgers, and hot dogs.

*Food Services Director* states that food service directors need to give kids what they want in order to increase revenues. What students want, states *Food Services Director*, are “foods such as chicken nuggets, thin-crust pizza, hot dogs, and hamburgers” (Murray 50). The nutritional value of these foods is not mentioned in the April 1999 edition.

The culture of school food service directors, however, might be changing as illustrated through a comparison of *Food Service Director* articles from 1999 to 2004. Between 1999 and 2004, much has stayed the same regarding the emphasis on profit and revenue generation, but a change seems to be emerging regarding a growing emphasis on nutrition. In the April 1999 edition, the issue of nutrition was only mentioned in regards to USDA standards and how to most easily comply. In the most recent *Food Service Director* issue from March of 2004, there are five articles that explicitly discuss nutrition.

In fact, a large article on the Whitewater Unified School District, Wisconsin farm to school project was published in the March 2004 edition of *Food Service Director*. This article, entitled “Students in Wisconsin schools get the right stuff with no fluff”, praises Don Engling, Whitewater Food Service Director who is managing an innovative farm to school project, which includes a buffet style all-you-can-eat fruit and veggie bar as part of a larger selection of healthy menu items. The article states that ever since Engling was hired by the Whitewater Unified School District six years ago, a number of changes to food services have occurred, such as the virtual elimination of the a la carte line and the addition of an all-you-can-eat fruit and veggie bar. Now instead of unhealthy snack foods from the a la carte stand and limited types of fruits and vegetables that most schools offer, 85 to 95 percent of the students in Whitewater are taking advantage of the all-you-can-eat fresh fruits and veggies (Mastrelli 40). The article highlights the success

of the program, such as the 85-90 percent participation, cost containment, and revenue generation.

It is important to note that this article does not discuss Engling as part of a farm to school movement and nowhere in the article does the author, Mastrelli, provide explicit encouragement for other food service directors to start a new farm to school project. Despite the fact that *Food Service Director* does not present farm to school as an emerging trend or an expanding movement, this article is different than any article printed in 1999 by the fact that this it counterbalances the traditional wisdom that healthy does not sell. In fact, the article explicitly states that a food service director did not have to sacrifice nutritional integrity to make money. Although profit is still a sign of success in the culture of food service directors, now success is also being awarded to food service directors who provide financially viable meals with a primary focus on nutrition.

School districts across the country are facing budget crises and are in desperate need for more funds. Until school districts across the country receive a substantial increase in funding and until food service departments are no longer expected to be financially self sufficient, the concern over profit generation within school food service will exist. What food service programs can change, however, is how that profit is generated. Is it generated by selling fast food or by selling fresh, healthy salads and fruits? In order to make farm to school appear more viable to food service directors, it is important that food service directors and administrators know that nutritional integrity does not have to be sacrificed for profit generation. To demonstrate this fact, more documentation of financially viable farm to school programs needs to occur.

## Commitment and Knowledge

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The biggest obstacle in initiating a farm to school program is the difficulty in making the commitment. Commitment is the biggest obstacle for three reasons: 1) a farm to school project requires changes in the way food services and the district in general does business; 2) food services and the district may be reluctant to change entrenched policies, procedures and structures; and 3) without knowledge that the barriers to farm to school can overcome, barriers may appear more difficult to overcome than they really are.

The case study of the Compton Farm to School Project provides a detailed description of the steps that the Compton Unified School District has taken to overcome significant barriers in order to implement a very ambitious farm to school project. This case study will demonstrate that the food service director's commitment to the philosophy of farm to school and his or her knowledge of farm to school is fundamental to the success of a farm to school project. The lesson learned is that once a food service director recognizes the significant benefits of a farm to school program and is committed to implementing a project, then the food service director has already overcome the hardest obstacle for setting up a farm to school project.

## Financial Issues

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A main barrier to initiating and maintaining a farm to school project is that price, predictability, and convenience greatly influence the purchasing decisions of school food personal ([www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)). Purchasing from local farmers may be less convenient and cost efficient for a school district than purchasing from a centralized distributor that supplies pre-packaged and processed foods, in part because additional labor may be required to prepare farm fresh produce. Additionally, school district bidding policies can be a barrier to farm to school. These policies often mandate that purchasing orders go to the bidder offering the lowest price. This can pose a barrier to farm to school because due to economies of scale, food grown by small-scale family farmers may be more expensive than food produced by large-scale growers and purchased through conventional channels (Azuma and Fisher 52).

Possible increased price and labor costs associated with farm fresh purchases pose barriers because of the financial responsibilities of schools' food service departments. In most school districts, food services<sup>3</sup> is a department within the business services department, which is also responsible for administering maintenance and operations and new facilities construction (Brillinger; Ohmart; & Feenstra 15). Whatever the structural organization and features, food service departments are financially constrained, often operating with "enterprise funds," where expenses must be covered by the revenue generated by meal sales (Brillinger; Ohmart; & Feenstra 15). In addition, food services

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<sup>3</sup> The name "Food Services" is sometimes changed to "Student Nutrition Services", which occurred in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. The change signals important changes in the philosophy and mission of the department. The title of a food service director also changes as the department changes its mission and philosophy. Districts that chose to make the change decide to emphasize child nutrition as the primary goal of the department rather than focusing primarily on the department's economic bottom line.

often receive pressure to generate a profit in order to contribute to the general fund or to programs, such as the band or sports.

The need for a farm to school program to obtain additional funding, such as through grants, is almost always present, at least at an initial stage. A plethora of funding options exist, but it can be a strain on food service directors to find the time to fundraise. This is one reason why parent and community support is so important to any farm to school project. Strong parent and community support can help with fundraising efforts by writing grants and by demonstrating to the district school board that the farm to school project is a community priority that needs support from the district.

It is important to determine from the outset, in conjunction with school district administration, which costs will be borne by the district and which must be covered through fundraising (Brillinger; Ohmart; & Feenstra 17). The following possible project specific costs for a salad bar identified by the “The Crunch Lunch Manual”:

- Additional food service personnel salaries, benefits, and payroll expenses
- Equipment (e.g., salad bars trays and serving utensils)
- Promotion and marketing
- Educational materials and activities (Brillinger; Ohmart; & Feenstra 17).

With good management of a farm to school project, community, school, and district wide support, and fundraising efforts, a farm to school program can be financially viable, although this may not occur immediately. There is a period when the problem areas that exist in any farm to school project need to be addressed. Every school district and local agricultural system is different and a farm to school project must be adjusted accordingly. This process of finding the most efficient and sustainable type of farm to

school project can take a number of years. Therefore, food service directors who want a farm to school project may be hesitant to initiate one until the financial issues within their school district are less of a constraint.

This is the case for Rodney Taylor who is now the Nutrition Services Director for Riverside Unified School District. Taylor was the food service director at Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District during the first several years of the farm to school project there. Although Taylor was originally skeptical of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program, after seeing the success of the Occidental College Community Food Security pilot program at one of his schools, Taylor soon became a farm to school advocate who significantly helped to expand the farm to school movement. In part to demonstrate that a financially viable and sustainable farm to school project can exist in districts without the unique circumstances that Santa Monica has, Taylor accepted a position in Riverside (Taylor March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004). Taylor has sought to cautiously lay the groundwork for a farm to school project in this very large and socioeconomic diverse school district. The Food Service Department in Riverside, like other districts, has to be revenue neutral. In addition, Taylor had to deal with the accumulated debt that occurred under his predecessors. However, with the amount of enthusiasm, motivation and contacts that he has established within the district, a farm to school project is emerging and the district, which was originally not receptive to the farm to school idea, is now very supportive. Farm to school projects are viable in districts that have major financial constraints. Once the district is supportive and it is proven that the project can be effectively handled (e.g., a financial plan has been developed), financial considerations may not prove to be an insurmountable barrier.

## Labor Issues

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As discussed in the previous sections, labor costs can possibly increase with the implementation of a farm to school program because farm fresh produce may require more preparation than conventional pre-packed and prepared food bought from a vendor. Additionally, kitchen staff may require training in the techniques of handling and storing fresh produce.

However, the Compton case study will demonstrate that labor costs do not necessarily need to increase with the implementation of a farm to school program. The Compton Farm to School Project depends on the commitment of existing staff to the farm to school project. No new staff have been hired. Although cafeteria staff will have to take on more responsibilities in order to, in the case of Compton, run a salad bar program, the Compton case study demonstrates that cafeteria staff can be supportive and enthusiastic about the farm to school project, especially after seeing student excitement about the salad bar.

The viability of a farm to school project is fundamentally connected to the dedication and commitment of the staff to the mission of the farm to school project. It is important to understand that cafeteria staff, if encouraged and motivated by the district and department and by the students' enthusiasm over the farm to school project, will take leadership of the project at a cafeteria level. Furthermore, if hiring new staff is necessary, it is important to hire farm to school staff members who have a vision that coincides with the vision of the farm to school project.

## Infrastructure Issues

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Linked to issues of labor are issues of infrastructure. To cut labor costs, districts are also increasingly centralizing kitchen facilities and outsourcing to large food vendors and as a result food preparation facilities have been removed at school sites across the country (Brillenger, Ohmart, & Feenstra 16). Unlike large produce vendors who clean, cut, prepackage, and refrigerate, local farmers often do not have the facilities to prep their produce. A barrier to initiating a farm to school program is addressing the need for more equipment to prepare and store farm fresh produce. More refrigeration space may be needed as well. However, infrastructure barriers can be overcome with the creative use of existing facilities in conjunction with fundraising efforts that provide seed grants for the purchase of a salad bar, processing, and holding equipment.

## Transportation/Delivery/ and Other Logistics

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Traditionally, it is uncommon for school district and farmers to work within each other's complex business systems. Therefore, many logistical issues need to be addressed early in the planning period of a farm to school project. School districts are accustomed to working with one broker rather than with multiple farmers who have specific needs. Likewise, farmers are not accustomed to the invoicing, packaging, and delivery needs of school districts.

School districts often request that farmers deliver their produce directly to the school's holding site or directly to specific schools. However, small to medium farmers may not have the resources and/or time to have their own transportation systems. Even if they can deliver the produce, the time and cost of doing so for small orders may not make the trip cost effective. In fact, several farmers, such as Steve Smit a farmer who sells at the Davis Farmers' Market as well as the Davis Unified School District, do not make a profit (rather the business is profit neutral) because the food order from the schools is not large enough to be cost effective. Although farmers do not make a significant profit by selling to districts such as Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District and Davis Unified School District, farmers and their advocates such as the non-profit organization the Community Alliance with Family Farmers view partnerships with school districts as very important investments in the future. Farmers see schools as a lucrative market that will expand as farm to school programs are expanded (Stevens Thomas, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2004).

Another issue that needs to be addressed in the early planning period of a farm to school program involves payment to farmers. School districts are accustomed to paying

vendors who could wait months for payment and therefore, payment can often take longer than the two or three weeks that small and medium size farmers often expect (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 17). When developing a farm to school program, it is important to set up payment system that reimburses farmers quickly.

Although barriers to working with farmers exist, with understanding, flexibility, communication, and innovative ideas, school districts and farmers can establish working relationships that benefit everyone involved. The understanding and communication that needs to occur is two fold: 1) food services need to establish good communication and direct contract with farmers while understanding the logistics of procuring from local farmers instead of a centralized vendor and 2) farmers need to be cognizant of the logistics of working with a school district. One way that farmers can better work within the school system is to create a centralized system of farmer vendors, such as a coop or a non-profit business. Such a centralized system provides a way for farmers to collectively communicate with the school district, receive orders, and deliver produce.

## The Disconnect Between the Cafeteria and the Classroom

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In most schools districts the cafeteria and the classroom are separate entities. The cafeteria is traditionally a place for children to efficiently and quickly receive and consume food, and not a place to learn or reinforce classroom lessons. Nutrition education in the classroom teaches children that they should eat at least five fruits and vegetables a day. However, when children enter their school cafeteria the fruits and vegetables might be unappealing and consequently children do not always feel encouraged to eat these items.

Teachers and kitchen staff are traditionally not accustomed to working together to link educational lessons in the classroom to the cafeteria. It is a challenge for administrators, teachers, and cafeteria staff to re-envision the way in which the cafeteria can become part of the educational system. However, good communication, support, and working relationships can bridge the gap in a way that increases the health and academic performance of all students.

# Section III: The Compton Case Study

## Background Information

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### **Compton Unified School District**

The Compton Unified School District (CUSD) is located in the vibrant City of Compton, near the City of Los Angeles in the Los Angeles basin. It is bounded by Los Angeles County on the west and north and by Long Beach and Carson on the south. Compton is the second oldest city in the county (<http://www.pe.net/~rksnow/cacountycompton.htm>).

The Compton Unified School District has thirty nine schools: twenty-four elementary schools, eight middle schools, three high schools, two continuation schools, and two community day schools. The ethnicity of CUSD students is 67.8 percent Hispanic, 30.3 percent African American, one percent Pacific Islander, and less than half a percent white ([www.ed-data.k12.us](http://www.ed-data.k12.us)). In comparison, schools in the greater Los Angeles County are 60.7 percent Hispanic, 10.8 percent African American, and 17.6 percent white ([www.ed-data.k12.us](http://www.ed-data.k12.us)).

In the district an average of 93.8 percent of students receive free or reduced price meals compared to 61.8 percent in the county and 48.7 percent in the state ([www.ed-data.k12.us](http://www.ed-data.k12.us)). Eligibility for the National School Lunch Program is based on parent income and family size.<sup>4</sup> CUSD has the opportunity to significantly impact the health of Compton's children, as nearly 100 percent of elementary students in Compton eat at least one meal at school per day.

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<sup>4</sup> The per capita income in Compton is \$10,389 compared to \$20,683 in Los Angeles County (<http://www.losangelesalmanac.com/topics/Employment/em12.htm>).

## **Project Plan Background**

The plan for the Compton Farm to School Project is to have a farm fresh salad bar in all twenty-four elementary schools by the end of the 2004-2005 school year. The first farm fresh salad bar was introduced February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004. A new salad bar program is being implemented approximately every two weeks to one month. Tracie Thomas, the Compton Unified School District Assistant Food Service Director who has been working for the district since November of 2003, has led this ambitious roll out plan. However, the support of the district and in particular the support and ambition of Tommie Callegori, the CUSD Nutrition Service Director, enabled the project to exist and to expand rapidly.

## How CUSD Quickly Implemented a Farm to School Program

### **Initial Project Requirements**

In order to initiate and implement a farm to school project the following initial requirements must be met:

1. There must be some degree of support from the district, the food services department, and the food service director.
2. The food service director must have confidence, motivation, and problem solving abilities.
3. All involved in a farm to school project need to understand the importance of the project.

### **Support from the Nutrition Services Department**

District and particularly food service departmental support is crucial for the efficient implementation and expansion of a farm to school project. The first prerequisite that the Compton Farm to School Project fulfilled was having support within the Compton Unified School District Nutrition Service Department. CUSD Nutrition Service Department's philosophy directly supports the farm to school approach. The fact that the food service program at CUSD is called the Nutrition Service Department (rather than Food Service Department) underlines that connection. The mission of the CUSD Nutrition Service Department emphasizes the importance and desire to provide students with food that is prepared with care and made from scratch and, at the very least, "food" that is not highly processed (Thomas, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

Tommie Callegori, the Compton Unified School District Nutrition Service Director, played a crucial role in the initiation and implementation of this project. It was

a long-standing vision of Ms. Callegori to implement a project like farm to school. Ms. Callegori was interested in the SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program and the work of Tracie Thomas as program coordinator. Thomas was hired as Assistant Food Service Director with the intent that she would start a farm to school project. CUSD and the Nutrition Service Department were very supportive of the farm to school project from the very start and consequently the project has been able rapidly expand.

**Knowledge, confidence, and problem solving abilities of food service director**

The success of a farm to school project is fundamentally connected to the motivation and commitment for the food service director(s) and his or her ability to project enthusiasm for farm to school. The vision, commitment, and confidence of Tommie Callegori and Tracie Thomas enabled the project to exist.

Tracie Payton Thomas was hired as the Assistant Nutrition Service Director at Compton Unified School District after working for the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) from 1998-2003. She was hired in December 1998 to be the full-time coordinator of the SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. Her strong advocacy and outreach skills were instrumental in identifying the support mechanisms necessary for the program's expansion (Mascarenhas and Gottlieb 8). When Rodney Taylor left his position as the SMMUSD Food Service Director for the position of Food Service Director at the Riverside Unified School District, Thomas took over in SMMUSD. She attributes a large part of her success as a Nutrition Service Director to Taylor, her mentor.

Both Thomas and Taylor left Santa Monica with plans to expand farm to school to their new school districts, for Thomas a school district that was closer to her residence.

Taylor wanted to demonstrate that Santa Monica was not an exception, but rather that farm to school is viable in other districts (Taylor February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

Although every school district has unique circumstances and specific barriers and opportunities for a farm to school project, every food service director has the ability to creatively problem solve in order to utilize opportunities and overcome barriers. With different circumstances in Compton than in Santa Monica, Thomas, and the Compton Farm to School Project in general, encountered new issues and barriers. However, Thomas has been able to creatively utilize opportunities and overcome barriers. Thomas utilized the financial resources that a supportive district and Nutrition Services can offer. This has compensated for the fact that currently during this initial stage in the project, there is limited parent and community leadership within the project to undertake fundraising. Thomas has managed the funds she receives from Nutrition Services to purchase salad bar equipment while she has elicited donations from local businesses to acquire others things, such as garden supplies and garden infrastructure.

**Motivation: Understanding the need for a farm to school project**

In order to have a successful farm to school project, everyone involved needs to understand the importance of the project. CUSD Nutrition Services is cognizant of why a farm to school project is important in Compton and this understanding provides the motivation and commitment needed to implement an ambitious farm to school plan. Employees of the CUSD Nutrition Services believe that they have a large role to play in addressing the health of children in their district. Furthermore, the department is cognizant of the connections between academic performance and health.

The Compton Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program (as part of the Compton Farm to School Project) was created to:

1. Increase children's taste for healthy food
2. Increase consumption, access, and exposure to fruit and vegetables
3. Increase nutrition awareness
4. Address overweight issues
5. Foster the development of life long healthy eating habits.

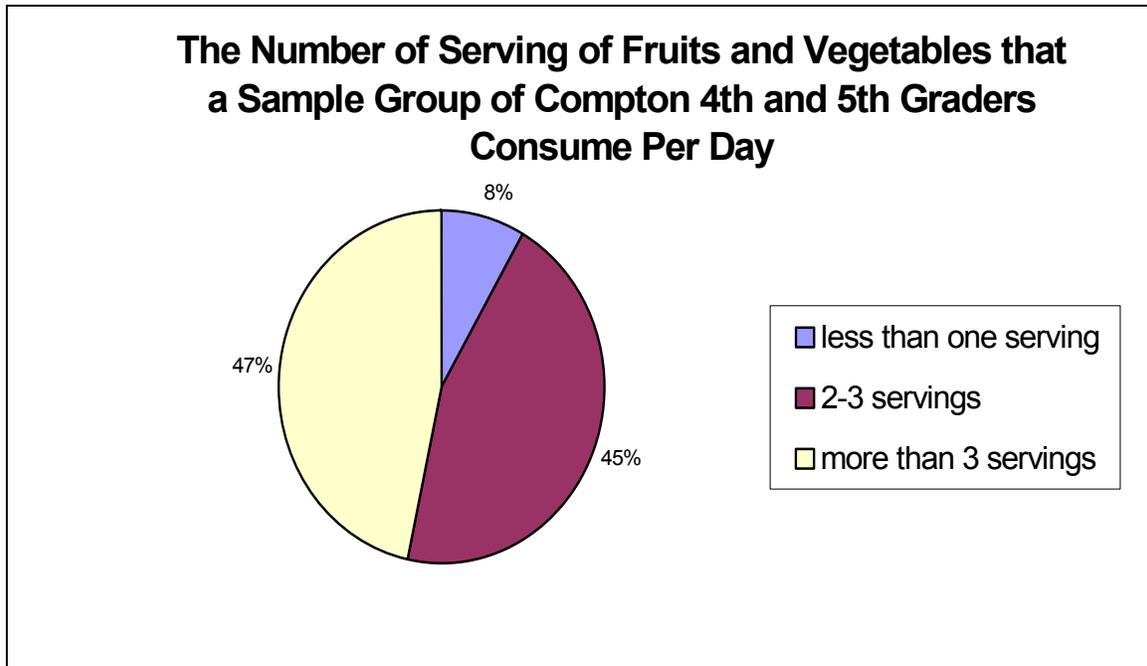
### **Compton Student Food Questionnaire**

A questionnaire conducted by the author of this report illustrates why a farm to school program is important in CUSD (See Appendix 2). The food questionnaire was developed in order to research Compton student's eating habits at school and at home prior to the implementation of their schools farmers' market salad bar. Another purpose of the questionnaire was to learn what fruits and vegetables students wanted on their salad bar. This two-page food questionnaire, written in both English and Spanish, is included in the Appendix (See Appendix 2).

Copies of the questionnaires were given to the principal at Willard Elementary School. The principal then gave the questionnaires to one 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and one 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. These teachers instructed their students to fill out the questionnaires as part of an introduction to the salad bar, which was implemented within a week of the questionnaire completion. Of the 69 students in these two classes, 60 fully completed a questionnaire. The results from this questionnaire illustrates that prior to the salad bar students at Willard Elementary did not consume the recommended five to nine servings

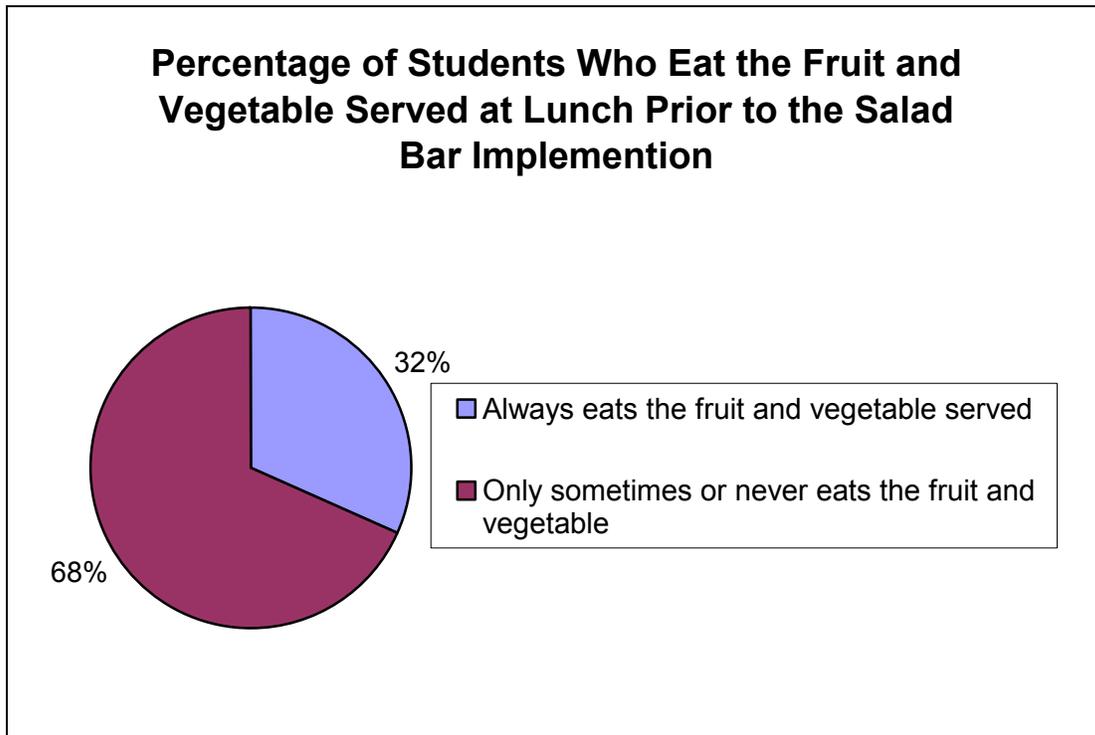
of fruit and vegetables, as recommended by doctors, nutritionists, and government agencies, such as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention

([www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5aday/SDA](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5aday/SDA)).



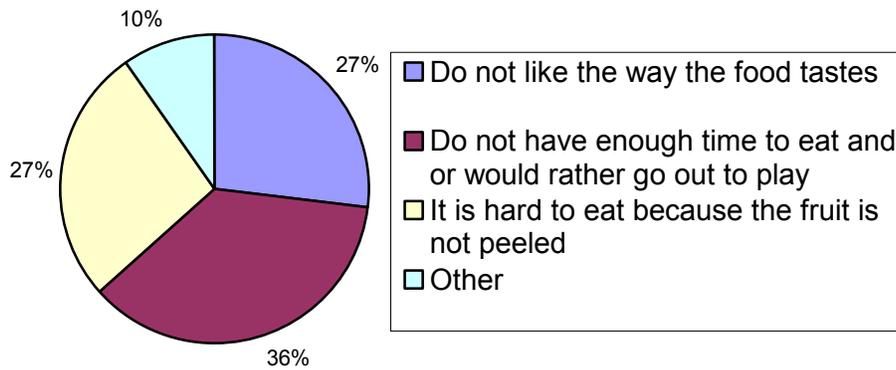
The reason that many Compton students do not consume the minimum recommended amount of fruits and vegetables is complex and beyond the scope of this report to fully address. However, the questionnaires reveal that many children do not regularly eat vegetables at home. When asked what three foods are commonly eaten at home, there were twice as many responses listing fast food, chips, candy, and soda as there were responses listing vegetables and salads. Sixteen percent of the most commonly listed foods were fast food and or junk food, such as chips and candy, while different types of vegetables and salads comprised only eight percent of commonly eaten food.

Furthermore, the food questionnaires reveal that prior to the salad bar, student often did not eat the fruits and vegetables served in the traditional hot meals. In fact, according to the student question, prior to the salad bar implementation, 68 percent of students said that they never or only sometimes ate the fruit and vegetable offered.



There are many reasons why students did not always eat their fruits and vegetables prior to the salad bar. These reasons include not liking the taste of the food, having difficulty eating the fruit or vegetable because it was not sliced or prepared in an appealing way, and not having enough time to eat the fruit and vegetable. The graph on the following pages illustrates the various barriers to the consumption of fruits and vegetables. The CUSD farm fresh salad bar program seeks to address the issues demonstrated by the following graph:

### Reasons Why Students Do Not Eat the Fruit and Vegetable Served in Traditional School Lunch Program

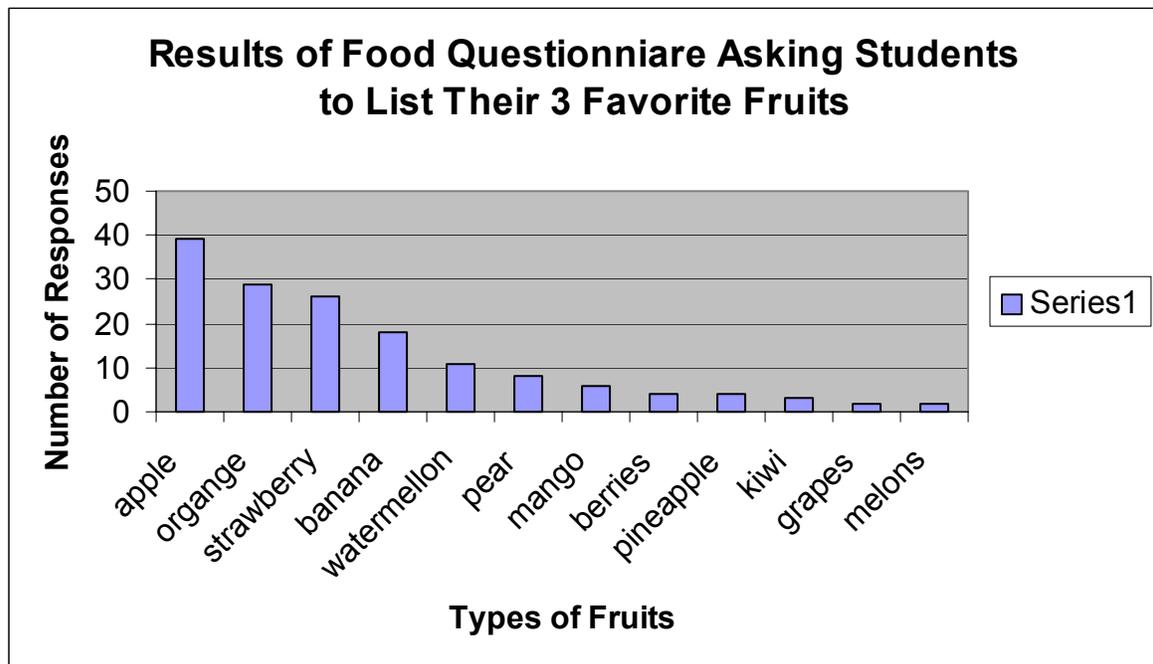


CUSD seeks to supply students with fruits and vegetables that appeal to the students. Nutrition Services emphasizes presentation and making the salad bar user friendly. Thomas believes that it is a different experience to have students go through what looks to them like a line for institutional food versus allowing them to select from what looks to them like a restaurant style salad bar. Furthermore, employing an “offer” versus “serve” food service model increases the opportunity for students to select what they want to eat. In the salad bar, a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, protein, dairy, bread and grain options exist so that can children can personalize their lunches to their specific tastes. The idea is that students will be more likely to eat fruits and vegetables if they are able to select the items that appeal to them. Furthermore, a farm to school program can decrease food costs because there is less waste when children can choose and take only what they want to eat. Thomas also emphasizes adding variety to the salad

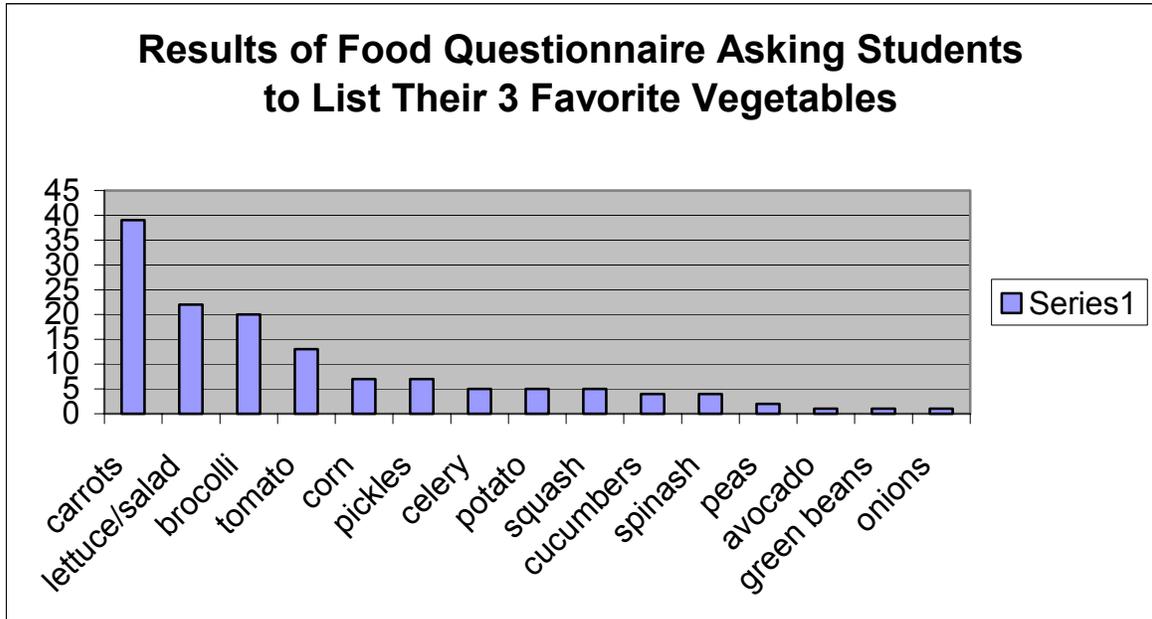
bar. Adding variety not only maintains interest among the students, but communicates that eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is important for good health

(<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/fruits.html>).

The following graphs illustrate food preferences for students at Willard Elementary School. Cost, local supply, and spoilage limit what fruits can be served on the salad bar; however, all three recorded favorite fruits are regularly included as part of the salad bar.



Most of the vegetables listed as favorite vegetables in the food questionnaire are served on the salad bar. Favorite vegetables include:



## **Phase One**

In order to initiate and implement a farm to school project the following are recommended first steps during phase one of the project:

1. Identify the necessary fundraising approaches and needs. If needed, work with the district, parents, community members, and organizations to fundraise.
2. Access cafeteria infrastructure. If needed, order kitchen infrastructure, salad bar equipment, serving utensils, etc.
3. Work within the community and schools to develop a school garden task force.
4. Make initial school contacts at least one month before project implementation.
5. Evaluate existing labor capacity to determine if the district needs to hire more employees for the project. If it is decided that new employees should be hired, then the hiring and training processes should occur in the first phase of the project. It is important to hire and train employees who are committed to the mission of the project and who understand the importance of their role in the project.

### **Funding**

Because Tracie Thomas was hired after the Nutrition Service Department's budget was created for the 2003-2004 school year, the farm to school project was not incorporated into the budget for the school year. Nevertheless, indicative of the commitment from the District and Nutrition Services, the project was still funded through Nutrition Service's existing budget. There are many reasons why funding is not a major issue at this time. Reasons include the strong commitment to this project at the district and departmental level, the reimbursement rate in Compton, the high participation in the

salad bar program, Nutrition Network funding, and careful management and purchasing decisions.

A salad bar project is more financially viable if there is high student and teacher participation because much of the salad bar costs are fixed labor costs and therefore the costs per salad bar meal decrease as the participation increases. In CUSD 93.8 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunches. As a result, more students participate in the school lunch program than, for example in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, where only 23.5 percent of students qualify and many students bring their own lunches. Moreover, with high qualification rates for free and reduced meals, CUSD receives a high reimbursement rate from the government. The reimbursement rate is \$2.19 for each meal (Thomas, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004). Government reimbursement funding can help create a balanced food services budget with careful management and purchasing decisions. To save on costs, the CUSD Nutrition Service Department makes careful selections from the US Commodity Program for grain and protein options, which complement farmers' market produce purchases for the salad bar.

Another circumstance that is advantageous to the Compton Farm to School Project is that Compton qualifies to receive California Nutrition Network funding. School districts are entitled to funding from the California Nutrition Network, part of federal administered California Department of Health Services, if 50 percent or more of the students in the district qualify for free and reduced lunch and the district is able to match funds. The mission of the California Nutrition Network is to create innovative partnerships so that low-income Californians are able to adapt healthy eating habits and physical activity patterns as part of a healthy lifestyle (<http://www.ca5aday.com/network>).

The Compton Farm to School Project is a project that meets these objectives. Nutrition Network funding is used to fund the nutrition education component of the Compton Farm to School Project.

### **Cafeteria Infrastructure and Salad Bar Equipment**

Thomas has been able to overcome infrastructure barriers by becoming resourceful and by maximizing certain opportunities. One such circumstance in CUSD that has worked to the advantage of a farm to school project has been that every CUSD school has a working kitchen. Therefore, Thomas found no need to purchase new equipment to process the farm fresh produce and instead she only had to purchase salad bar equipment.

One of the first projects that Thomas tackled was ordering salad bar equipment from the same distributor that supplied equipment for the Santa Monica-Malibu Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. Thomas placed an order to the districts' fiscal services on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004. However, a disconnect between the Nutrition Services Department and fiscal services, the district department that oversees purchases, delayed the order. It was not until the second salad bar was implemented in March that the salad bar equipment arrived. The fact that the salad bar equipment had not arrived on the February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the day of implementation at Willard Elementary School, the first school to receive a the farmers' market salad bar program, did not delay the opening. Instead, Thomas contacted SMMUSD and arranged to borrow salad bar equipment, enabling the salad bar program to be implemented at Willard Elementary School as planned. By the time the salad bar equipment arrived on March 11<sup>th</sup>, more than three months after Thomas had put in her order for the equipment, the salad bar at Willard Elementary was

already running smoothly. The hold-up on the salad bar equipment has been one of the biggest issues that the Compton Farm to School has had to face. However, these issues were efficiently addressed and overcome.

### **School Garden Task Force**

As part of a farm to school program school gardens can be an important experiential learning laboratories used for nutrition, food, and food systems related education. The CUSD Student Nutrition Services Department has determined that over a period of two years each school will have a garden planted on its grounds. In addition, at least one off-campus site has been acquired for a centralized community garden that will provide produce to supplement farmers' market produce in the salad bar program.

Thomas's first step towards reaching these goals was to create a garden task force. Although Thomas had limited initial support from parents, community members, teachers, or staff in Compton already working on school garden projects, Thomas quickly worked to involve certain community members. When asked how she assembled a task force by January when she was hired only two months prior, Thomas replied, "You just pick up the phone and call." Her high-energy yet efficient style gets the job done and by January she had put together a garden task force.

Lenora Gibson, a community member, is an important member of the task force. Mrs. Gibson owns a piece of property behind her house in an area of Compton called Richmond Farms. Richmond Farms used to be a working farm community that is now a residential area divided into different private property lots. The majority of families still use part of their land for agricultural purposes to some extent (Gibson, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004). Mrs. Gibson's decided to donate her backyard lot to CUSD for the creation of a

large, centralized community garden. The goal is that once developed, this garden could supplement local farm produce for the schools' salad bars as well as provide an area for students and community members to learn about food and food systems related education.

The garden task force consists of six people, including community members, master gardeners, Rex Threat, the district's staff member who has worked on a couple of Compton school gardens in previous years, and the organization the African American Food Association. The members of the garden task force first met on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004 for a tour of the community garden site and to explore other possible school garden sites. When given a tour of the community garden site by Mrs. Gibson, opinions arose regarding a plan for the garden. Immediately Peter Beurdoin, master gardener instructor, listed practical ideas for a garden that would produce a large quantity of produce efficiently and in a way that children could participate. Beurdoin's ideas differed in some ways from the members of the African American Food Association, who envisioned wanted employ a food forestry concept, meaning that that the garden would actually be a mini-farm that would serve as a laboratory for instructing young people in natural food production (Nuri 3). Beurdoin and the African American Food Association were asked to develop two separate plans for the garden on Mrs. Gibson's land. As of April of 2004 the Compton Unified School District was in the process of reviewing the submitted garden plans.

### **Initial School Contact**

A critical part of initiating and implementing a farm to school project is establishing contact and support from schools, including principals, staff, and teachers. In the initial stages of implementation for a salad bar in each school, Thomas contacts the principal of the particular school to discuss organizing a taste test, to address logistics, (such as how the salad bar will operate, where it will be located, and how many children it will need to serve), and to discuss the issue of establishing a school garden. All principals have been very supportive of the farm to school project.

### **Labor**

As mentioned previously, instead of getting all meals pre-prepared from a distributor, the Nutrition Services Department's long-standing mission has allowed cafeterias to remain a place for fresh food access and consequently, each cafeteria is fully staffed. The number of qualified staff in every CUSD cafeteria has been advantageous for the farm to school project. The district has decided that the existing cafeteria staff has the time and capability to handle a salad bar program. Cafeteria workers have their own opinions on the matter, which may evolve as workers feel like integral parts of the project, witness students' enthusiasm for the salad bar, and learn efficient ways to organize the process.

CUSD chose to train existing kitchen staff and depend on the support of these employees who, as part of the project, are required to do more work than they are accustomed to. Kitchen staff members process the farm fresh produce, set-up the salad bar, monitor the salad bar (a role that parents in Ventura do) and clean up after the salad bar. The increased workload and the procedural changes led to some initial hesitation

among cafeteria workers. A week prior to the salad bar implementation date, the cafeteria staff at Willard Elementary expressed apprehension about the salad bar program and workers such as Armando Lopez were reluctant to discuss the salad bar. This apprehension existed partly because the cafeteria workers were uncertain if students would like the salad bar. Another reason why cafeteria workers may have felt apprehensive is because the cafeteria workers may not have felt like they were part of an important project that was worthy of them having to work more than they were accustomed to.

Although the cafeteria workers at Willard Elementary were hesitant to support the salad bar at first, just a couple of weeks after the salad bar opened at Willard, the cafeteria staff began to take ownership of the program (Thomas, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004). Armando Lopez, chef at Willard Elementary School states that, “the salad bar was hard at first but the things are always a little hard in the beginning. After three weeks, once everything became organized, the program began to run smoothly. Now having a salad bar is easy- piece of cake” (Lopez, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004). The cafeteria staff became more supportive of the salad bar program after the process was more organized and after witnessing the students’ enthusiasm for the salad bar.

More research on the subject of kitchen staff needs to be done, however it is expected that cafeteria staff throughout the district will become more confident about the salad bar as salad bar programs are expanded successfully to more schools. As an example of this possible change in confidence, cafeteria workers at Caldwell Elementary School were confident about the success of the salad bar the morning before the salad bar opened at lunch on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Rachele Richardson, a Caldwell Elementary

School cafeteria worker stated that she thought the salad bar would be very popular because, “the kids have been so excited about the salad bar and asking about it every day since the taste test,” on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004 (Richardson, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004). Although the opening of salad bar at Caldwell Elementary was a little chaotic and some logistical information about time management and the placement of salad bar equipment needs to be addressed, excitement among the workers did exist.

### **Phase Two: Before and During Project Implementation**

In order to implement a farm to school project the following are recommended secondary steps during phase two of the project:

1. Conduct an outreach and marketing campaign. This might include taste tests in schools, flyers to parents, etc. Contact the media as a means of awareness building, promotion, and volunteer recruitment.
2. Engage students by listening to their preferences and educating them about the importance of their food decisions. Classroom activities and lesson plans should be developed to connect the classroom, cafeteria, garden, and larger local food system in a way that fulfills the mission of the particular farm to school project. Recommended lesson themes involve nutrition and an experiential agriculture component.
3. Forge partnerships with local farm organizations and farmers’ markets. Strong communication and working relationships between the district and local farmers needs to be established. Logistical information, for example about delivery and payment, should be discussed initially and then logistics should be continuously

addressed through learning to understand and work within the other's complex business systems.

4. Continue work from phase one regarding hiring and training staff. It is very important to train employees and help them develop leadership in the project. All staff involved should feel invested in the project and understand the importance of their role.

### **Outreach and Marketing**

Outreach and marketing are important aspects of a successful farm to school project. To generate interest and enthusiasm about the salad bar program, Thomas arranges a taste test session a week or so before the first day of the salad bar at each particular school. During the taste test, students are introduced to a variety of fruits and vegetables and encouraged to explore how fresh produce really tastes when it is straight from the farm (Gottlieb and Joshi, M3). They are allowed to sample whatever they want, which helps to create excitement and interest in the novel and exciting foods coming to the cafeteria. The test tastes have been very successful, creating a high level of interest among students and teachers. Caldwell Elementary School had a taste test about a week prior to the implementation of its salad bar program on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004. Rochelle Richardson, a cafeteria worker at Caldwell Elementary School, stated that the children were so excited about the salad bar after the taste test that they were disappointed that the salad bar did not start immediately (Richardson, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004).

Thomas gives presentations at teacher meetings, encouraging teachers to take part in the salad bar program. Several teachers are interested in the salad bar program, which is important for the financial viability of the project because teachers in every Compton

school pay \$3.50 for lunch, including the salad bar (Marlo, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004). Moreover, teacher participation in the salad bar may encourage students to eat from the salad bar.

As another form of marketing, the week before the salad bar implementation date, flyers announcing and promoting the farm fresh salad bar are given to all students to take home to their parents (see Appendix 3 for an example). The flyer tells parents to encourage their son or daughter to eat from the salad bar. The flyer also states that the salad bar is part of the Compton Farm to School Project that includes nutrition and food system- based education in the classroom, the cafeteria, and the garden. Parents are encouraged to get involved with the project by contacting Thomas at her work number. Thomas also introduces the project at presentations she gives at Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Furthermore, plans exist to send newsletters to parents. Newsletters specifically on nutrition, as part of the nutrition educational program called Harvest of the Month are already given to teachers and parents.

Other plans exist to bring chefs into classrooms. During these visits the professional chef would teach a class about their trade while encouraging students to make healthy eating choices. These types of activities are exciting to elementary students who like to see new, friendly faces in their classrooms speaking about a topic that interests children- food! Moreover, these types of activities reinforce the objective of farm to school, which aims to help students make healthier food choices while learning to value the people that produce and prepare the food that they eat.

## **Media**

The use of media to promote a farm to school project is important in order to gather support and enthusiasm about a specific project throughout the community. Although time constraints have limited the district's ability to do media outreach and instead the district has concentrated on using marketing strategies within the school, there is a network of activists in Los Angeles interested in the expansion of farm to school and the success of the Compton Farm to School Project.

Activists Robert Gottlieb, professor of urban and environmental policy at Occidental College and Anupama Joshi, Director of the California Farm to School Program, based at the Center for Food and Justice at Occidental College wrote an article that was printed in the Los Angeles Times, entitled "Fresh Outta the Farm and Straight to Compton." This article highlighted the Compton Farm to School Project and put Compton in the broader context of the farm to school movement. Gottlieb and Joshi state that, "If she [Tracie Thomas] is successful in Compton, Thomas will have shown that there's no reason why any school district in California can't move toward more healthy food" (Gottlieb and Joshi, M3). Media coverage like this illustrates that farm to school is a viable option for food services programs throughout the country.

## **Student Education**

In this initial implementation stage, the Compton farm to school project aims to connect the cafeteria to the classroom through the utilization of existing nutrition projects. Pam Williams, the CUSD nutrition specialist, integrates nutrition and fruit and vegetable education into the classroom. Williams sponsors the Harvest of the Month Program, a program sponsored by the Nutrition Network, to support food and nutrition

education while exposing students to various fruits and vegetables. Through this program, each month participating teachers receives fresh produce delivered once a month to the classroom and a newsletter, which contains user-friendly ideas for nutrition and food education (Williams March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004). The goal of the program is to increase students' consumption, enjoyment, and access to fruits and vegetables in a district where, according to a CUSD fourth grade teacher, "most fourth graders do not know how to identify many vegetables" (Casto, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004). Williams also develops a parent and teacher newsletter so that a dialogue regarding the health benefits of eating 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day is brought from the classroom to the home by the student.

Student Nutrition Advisory Councils (NAC) are forming in CUSD schools. The NAC's are designed to provide an opportunity for students to learn about nutrition and health, involve students in planning and implementing projects that support healthy habits and encourage participation in the school food service program, and serve as a communication bridge between students, administrators, school nutrition service personnel facility (Williams, Program Overview). As an example of the type of work done within NAC's, at Willard the NAC has created a booklet to give to teachers with suggestions and creative ideas of how to teach physical education.<sup>5</sup> The Willard NAC also writes a newsletter, in which the students discuss what they would like to see in the school cafeteria. Plans exist to have all NAC's work with nutrition service staff to help promote fresh produce menu items. The NAC's in Compton can have a formidable role

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<sup>5</sup> In CUSD elementary schools, there are no physical education teachers and instead teachers try to squeeze time into their extremely busy curriculum plans for physical education. Nutrition education is also a challenge for teachers to include in their lessons, especially in CUSD where there are so many children that are below grade level proficiency in reading, writing, and math. Therefore, classroom time is allocated to these subjects first and foremost. Furthermore, strict California teaching standards mandate exactly how much time a teacher must devote to teach a given subject, which can often limit the amount of time spent on subjects such as nutrition and environmental studies.

in developing a holistic farm to school project that connects healthy selections of fruits and vegetables in the salad bar to nutrition education in the classroom and the garden.

### **Working with Farmers: Communication and Delivery Logistics**

A critical part of a farm to school project is establishing good communication and direct contact with local farmers. A common way to locate a network of farmers who might be interested in such a program is to establish relationships with farmers at local farmers' markets. The Santa Monica-Malibu farm to school program benefited from the existence of multiple large farmers' markets located in the City of Santa Monica. However, there are no farmers' markets in Compton, and thus CUSD has to explore other procurement options.

The district is interested in procuring from farmers at farmers' markets in closest proximity to Compton, including markets in downtown Los Angeles. Ida and Edwards Williams, the managers at the Gardena and the Adams and Vermont Farmers' Markets, both in Los Angeles, expressed strong interest in creating a system where their farmers could sell to CUSD. When asked about the possible interest among farmers in selling to CUSD, Ida Williams replied, "of course farmers are interested in a program like this; schools have never been an option before, but it just has never been offered to farmers previously" (Williams, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004). Williams agreed that she would help coordinate a centralized system in which she would distribute payment to her farmers (Williams, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004). Other farmers' market directors, such as Jabari Jumanee, manager of the small Harmambee Farmers' Market, have also expressed enthusiastic interest in working with CUSD (Jumanee January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

However, barriers and issues exist to setting up a good working relationship between the district and local farmers. One issue involves the complicated process of creating a delivery system that meets the needs of both farmers and the district. CUSD wants a centralized delivery system in which all farmers involved in selling to CUSD coordinate transportation and delivery to the district's centralized food storage site. The district does not want to pay for hiring a delivery driver. However, Ida Williams states that small to medium size farmers who sell at local farmers' markets are not usually equipped to hire a driver and that the district would have to pay for delivery services (Williams, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

Because of the complex process of establishing an ordering, delivery, and invoice system with a new group of farmers, Thomas decided to procure from Garden Patch. Garden Patch is the group of farmers that Thomas worked with on the Santa Monica Malibu Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. Although Garden Patch is located further away from Compton than many other farmers' markets, Thomas has been drawn back to this farmers' group because she has an established good working relationship with them because they have proven capable of working within the complex school system.

Garden Patch delivers to CUSD's centralized warehouse. Thomas states that the district has enough staff to then deliver produce from the centralized warehouse to the individual schools. Delivery issues therefore, have not held up the Compton Farm to School Project. However, with the plan to expand the salad bar program to all schools in Compton, including middle and high schools after all twenty-four elementary schools have established salad bar programs, a great deal of produce will need to be purchased

and delivered every week in the next couple of years. The district is still exploring other future procurement options.

The district's ordering and invoice system works efficiently. During the first couple of weeks of the project Thomas was in charge of collecting orders from Yvonne Rosser, the Cafeteria Manager at Willard Elementary School. These two roles have now been assigned to a staff member in Nutrition Services who takes orders from cafeteria managers and then provides a single order to Garden Patch.

### **Staff Training and Other Final Preparations Before a Salad Bar Roll Out**

Final logistical information is addressed one or two weeks before a salad bar implementation date. During this time Thomas visits the cafeteria and talks to the school principal, cafeteria manager, and cafeteria staff about salad bar logistics, such as the placement of the salad bar equipment, plans for the salad bar line and efficient movement of students, and the logistics of ordering, storing, and preparing produce. After this meeting, the taste test occurs. The taste test day is the main day of staff training when cafeteria staff are introduced to a new system of preparing fruit and vegetables. Thomas instructs the staff how to clean, cut, and display the produce. She also goes over the logistics of the set-up of the salad bar. Although the taste test day is the main day of staff training, cafeteria staff learn how to best run a salad bar program specific to their school and cafeteria through some trial and error. A farm to school program is never stagnant; it is always adjusting to fit the needs of specific schools as those involved made changes to increase project efficiency and sustainability.

## **School Gardens**

Currently no functioning school gardens exist in the Compton elementary schools. The garden component of the Compton Farm to School Project is moving slower than the farmers' market salad bar program component; however, the first necessary steps are being taken so that the project can be developed in a well-planned manner by the end of the 2004 school year for Willard Elementary School, and in other schools within six months of their school's salad bar implementation. These necessary steps include: gaining support for the school principal and teachers, choosing a site placement, and training the main staff member who will help coordinate garden activities. Thomas is working with principals at the schools that already have a farm fresh salad bar program to establish school garden sites, contact teachers who would like to help develop and utilize a garden as an experiential learning laboratory, and address logistical issues involved with developing a garden.

The district is proceeding cautiously on the large community garden plan. Peter Beurdoin and the African American Food Association presented their plans for the garden to Ms. Callegori and Ms. Thomas. The district is currently discussing which, if any, of the two plans will be implemented. When a plan of action is decided upon, things should start moving more quickly, in part thanks to Thomas's successful fundraising efforts. Thomas has secured donations from six local companies that have promised to donate everything from a greenhouse to an outdoor kitchen, equipped with a juice, salad, and fruit bar. A total of \$45,550 in garden supplies and infrastructure has been donated to CUSD (Thomas March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004). However, more funding will be needed for the community garden project because it is an extensive and labor-intensive project.

## Progress Measured

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### **Progress Measured**

The Compton Farm to School Project has already made a large impact on the students of CUSD. About fifty percent of students choose the salad bar over the hot lunch every day. Furthermore, students are increasing their taste for new fruits and vegetables. In a survey conducted by Willard Elementary School, every student who ate from the salad bar at Willard during the week of March 15<sup>th</sup> (3 weeks after the salad bar opened) reported that they ate at least one new food.

### **Salad Bar Project Expansion**

The farmers' market salad bar program is quickly expanding on schedule. A new program is implemented approximately every two weeks to one month. If the program continues to follow the ambitious roll-out plan, all twenty four CUSD elementary schools will have a salad bar by May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The schedule of schools to receive a salad bar program was determined by school population and funding sources. Thirteen CUSD elementary schools receive Nutrition Network funding to do nutrition education. These are the first thirteen schools to receive a farmers' market salad bar. The smallest of these thirteen schools are the first to receive a salad bar. The logistics of operating a salad bar in a school of 324 students (the population of Willard Elementary) differs from the logistics of operating salad bar programs in a school of 1100 students (the population of Dickison Elementary). Thomas is already preparing for increased populations by ordering salad bar equipment for at least two salad bar lines in larger schools.

Section IV:  
Compton Farm to School  
Project Recommendations

## Recommendations for the Compton Farm to School Project

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Although the Compton Farm to School Project is expanding rapidly and is well received based on high student participation in the farmers' market salad bar program, the project is still in an initial stage of development and the leaders are aware that more work needs to be done to make the project more holistic and sustainable. The two primary needs of the project are:

1. Increased parent, teacher, and community support and leadership in the project
2. More organizational partnerships

Specific needs include:

1. More nutrition and garden-based educational programs
2. The development of the community garden and the creation of school gardens in every school. (Experiential work in the garden should be linked to nutrition and agriculture systems based education).
3. More leadership training among cafeteria staff
4. A parent and community outreach campaign
5. More farmer outreach and relationship building

### **More parent and community outreach and support**

Currently leadership for the Compton Farm to School Project is centralized in the district. Leadership needs to be developed among community members, teachers, and parents as well. Although Thomas has demonstrated that a farm to school can quickly be implemented from the top down, to make a farm to school sustainable and able to overcome possible future barriers, there needs to be an organized group of parents and community members who can serve as advocates and leaders of the project.

More publicizing and parent and community outreach are needed to cultivate parent and community involvement. Brochures to parents and schools are a good way to start. However, creative ways to reach parents and community members should be explored. As previously discussed, parent involvement in PTA's is limited and therefore the district must investigate what types of activities attract parents and then target parents based on these findings. For example, if parents are unable to attend a nighttime PTA meeting but could attend Saturday events if childcare were provided, then the district may want to pursue hosting events that accommodates those needs of parents. Furthermore, the district should research social groups that exist in the vibrant City of Compton and attend meetings of these groups as a way to introduce and recruit volunteers.

A barrier to initiating a large outreach campaign involves labor. Although the staff members who are working on the project are very energetic and hard working, the small number of staff members leading this project limits what can accomplished. With the staff involved in the project already with an impressive workload, there is no one within the district who can take on the role of outreach coordinator. It would be beneficial to partner with community organizations and/or schools and then assign roles, such as outreach coordinator, to others involved outside of the district. Plans for an Occidental College intern to initiate an outreach campaign are in the works. The partnership could lead to increased community and parent leadership within the project.

## **More nutrition and garden-based education programs**

Although important plans exist to expand educational programs as a fundamental component of the Compton Farm to School Project, the district may want to do even more to facilitate the integration of nutrition, food, and food systems based education into normal curriculum.

Currently the nutrition educational component of the Compton Farm to School Project consists primarily of the nutrition programs that Pam Williams organizes. Harvest of the Month, the main food and nutrition program in CUSD, is administered only once a month and is not typically incorporated into normal daily curriculum because teachers often do not receive the teachers guide in enough time to plan for the full incorporation of the material into their normal curriculum. In order to facilitate increased integration, during the summer or at the beginning of the school year CUSD should provide teachers' curriculum guides and manuals with specific lessons plans that help teachers incorporate nutrition and food-systems related education into their normal math, English, science, and social studies curriculum. In order to be most useful to teachers, the curriculum should be adopted to meet California State Standards for subjects such as math, English, and science and they should be flexible so that teachers can adopt the programs to meet their needs.

The Compton Farm to School Project should continue to break down the barriers that separate the cafeteria and outdoors from the classroom. To do so teachers should be supplied with curriculum guides that incorporate the school cafeteria and school garden as experiential learning centers for students. Although initial plans exist to start a garden

education program, currently the project lacks an experiential agriculture education component

A sample garden-based curriculum, which meets California state standards for the earth sciences, and which incorporates classroom lessons with garden activities, is included in the appendix (See Appendix 4). This curriculum, prepared by the author of this report and Mary Christianakis, Professor of Education at Occidental College, has been implemented into a Los Angeles school, Delevan Dr. Elementary School, with success measured by student academic progress and teacher feedback. Other garden-based curriculum guides exist; however, there is no main database listing various nutrition, food, and food systems-based educational projects and/or curriculum that can be easily referenced and used for a farm to school project.

It also is important to provide the opportunity for students to build connections with the farmers that grow their food. Williams has plans to bring professional chefs into classrooms, which will increase student respect and awareness of the people and systems that help to create their meals. However, a farmer visits program is also recommended.

Important plans exist for the organization of a teacher workshop on nutrition and physical activity education. Plans call for the surveying of teachers to determine strategies to incorporate nutrition and physical activity education in the classroom. Based on the information collected in the survey, the workshop will present strategies to help teachers weave nutrition and physical activity education into curriculum. Moreover, plans exist to pay teachers to attend the workshop. Teacher workshops can play a formidable role in facilitating the integration of nutrition and health education into curriculum.

## **School Garden Progress**

Although the garden project is still in an initial planning phase, it is never too early to build a broad coalition of teachers, parents, and community members. Teachers and professors at all schools in the district should be contacted to see if there is interest in creating community based learning projects that would integrate classroom lessons with hands on work in the community garden. Specifically, one way to build support might be to recruit students in the Earth Science Program at Compton Community College. Furthermore, parents could also be contacted and offered specific volunteer positions at the community garden and at their children's school garden.

Even if specific garden plans are not determined until later this year, a general vision that can be shared with the community should be established and recorded. One such vision would be to create a large garden that serves as a community educational center where Compton children and community members can grow their own food, supplement the farmers' market produce in the school salad bar programs, teach children about agricultural and life systems, and help foster environmental stewardship and respect for the earth.

## **More Leadership Training Among Cafeteria Staff**

Initially cafeteria staff may approach their schools' new salad bar program with apprehension. Cafeteria workers may wonder if the program is worth the necessary addition work, may not understand the importance of their role in the program, and may fear that the salad bar program will not run smoothly. Modifications in current staff training and school contact procedure are recommended to develop leadership and knowledge among cafeteria staff about the importance of their role in the larger project.

Instead of contacting school principals and school staff a month before the salad bar opening day, CUSD Nutrition Services may want to contact principals and school staff as soon as possible and at least six weeks before implementation of the salad bar program at their school. CUSD may also want to initiate an extra training day(s) for kitchen staff, separate from the training that currently exists during the taste test day. Increased training in farm fresh produce preparation and salad bar administration could increase workers' confidence in the program. Furthermore, leadership training could help cafeteria workers to feel like they are leaders in an important program. The project will become more sustainable when more staff members take ownership of the project. Staff should feel invested in the project and have pride that they are an integral part of a project that benefits children.

### **More farmer outreach**

Another facet of the Compton Farm to School Project that needs to be addressed involves creating a procurement system that can meet the demand for twenty-four schools. Currently Garden Patch is able to meet demand and deliver the produce. However, it is important to continue to explore other procurement options because more salad bar programs are created ever two weeks to one month. As mentioned previously, every farmers' market managers contacted thus far has expressed strong interest in working with CUSD. Continued research needs to occur to find more farmers' markets that can meet the delivery requirements and needs of the district. One way to do this is by looking at the registrar of farmers' markets in Los Angeles and contacting markets manager(s).<sup>6</sup> An interview with the farmers' market manager will help to determine

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<sup>6</sup> To view the list of Los Angeles County farmers' markets go to <http://lacfb.org/markets.html>.

whether it would be possible to pursue a working relationship with farmers that sell at this market.

The vast majority of farmers are not aware of the opportunity to sell to school districts. Therefore, until there is increased awareness among farmers regarding farm to school, which needs to occur, CUSD will have to contact farmers and farmers' market managers. It is important to view building relationships with farmers as a primary priority. A farm to school program cannot succeed without good communication and a strong working relationship between the district and the farmers.

Section V:  
Recommendations to  
Guide Future Efforts

## **Farm to School Program Recommendations**

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Food service directors will soon have access to detailed logistical information about how to, for example, prepare fresh fruits and veggies for a salad bar that will be available through the three USDA manuals discussed in Section I. However, before the nitty gritty of each particular project is addressed, it is important for farm to school project organizers to understand what is required in the initial stages of any farm to school project initiation. A summary of the lessons learned from the case studies can serve as general guidelines for future efforts:

1. Support for a farm to school project must come from the district, the food service department, schools, teachers, parents, students, community members, farmers, and farmer and community organizations.
2. Support and the adoption of the philosophy of farm to school by the food service department administration, especially the buy-in and active participation of the food services director, is significantly connected to success. The food services department must be willing to make changes in the way it does business. The Department should view the project as a long-term investment in the health and education of students and understand that financial profit may not come immediately.
3. Strong communication between all people involved with the project is critical to project success.
4. The district and farmers together must develop a system of ordering, delivery, and reimbursement that works within the framework of the district but is flexible enough to accommodate changes that will occur with the switch from a

- centralized, one distributor delivery system to one in which the district must work with multiple farmers who have specific needs. The district must understand the system in which small to medium size farmers operate and farmers must understand the logistics of working with a school district.
5. Engage students by listening to their food preference and educating them about the importance of their food decisions. A nutrition and experiential agriculture educational component is recommended to include in any farm to school project. Use education as a farm to school marketing tool, as a way to connect the cafeteria, classroom, and garden, and as a method to link students to the community and local agricultural systems in a way that promotes life long healthy eating habits.
  6. All people part of the project, including cafeteria workers, need to understand the importance of their role. Staff leadership training is recommended.

In order to initiate and implement a farm to school project the following are recommended first steps during phase one of the project:

1. Build support for the program with school district officials, the food service director, and other policymakers.
2. Cultivate parents and community members to act as advocates for the program.
3. Forge partnerships with local farm organizations, farmers' markets, and other individuals with similar goals of supporting local agriculture ( ).
4. Access the necessary fundraising needs. If needed, work with the district, parents, community members, and organizations to fundraise.

6. Access cafeteria infrastructure. If needed, order kitchen infrastructure, salad bar equipment, serving utensils, etc.
7. Work within the community and schools to develop a school garden task force.
8. Make initial school contacts at least one month before project implementation.
9. Existing labor capacity should be evaluated to determine if the district needs to hire more employees for the project. If needed, hire employees committed to the mission of the project.

The following are recommended steps during phase two of the project:

1. Conduct an outreach and marketing campaign. This might include taste tests in schools, flyers to parents, etc. Contact the media as a means of awareness building, promotion, and volunteer recruitment.
2. Set up Student Nutrition Advisory Councils to engage students in the project and get their feedback and advise.
3. Develop educational programs that connect the classroom, cafeteria, garden, and larger local agricultural system. Recommended lesson themes involve food, nutrition, and an experiential agriculture component. Educational programs should be integrated into normal curriculum and meet state educational standards for various subjects.
4. Establish strong communication and working relationships between the district and local farmers.
5. Continue work from phase one regarding hiring and training staff. Train employees and help them develop leadership in the project. Leadership training

for staff is recommended because all staff members who are involved should feel invested in the project and understand the importance of their role.

## **Recommendations for the Expansion of Farm to School**

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Farm to school is a national phenomenon that is rapidly expanding. However, farm to school programs are multifaceted and complex in nature and more work needs to be done at many different levels to address and overcome the following barriers:

1. Lack of knowledge and confidence about farm to school
2. Financial concerns: lack of financial resources to pay for new infrastructure and possible increased staff and food costs.
3. The culture of food service directors and the lack of knowledge among food service directors that barriers can be overcome.
4. Transportation, delivery, and other logistical issues.
5. The disconnect between the cafeteria and the classroom

The following recommendations address these five barriers:

### **The Compton Farm to School Project Should Be an Official Pilot Demonstration Site**

Many food service directors unfamiliar with farm to school may doubt that a farm to school project is feasible for their district. However, food service directors are influenced when they visit a farm to school program site and see how smoothly and effectively a program can be run. Although the Compton site will informally be a demonstration site regardless, designating the site as an official pilot demonstration site is important to increase outreach and provide resources to the program so that staff will not

be burdened. The Nutrition Network could make this sort of designation and provide the funding.

## **Federal and State Legislation**

### **1. Continued Campaign Work with the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill**

Financial legislation is needed to overcome financial concerns and provide legitimacy to farm to school. As discussed previously, on March 24th, 2004 the House of Representatives, approved by an overwhelming bipartisan vote (419-5), the Child Nutrition Improvement and Integrity Act (H.R. 3873) (Vollinger 1). Although the farm to school provisions within this legislation were accepted word for word, funds have not been appropriated for the \$10 million competitive grant program. It is highly recommended that funding options are explored and that the momentum that helped secure House support for the bill expand so that the Senate pass Senate Bill 1755, the Farm to Cafeteria Projects Act, support the inclusion of its provision in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation, and allocate funding to the farm to school seed grant program.<sup>7</sup>

To expand the campaign, it is recommended that the Community Food Security Coalition partner with other organizations involved with farm to school in order to create a database list serve of all food service directors involved in some way with farm to school. Many partial list serves have been developed but coordination and completion is needed. This list serve will enable those within the farm to school movement to have better communication across the country, an important aspect of any national campaign. Moreover, the list serve will help document the depth of farm to school projects. This is

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<sup>7</sup> Bipartisan support for these provision exists and six senators had already co-sponsored S. 1755 by March, 2004.

important because more documentation of successful farm to school projects is needed in order to increase support and collaboration with other groups, such as the nutrition and health community.

If seed grants are made available to school districts, it is important that food service directors be made aware of the option to apply for these funds. An outreach campaign needs to occur, in which the USDA notifies all food service directors of funding opportunities and other support programs.

## **2. Bonus Reimbursement for Local Foods**

Due to the tight budgets of school food service programs, financial issues create barriers to farm to school. To make farm to school a much more realistic and appealing option for school districts, it is recommended that schools receive an additional reimbursement for purchasing food from local small-scale farmers. It is recommended that Congress enact legislation that would create a pilot reimbursement bonus program. In this type of program, districts would receive 5-10 cents for each meal when procuring from registered local family farmers. A recommended five million would be appropriated initially from USDA (Azuma and Fisher 52).

### **3. State Incentives**

State governments have an interest in promoting local economic development and therefore state governments can logically provide incentives or mandates that school districts procure from state family farmers. Recommendations that are particularly relevant include:

1. State Departments of Education and State Departments of Agriculture should issue policy statements that explicitly encourage schools districts to purchase produced by local, family farmers (California Food and Justice Coalition).
2. States should provide a bonus reimbursement for five to ten cents for meals that incorporate state-grown products on family farms. State Departments of Agriculture could fund this bonus reimbursement program.
3. States should expand their partnerships with the DoD Fresh Program to increase the use of commodity funds for procurement of products from local family farmers (Azuma and Fisher 56).

### **Food Service Director Outreach**

#### **Media**

Food service directors need to view farm to school as an emerging trend that they want to involved with. To do so, there needs to be more publicity on farm to school. Because the USDA sponsored the Five a Day Campaign, it logical that this department, in partnership with state governments, could sponsor an “Eat Local” produce campaign that farm to school could be a part of. Additionally, the community food security network needs to capitalize on the recent policy victory in the House. Although there has been national coverage on farm to school, more could exist.

The farm to school movement also should capitalize on the fact that the issue of the obesity epidemic has become a hot topic. More partnerships with nutrition and healthy community advocates are needed to raise awareness of farm to school. To do so, more documentation on farm to school projects and research- including pre and post surveys to document changes in fruit and vegetables consumption- is needed to gain credibility with nutrition professionals and in so order that health professionals be able to use this information to develop policy recommendations (Kalb 6). The farm to school movement would greatly benefit from the publicity that the health community could provide for farm to school.

### **Increased Accessibility of Farm to School Workshops**

In order for there to be an exponential increase in the number of food service directors who initiate a farm to school program, food service directors need to not only know that farm to school is an option and that farm to school projects exist throughout the country, but that farm to school can work for their school district with its unique circumstances. All farm to school directors in the country should receive specific logistical information about how any farm to school director can overcome barriers and utilize their district's opportunities.

It is recommended the USDA and the community food security network should pool its resources to sponsor more farm to school conferences that serve to address specific issues of concern for food service directors and provide a plethora of resources available for food service directors. Farm to school workshops should occur at every annual regional food service director conference. Moreover, farm to school conferences must be sponsored in during the other half of the year.

# **Build Alliances Between Local Farmers and School Food Service Buyers: 3 Part Outreach Campaign**

## **1. Farm Registry**

School districts lack connections to local farmers. Food service directors often do not have a lot of time to invest in locating, contacting, and establishing good business relationships with many local farmers. This is why a farm registry of local farmers needs to be created in every region of the country as the first part of a very important USDA sponsored farmer outreach campaign. For this campaign the USDA should collaborate with local, state, and national farmer and community food security organizations that can help contact farmers about farm to school and record farmers' contact information. The farmer registry will be put into an on-line database that will be conveniently accessible to all food service directors.

## **2. Farmer Outreach Campaign**

The creation of a farmer registry must be associated with a farmer outreach campaign. Except for select areas of the country, farmers by and large are not aware of the possibility of direct marketing to school districts. For the majority of small to medium scale farmers, the school district is an untapped marketing opportunity. Even when a direct business relationship is pursued, the logistics of ordering, billing, and delivery has been an obstacle in nearly every pilot farm to school program because school district are not accustomed to working with local farmers and via versa. ([www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)). Therefore, before establishing working relationships, farmers must understand the logistics of working with a school district. To build awareness about farm to school and the needs of a school district, workshops for local small agricultural producers should be sponsored twice a year in each state.

The structure of these goals should be similar to the USDA Small Farm/Small Meals Workshop that was held in Georgetown, Kentucky on May 1st, 2000, except geared to an audience composed of local small agricultural producers.<sup>8</sup> The goal of the farmer workshops should be to: 1) introduce farmers to marketing to school districts; 2) teach participants about existing Federal and State financial assistance and technical assistance programs, which give preferences to small and/or local vendors in the school lunch program; 3) educate farmers about what food service directors need and want when choosing a vendor and how to market to school districts with their preferences in mind; and 4) facilitate partnerships between farmer that might market to schools through a cooperative arrangement.

Increased awareness about the government financial and technical assistance given to small farmers should be a primary goal of these farmer workshops. Government efforts to support farm to school projects are significant in legitimizing this arrangement, but are uncoordinated and lack publicity ([www.foodsecurity.org/healthy.html](http://www.foodsecurity.org/healthy.html)). Of particular interest are programs that offer federal and state assistance in forming a producer-owner marketing cooperative. Participation in cooperatives can offer small farmers significant advantages when they attempt to market their farm products to local school food service because food service departments appreciate the efficiency of working with one local business entity (Tropp and Olowoayemo 24). Moreover, small farm operators often receive long-term economic benefits because participation in a cooperative generally enables farmers to better leverage their financial resources, which could enable farmers to afford to purchase farm produce preparation infrastructure.

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<sup>8</sup> Refer to [http://www.foodsecurity.org/f2c\\_pressrelease.html](http://www.foodsecurity.org/f2c_pressrelease.html) to download a copy of the report entitled, "How Local Farmers and School Food Service Buyers Are Building Alliances: Lesson Learned from the USDA Small Farmers/School Meals Workshop, May 1, 2000"

Preparing farm produce enables farmers to produce value-added goods. Pre-prepared fresh farm produce appeals to food service director to help them contain labor costs.

Awareness about the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) needs to increase. The RBS offers an abundant variety of technical assistance to producer groups seeking to form an agricultural marketing cooperative. These resources include numerous publications and videos, along with free training opportunities for coop members and managers. Information about RBS can be found at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov> but also needs to be given to farmers in mass at the recommended farmer workshops. The Business and Industry (B & I) Guaranteed Loan Program is another program that needs more publicity among farmers interested in pursuing direct marketing opportunities with school districts. This loan program, which guarantees up to 90 percent of a loan made by a commercial lender, is available to virtually any legally organized entity, including a cooperative or other profit or nonprofit entity (Tropp and Olowolayemo 23).

Even as not part of a cooperative, local farmers have many options to receive marketing and technical assistance, including the USDA-AMS, Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP). The FSMIP provides matching funds to State departments of agriculture or affiliated State agencies to develop innovative approaches in the marketing of agricultural products. The USDA typically funds 20 to 30 projects per year and gives high priority to funding agricultural marketing projects that have an explicit small farm, direct marketing, or sustainable agriculture component. More farmers involved in farm to school should be aware of this opportunity.

### **3. Farmer and Food Service Director Conference**

The other set of workshops that should be the third and final part of this USDA sponsored outreach campaign should be organized as a conference entitled “Building Alliances Between Local Farmers and Food Service Directors.” The Community Food Security Coalition should co-sponsor these workshops. These workshops could precede annual regional food service conferences. The goal of these workshops should be very similar to the USDA Small Farm/Small Meals Workshop in Georgetown, Kentucky on May 1st, 2000, which was primarily designed to: 1) provide a forum for local small agricultural producers and school food service buyer to network; 2) introduce participants to emerging trends in school lunch purchasing that highlights farm to school opportunities; and 3) enable small producers and school food service buyers who have already established successful direct marketing relationships to share their experiences (Tropp and Olowolayemo, 1).

### **Increase Opportunities for Education**

It is recommended that State Departments of Education develop and/or compile a teaching manual for farm to school projects for teachers of that particular state. The manuals should be organized by grade level for K-12 and by subject matter for sixth through twelfth grade teachers. Food, nutrition, and food system-based education should be integrated into curriculum for all subjects that have a state education standard. A sample 1<sup>st</sup> grade garden-based curriculum plan that teaches food, food-system, and environmental science education and is integrated into California state standards for the earth sciences is included in Appendix 4. Prior to development, the State Departments of Education should conduct teacher surveys and sponsor teacher panels for teachers of

every grade level to ensure that the curriculum manuals meet teachers' needs and will be used by teachers.

# Section VI: Conclusion

## **The Compton Farm to School Project and the Farm to School Movement**

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The Compton Farm to School Project might represent a new stage in the national Farm to School Movement. In the first stage, parents, active community members, and government agencies, such as the USDA, took the lead and organized farm to school projects, in part by persuading school districts and cautious food service directors to support the projects. Due to the history of farm to school, a misconception regarding farm to school is that unique circumstances, such as an active and involved group of community leaders within a supportive school district and city, is needed to initiate a farm to school project. Current action dispels this myth. The Compton Farm to School Project has not benefited from all of the circumstances that have characterized several farm to school programs initiated at an earlier stage of the farm to school movement, and yet, the project has been successful, illustrating that barriers can be overcome with the commitment, motivation, and problem solving abilities of project leaders. Hundreds of school food directors from a diverse range of school districts and communities now support and lead farm to school projects. The Compton Farm to School Project is just one example of this support.

It is anticipated that as support and information about farm to school is more widely disseminated, an increased number of food service directors will initiate farm to school programs. Grassroots action for farm to school is also anticipated to increase as community food security issues, such as farm to school, move further to the forefront of the obesity debate. Consequently, partnerships between district and food service personnel and grassroots leaders will expand. The farm to school movement is a national phenomenon that has already made tremendous strides since its initiation just

eight years ago. This movement that is revolutionizing children's' relationship with food and will only continue to grow.

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## Appendix 1

# Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Farmers' Market Salad Bar Programs 2003-2004

### **Edible Education**

- Age appropriate food preparation activity in classroom with nutrition lesson using 5 A Day Message promoting fruits and vegetables for better health.
- All grades

### **Farmers' Market Salad Bar Gardens Co-op**

- Have a Master Gardener give your class 2 lessons in your garden on soil & tool safety, and planting.
- Receive free seeds and seedlings to plant in your school garden.
- Students receive a free salad bar lunch for each harvest donated to their school salad bar.

### **Farmers' Market Tours**

- Every Wednesday- Grades 2 and up.
- Receive hands on knowledge of seasonal produce from the market and \$1.00 market coupon.

### **Garden Workshop**

- Teachers: peer taught lessons on how to tie gardening into curriculum
- Gardening Angel/Parent volunteers: instruction on how to start and maintain gardens

### **Harvest of the Month Club**

- Sign up to receive nutrition facts about one fruit or vegetable each month. Show us how you incorporated it into your curriculum and receive a complimentary basket of the fruit or vegetables to share with your class.

### **Kindergarten Cafeteria Tour**

- Visit the cafeteria on a Wednesday morning when the fresh produce has arrived from the Farmers' Market to be used on the school salad bar.

### **Pyramid Power**

- Science based nutrition lesson centered on the Food Guide Pyramid. Designed to meet grade level standards for Health and Science.

### **Santa Monica High School Garden Visits**

- Students will be taught by Biology students about photosynthesis, cell structure, and worm composting

## Appendix 2

### **Pre-Salad Bar Student Food Questionnaire**

- 1) What is your favorite food?
- 2) Please circle one:
  - a. I always eat the school lunch
  - b. I almost always eat the school lunch
  - c. Sometimes I eat the school lunch
  - d. I never eat the school lunch
- 3) If you eat the school lunch, please list three things that you often eat:
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- 4) List three things that you like to eat for lunch at school?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- 5) Do you eat the fruit and vegetable offered at lunch? Please circle one:
  - a. Yes, I always eat both the fruit and vegetable offered
  - b. I almost always eat both the fruit and vegetable offered
  - c. I sometimes eat both the fruit and vegetable offered
  - d. I never eat the fruit and vegetable offered
- 6) If you circled b. c. or d. to question #5, why do you not always eat the fruit and vegetable offered in your school lunch?
  - a. I do not like the way the food tastes
  - b. I do not have enough time to eat the fruit and vegetable
  - c. It is hard to eat because the fruit is not peeled
  - d. Other. Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

7) Please list three things that you often eat when you are not at school:

1.

2.

3.

8) How many servings of fruits and vegetables do you eat a day?

a. less than one serving of fruits or vegetables per day

b. 2-3 servings of fruits and or vegetables per day

c. more than 3 servings of fruits and or vegetables per day

9) What are your three favorite fruits?

1.

2.

3.

10) What are your three favorite vegetables?

1.

2.

3.

11) Other than your favorite fruits and vegetables listed above, are there things that you want in the salad bar that are not in the salad bar now?

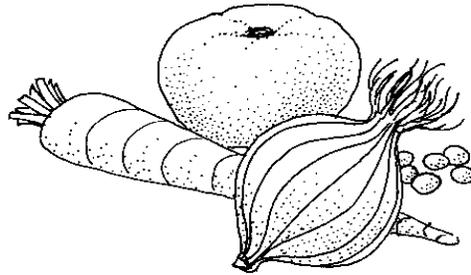
1.

2.

3.

Thank you!

## **Do you know that Willard Elementary School is implementing a Farmer's Market Salad Bar?**



**A complete farm fresh salad bar program will provide the opportunity for your child to choose food from a wide selection of healthy and tasty fruit, vegetable, protein and grain options.**

**This fantastic salad bar will be opening at Willard Elementary School on Wednesday, February 25<sup>th</sup>.**

**Encourage your child to try the new and exciting salad bar.**

**Also, look for more information on the Farm-to-School Program in Compton, which includes not only salad bars, but also school gardens and nutrition, food, and food system based education.**

**If you have questions about the program or if you what to volunteer, contact Tracie Thomas at (310) 639-4321 ext. 55105**

## Appendix 4

### First Grade Earth Science Garden-Based Earth Science Curriculum

Theme: Plant and Human Needs

Unit Essential Question: How are plants needs similar to our (human) needs?

#### 10 Days-At-A-Glance-Objectives

<b>California Standards Met:</b>
<b>Life Sciences 2.a.:</b> Students know both plants and animals need water, animals need food, and plants need light.
<b>Life Science 2.e.:</b> Students know that roots are associated with the intake of water and soil nutrients and green leaves are associated with making food from sunlight.

<b>Basic Materials:</b> Garden plot (this can be anywhere, such as the side of your classroom. This does not have to be in an established school garden). Garden tools, including shovels and watering can or hose. Seeds and compost. Garden journal for each student. Poster board, markers, and crayons.
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Day	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Objective: Address the following question:	How can we see different types of soils, seeds and plants in our normal day?	Why is soil important to plants and how do different types of soils impact our plant in the garden?	How a seed become a plant?	Why is water important to seeds and plants and how do plants take in water?	How do plants get energy to grow?
Materials Needed	1) For lecture: a poster-board and markers. Also bring samples of seeds, soils, and plants that the students can see and touch in the classroom. 3) For the garden: shovels to take out weeds and turn the soil if needed.	1) For soil experiment: prepare small planting containers with different soil types. Bring bean seeds to plant in the containers and popsicle sticks to record plant growth. 2) For the garden activity: organic compost and maybe fertilizers.	1) For the garden activity: various packets of seeds. Choose seed types based on seasonality and germination time- the faster growing and fruiting plants are usually the best when working with children. Also need: plant markers and permanent markers (or pen) to label the markers.	1) For lecture: chalkboard or poster board. Use visual aids when giving the lesson. 2) For the garden activity: more seeds. Water cans or other container to water are also needed.	1) For lecture: chalkboard or poster board. Use visual aids when giving the lesson. 2) For the garden activity: more seeds and possibly plants.

Day	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Objective: Address the following questions:	How do the different parts of the plant help the plant to grow?	How do plants need us?	Why do we need plants?	What do we need that plants need?	Student Evaluation
Materials Needed	1) For lecture: chalkboard or poster board. Use visual aids when giving the lesson. 2) For garden activity: no materials needed. (Do weeding and maintenance).	1) For lecture: chalkboard or poster board. Use visual aids when giving the lesson. 2) For garden activity: no materials needed except garden tools. (Do pruning and weeding in the garden).	1) For lecture: chalkboard or poster board. Use visual aids when giving the lesson. 2) For garden activity: no material needed except garden tools. (Do pruning and weeding in the garden).	1) For lecture: marker to finish filling out the circle graph. 2) For garden activity: no materials needed except garden tools	1) For the evaluation activity: paper, crayons, and markers for students to draw pictures of the garden. 2) For recognition event: plates, drinks, napkins, and food. (Try to use food grown in the garden or food that is prepared with the same types of vegetables and fruits that are growing in the garden).