



SCHOOL FOOD CHAMPIONS

Organizing For Change



BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

About This Series

A primary tenet of the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative is that place matters, i.e. where one lives determines how one fares in health, safety and wellbeing. The 14 California communities that are a part of Building Healthy Communities have long histories dealing with policies that have institutionalized class, race and ethnic disparities in education, health and human services, and local government planning decisions. “Health Happens Here” is both a guiding principle and a rallying cry for BHC sites addressing these entrenched disparities. This case study explores successes, opportunities, challenges and transitions experienced “in place” as communities endeavor to create and sustain healthy communities for children and families.

Background

Building Healthy Communities (BHC) is a 10-year, \$1 billion program of The California Endowment (TCE). Fourteen communities across the state are working to create places where children are healthy, safe and ready to learn. BHC is focused on prevention and strategies aimed at changing community institutions, policies and systems. In BHC, a focus on systems change requires work across sectors with multiple stakeholders.

Through this cross-sector collaboration and with youth and resident leadership, BHC sites seek to improve neighborhood safety, unhealthy environmental conditions,

access to healthy foods, education, housing, employment opportunities and more. All BHC sites began with a planning process and determined health priorities, each site selected from 10 pre-determined outcomes. From this an implementation plan was created that included targeted strategies to change four systems that impact the wellbeing of children, youth and families: health, human services, education, and community environments.

Each site formed a “Hub” to serve as the central table through which implementation efforts would be coordinated. Local leadership worked with TCE Program Officers who were embedded in each site to assist with rolling out the process and enabling the connection with local systems leaders and policy makers. Community campaigns have since been organized under the umbrella of Neighborhoods, Schools and Prevention.

Since 2010, BHC sites have experienced a number of important successes. However, every initiative exists in a dynamic environment and comes with structures and expectations that can be challenging for communities, and BHC is no different. BHC finds its roots in large scale, complex, community change initiatives, so any narrative has to acknowledge that complexity and include the many perspectives that reflect it. The multiple perspectives in this case study are those of institutional leaders, residents, organizers, facilitators and TCE staff.

Read more about Building Healthy Communities at www.calendow.org

Acknowledgments

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Anthony B. Iton, MD, JD, MPH Senior Vice President, Healthy Communities

Beatriz Solís, MPH, PhD Program Director, Healthy Communities Southern Region

Sandra Witt, PhD Program Director, Healthy Communities Northern Region



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	7
Introduction	8
Food Policy In Los Angeles	10
Students & Parents Implementing Change at School Sites	14
Water Access, A Free & Healthy Option	16
On the Ground, What We Have Learned	17
Next Steps: 2016 & Beyond	20
Conclusion	22



The Healthy School Food Coalition, a program of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute, is a group of committed parents, students and community members who have worked to develop and implement food and nutrition policies in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

We know that most of LAUSD students depend on school meals as an important source of food and nutrition. Through organizing, advocacy, partnerships and collaborations we have been successful at engaging the school district to improve eating environments in schools and address barriers that have historically discouraged students from participating in cafeteria programs.



Urban & Environmental Policy Institute
OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



For over a decade of steadfast advocacy, relationship-building, issue analysis, research, training, mobilizing, monitoring, the Healthy School Food Coalition (HSFC) has worked to raise visibility of the importance of food and nutrition in Los Angeles public schools. Organizing a broad base of parents and students while collaborating with community partners, the HSFC has won significant policy campaigns and remarkable improvements in cafeteria menus resulting in direct benefits to students in Los Angeles.

These changes have established Los Angeles Unified School District's role at the forefront of national efforts to combat childhood obesity through improving student nutrition. Cafeterias in Los Angeles now offer more nourishing meals served to more students than ever before. Today, LAUSD also has the largest Breakfast in the Classroom

Program (BIC) in the country, thus creating a solid foundation for students' health, attendance to school, literacy and access to nutritious meals in neighborhoods considered as food deserts. Through sustained organizing and advocacy, the Coalition and its partners have shifted the culture of the nation's second largest school district and are poised to develop and expand new strategies for creating momentum for deeper and expanded adoption and implementation of food and wellness policies in the district.

The Healthy School Food Coalition and its members - parents, students, teachers, and community members - have the opportunity to address and seize several important trends in local education to ensure more consistent implementation of policies and to ensure good nutrition is a top priority for education leaders across the region.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2000, the Healthy School Food Coalition and California Food Policy Advocates have worked together to improve student nutrition and food access in LAUSD schools. This joint work and partnership, titled the Los Angeles School Nutrition Project (LASNP), has focused on the adoption and implementation of landmark nutrition and food systems policies adopted by the Board of Education, as well as on building community support and ownership of the changes. Over the years numerous organizations have emerged, embraced school food and nutrition work and have collaborated on these efforts.



This case study was commissioned and supported by The California Endowment to share learning on Los Angeles' local, historical and current policy, systems change and implementation of school food and nutrition policies to improve eating environments for students in Los Angeles Unified School District. Many stakeholders have rallied around in order to gain policy adoption, and to be truly successful, many more have been needed to remain consistently focused on the process of implementation. Leaders at the school setting, at the school district level and advocates outside the district have played a critical role and collaborated to bring about the dividends of changed cafeterias and attitudes related to school food and nutrition programs.

Initially, and as a basis to build this case study, historical efforts and data were gathered. At



Roosevelt High School mothers participating in school food training and cooking class.

the same time, visits to schools to meet various stakeholders took place. These stakeholders are individuals who have worked and collaborated around accomplishing school nutrition and student health goals. Over a dozen interviews were carried out allowing for garnering of diverse perspectives, experiences, learning and contribution to this work. These interviews are displayed throughout the case study. The voices represented range from students, parents, Cafeteria Managers, non-profit organizations to school nutrition staff within the Building Health Communities sites in Boyle Heights, and South Los Angeles. Following are descriptions of sets of conditions under which policy work takes place. Some of these descriptions were drawn from interviews as well as direct experience and observations made by the partners over the years.



USDA Under Secretary with cafeteria staff.

Credit: Dean Musgrove, LA Daily News



LAUSD cafeterias were discussed during a House of Representatives Education Committee hearing in Washington, D.C. in 2008.



LAUSD Cafeteria Managers discuss menus with Boyle Heights community members.

To conclude the case study, a set of next steps toward advancing the work are outlined.

This case study is a product of collaboration, sharing, giving and receiving. We are most grateful for the time and involvement reflected on this document, and for these relationships and partnerships. Among the many goals of this publication is to increase understanding of school nutrition regulations and standards, share advocacy and implementation efforts while painting a landscape, challenges and opportunities that are ripe for harvesting. It is of utmost importance to make this work accessible to anyone working

on similar nutrition and wellness work in school settings. It is our hope to ignite energy among advocates, whether they are based at a community agency, in the classroom or at the kitchen table.

Background and Context

Rising levels of obesity and diet-related illnesses have drawn attention to the need for prevention and interventions where children live, learn, and play. The food served and sold at school has been a major focus of policymakers, school officials, parents, teachers, students and community members. In the Los Angeles region, these stakeholders have taken the lead to transform the school food environment at the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). With more than 1,000 school sites and 640,000 students, LAUSD is the second largest school district in the country with about 80% percent of its students eligible for free and reduced priced lunches.



FOOD POLICY IN LOS ANGELES

After establishing policies to reduce student consumption of sweetened beverages at school (Healthy Beverage Motion, 2002), the attention of students, parents, elected officials and community organizations turned towards strengthening the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program. Working with former Board Member Marlene Canter, the Coalition and a growing number of school food advocates led successful campaigns to win policies such as the Obesity Prevention Motion (2003) and the Cafeteria Improvement Motion (2005).

Additionally, the Board of Education adopted a closely-watched resolution in support of successful implementation of the Breakfast in the Classroom (2012), sponsored by Board Members Nury Martínez and Mónica García.

Board Member Zimmer led the development of the Food and Nutrition Policy adopted at the end of 2012, thus initiating a new round of changes to the district's cafeterias and followed up with the Good Food Procurement Policy, adopted in late 2014. Here are a few highlights of the changes prescribed by the policies:



Reduce the availability of unhealthy snack foods by setting nutritional standards for vending machines and student stores, with a secondary effect of directing more students to the cafeteria for their calories.



Increase participation, through student discussion groups and feedback, facilities investments, and culinary expertise to improve the taste profile of recipes.



Provide additional servings of fresh vegetables and fruits.



Establish true access to breakfast through initiatives such as Breakfast in the Classroom.



Reduce stigma of participating in school nutrition programs by eliminating meal tickets.



Offer at least twenty minutes for students to consume lunch.



Invest in technology, modernization of secondary cafeteria lines, signage and equipment.



Establish a Cafeteria Improvement Committee to provide input.



Modify entrees to limit intake of nutrients found in excess in children's diets (sodium, total fat, saturated fat, added sugars, artificial trans fats). The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, adopted by Congress in 2010 and strongly supported by First Lady Michelle Obama, included nearly identical nutritional benchmarks.



Establish the cafeteria as a place of learning by posting nutrition information and signage about menus and good health habits.













LAUSD student interviewed by press during Breakfast in the Classroom.



LAUSD Board of Education President Steve Zimmer presents on school food policy at PolicyLink's Equity Summit.

During this time the Food Services Division initiated a series of parallel changes that supplemented and complemented the Board policies:

-  Strengthened personnel through reduced cafeteria staff vacancies, increased training, standardized procedures and additional support to schools from an enlarged team of Area Food Services Supervisors.
-  Established business plans for Menu Development and Marketing.
-  Introduced new entrees, the “Chef’s Signature Series”, developed by the Food Services Division Executive Chef.
-  Removed a la carte sales from lunch lines.
-  Eliminated “fast-food” type entrées. For example, hot dogs, corn dogs, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, pizza, etc.
-  Simplified the food purchasing system to ensure more funds going into the cafeteria nutrition programs versus paperwork at the state level.
-  Conducted a series of student discussion groups during after school.
-  Engaged high school students in nutrition advocacy by setting up Teen Nutrition Teams.
-  Conducted regular student taste panels and tours of the Newman Nutrition Center to further enlist student feedback in the menu process.
-  Established access to the school meal application online and accessible in several languages.

The combination of policies, practices, and programs focused on optimizing student nutritional behavior at schools as well as education and practice of appropriate, long-term eating habits. District administrators and elected officials have received numerous national and regional awards for their groundbreaking work, invitations to the White House and regular media coverage. From highlighting the implementation of the 2012 USDA nutrition standards for school menus which the district implemented in 2011, a year in advance to any other district in the country, to coverage of the Cooking Up Change featuring LAUSD Culinary Arts students at the national competition, to most recently hosting the USDA Under Secretary Kevin Concannon at an elementary school to celebrate National School Breakfast week, eat with students and highlight Breakfast in the Classroom program. All around, district policies have become best practices for other school districts nationally.



In The Media

Santee High School students win the LAUSD 2016 Cooking Up Change competition

<http://www.dailynews.com/social-affairs/20160408/santee-education-complex-clinches-laUSD-healthy-cooking-competition>

USDA Under Secretary Kevin Concannon has breakfast with elementary school students to celebrate National School Breakfast week

<http://www.dailynews.com/social-affairs/20160310/free-breakfast-plan-at-laUSD-schools-boosts-nutrition-reduces-poverty-stigma>

<http://player.tout.com/dailynews/v4qb6x>

<http://photos.dailynews.com/2016/03/photos-some-laUSD-schools-getting-free-breakfast-and-lunch-for-all-children/#1>



Most prominently, experience over the years, observations and conversations as well as interviews carried out for this case study reveal important progress in building the support for good nutrition that students deserve. Through the HSFC, parents and students engaged in a range of strategies, including educating Board members, engaging with local site decision makers (e.g. through taste-testings), developing collaborations with other health organizations, building coalitions, providing public testimony, etc. Parents at BHC school sites utilized these similar strategies to push for change defined by parents at each site.

As a result of new district practices, alongside with organizing, advocacy and education work parents and students now are more:

- 🍓 Informed about decision-making on school food.
- 🍓 Equipped to make the right ask to the right person.
- 🍓 Trained to meet with and testify in front of School Board on procurement.



The LA Fund for Public Education's Megan Chernin and actress Sofia Vergara join students for Breakfast in 2012.

In addition, parents and students noted that implementation of federal, state and local policy changes are uneven at schools. Gaps remain in:

- 🍓 Fundraising practices.
- 🍓 Water access.
- 🍓 Salads & menu choices.



STUDENTS & PARENTS IMPLEMENTING CHANGE AT SCHOOL SITES

Schools in each of the Building Healthy Communities sites utilized different strategies and advanced areas of school nutrition that they determined as important to the local school site and their respective neighborhoods. The sites received support in carrying out strategies after engaging in training on the various local, state and federal nutrition policies mandated for all public schools. Each of the sites assessed priorities given the timing, the relevance, passion and urgency, and moved forward to address policies. Here are some highlights:



Scaling up Salads: Theodore Roosevelt High School – Lessons from Boyle Heights

Early in 2014 ten schools were selected to carry out low-cost tactics to change what students eat at school through changing environmental cues and menus in subtle ways to increase vegetable, fruit and milk consumption. HSFC and CFPA advocated to have Roosevelt High School participate in the pilot and roll out these changes denominated as Smarter Lunchrooms. This was especially timely for the advocates since there was a relationship with the Cafeteria Manager and this site is within the Building Healthy Communities. There was also the collaboration with the Volunteers of America, Los Angeles's Healthy School Meals Advocacy Project which launched in 2013. Then, a key challenge facing students, parents and teachers was that they did not know who is responsible for which decision or what policy.

With steady support and training from the Healthy School Food Coalition, parents and students at Roosevelt High School led by Karina González learned the basics of how the school lunch money flows from Washington, D.C. to the eastside of Los Angeles. The youth learned to survey their peers, gather data about who is not participating in the lunch program and why not. In the meantime, the cafeteria saw a series of changes from placing fruits and vegetables more visibly, to creating a salad section and having more prominent signage for foods offered and trained staff to offer more



Kale Salad is served in an LAUSD high school.

options to students and ensure that they have a complete meal before leaving the register. Along the way, students were trained in social media and began a collaboration with a local artist to create a mural on nutrition topics in the eating area outside the cafeteria.

A friend invited Jorge Tovar, a senior, to participate in the weekly meetings about nutrition at Roosevelt. A survey of 700 students revealed complaints about food items running out and preparation quality. Serving salads and serving water arose as priorities. The students received training to explain these priorities and met with Cafeteria Manager, Kiki Camarena who had never been exposed to a group of well-trained students to discuss cafeteria affairs.



Roosevelt High School students meeting with Laura Benavidez, Food Services Director.

“Getting involved does affect us as students when you know what you put in your body. I’ve been able to eat healthier.”

- Jorge Tovar, senior, Roosevelt High School

“The youth came in shy and now are connected to so many opportunities through BHC-BH.”

- Karina González, Healthy School Meals Advocacy Project for Volunteers of America, Los Angeles

Kiki described how she is trying to offer foods the students like, such as yogurt parfait. “Sweet potato is not as popular this year. Each year, we get new students and they have different preferences,” she observed. Her enthusiasm for the nutrition organizations is partly based on the importance of making sure parents know about the cafeteria menu and the foods offered so they can encourage their children to try new foods at school. She also appreciated Jorge and the students requesting more salads.

In 2014, only fifty salads were offered each day, but now over 200 are served. The organizers also help make sure students can share complaints and recommendations. What happens next at Roosevelt? Cafeteria administrators need more data about who is not eating and why not. Fortunately, the Healthy School Meals Advocacy Project is tabulating a recently completed survey results.



Roosevelt High School parents meeting with Kiki Camarena, Cafeteria Manager.

WATER ACCESS, A FREE & HEALTHY OPTION

South Los Angeles schools have led important changes in the food and nutrition landscape. The school food work builds on programs such as the Crenshaw High School garden supplying salad dressing greens for commercial sales through Food From The 'Hood, Root Down LA's work at Jefferson High School to build youth appreciation and demand for vegetables to Figueroa Elementary, and launching LAUSD's very first Breakfast in the Classroom pilot. It is no doubt that over the years schools in South Los Angeles have been inspirational oases of changes in a nutrition desert.



Manual Arts High School – Lessons from South Los Angeles

During the first year of the Food Justice Council, a youth afterschool program, in Manual Arts High School, students did environmental mapping and raised their consciousness about inequities in their neighborhoods and food access. Then, they became thirsty for change at their school. In 2014 HSFC began to provide training sessions on school food and nutrition policy, students chose to focus on water because they were tired of spending so much money on bottled water. According to Caitlin Krier, LA's Promise staff and the Council's Coordinator, "From beginning to end, students ran everything, the entire campaign."

Students deployed a water fountain audit tool and were surprised to learn that the water quality was good, but since the equipment is unattractive, the students had to bring new options and choices to their campus. California Food Policy Advocates introduced the students to Mission Readiness, who provided a hydration station.

Caitlin noted the role of the Healthy School Food Coalition in enabling the youth to direct their energy effectively: "HSFC staff was critical to helping students figure out who is responsible for which issue, i.e., Board members, Principals and Cafeteria Managers." As the students rank priorities to select their next campaign, they are

emboldened to think big since the hydration station provides tangible benefits and real evidence of the result of their advocacy.

It is important to note that a similar strategy took place in John Muir Middle School with parents who also received training on school food and nutrition policy. After counting the number of water fountains they proceeded to test water from several fountains using testing kits and found no risk or problem with the quality of water in school.



Clean, cool and refreshing. The hydration station at Manual Arts High School.

ON THE GROUND, WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED



Settings and Neighborhood Conditions Impact Population Trends

Schools are their own societies with distinct cultures. This creates the opportunity for families to play an impactful role in schools. Families in the Building Healthy Communities school sites are often transient; districtwide statistics indicate that up to 25% of students change addresses annually. Moving, migrating is a constant for families. From changing phone numbers many times each year, to physical-geographic relocation. It is a challenge for schools and advocates to maintain contact with families, in this case mothers, who are the primary persons involved in the education and care of children. At the same time, according to LAUSD's Homeless Education Program there are some 15,000 students identified as homeless currently in Los Angeles schools. Organizing, training, supporting and cheerleading parents to be effective advocates requires enormous time and incredible patience. Specific to the Boyle Heights and South Los Angeles sites, families are experiencing an ever increasing push-out given the various gentrifying forces in both communities. These factors combined result in diminished stability and increased stress levels within the family while impacting their ability to partake in activities and resources offered in and out of school.

Parent Centers are Critical and Under-Resourced

Parent Centers are important settings available at most schools and provide different levels of resources. These centers have evolved over the years and now have a clearer set of expectations and goals. Most Parent Center Directors are on a semi-staff and volunteer basis and still many others donate countless hours of their days in

order to meet as many tasks and goals at the centers. Offering varied and continuous activities for parents whether it is educational sessions for parents' own growth or to teach skills to support their students' learning and achieving are among the main goals of these centers. Limited staff capacity and the scheduling of such activities sometimes prevents extended sessions and in-depth focus on complex topics such as school nutrition policy. HSFC's work with parents is not only about theory, but emphasizes practical actions. Limited access to parents at a site for more than four days per year limits the scale of organizing and impact. Staff turnover at Parent Centers is often a factor that impacts connection to training and work started at sites.



Bravo High School parents train in school food policy and prepare healthy dishes.

Parent Centers have increasingly developed into more stable and trusted resources within the school site. Increasingly, more parents are loyal participants there, which is a good result of much work done by the district in training staff. At the same time, centers are becoming possessive of

parents, activities, or the calendar itself. This has made it difficult to schedule training sessions with participants beyond the third or fourth session. In addition, there are only so many parents regularly involved and they are often pulled in so many directions that HSFC outreach competes with other activities and priorities on campuses.

Parents, family members, teachers, other staff and community are the models we need to guide and show the youth how healthier habits look like, so the broad strategy of community leadership and empowerment remains unchanged. New tactics and adjustments are needed to increase the base of supporters in the context of changing school environments.



Breakfast in the Classroom participation.

Credit: Dean Musgrove, LA Daily News

Food Culture IS Changing

The first class of LAUSD students that attended schools protected by the soda and junk food restrictions will graduate in 2016. Hundreds of thousands of new students, as well as their parents, and other family members, now starting their educational journey are already aware of the basics of school health, food and nutrition policy. This is no longer a secret and administrators no longer shut the door on HSFC advocates; remarkably, we have not been removed from a school campus in the last five years.

Yet, improved accountability is greatly needed from administrators, particularly in actual adherence to regulations related to competitive sales and bell schedules that allow students to enjoy their lunch comfortably. Accountability is needed from the Local District Superintendents and, of course, the Board of Education. School sites are sometimes slowly, but steadily, embracing that school nutrition programs are an integral part of the school environment and that there need not be any competition with cafeteria meals.



Building Leadership at the Board of Education Level is Critical

LAUSD began the 2015-2016 school year with new Board members, and began 2016 with a new (but seasoned) Superintendent. Among both senior Board members and newcomers, there is a range of knowledge, interest and commitment on school food policy. There have been a couple of school nutrition champions who helped author motions throughout the history of school nutrition advocacy and policy making. At present there is one clear leader in Board President Steve Zimmer. Among the new members there are two who have expressed interest on the issue. Engagement and relationship building are key factors to ensure that advocates play a role in Board members maturing into school nutrition champions.

Organizing, Partnership and Coalition Building is Essential to Win

Throughout these 16 years of school food and nutrition policy work the HSFC and CFPA have developed relationships and collaborations with an innumerable array of groups, agencies, and organizations. From parents writing letters to their Board representative and student leaders attending Board meetings ready to testify, from engaging diverse departments within LAUSD, to community organizations, as well as dozens of advocates representing communities across the district, all have helped to make winning possible. In the last few years, key groups, some of which work within the Building Healthy Communities sites, have been central in supporting policy and subsequent implementation at the school site. Among the groups involved is the Northridge Hospital Medical Center, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Community Health Councils, the National Health Foundation, and Volunteers of America, Los Angeles, Public Health Advocates, LA's Promise, and the Dairy Council of California, the Food Chain Workers Alliance, Los Angeles Food Policy Council, among many others. It is true that it is all about relationships and building strength and power under a focus cause. As in raising a child, school food and nutrition policy work, also requires a whole village to ensure students are the beneficiaries of nutrition resources.

Policy Change Matters

From the start of organizing around school food, back in the late 1990's and early 2000, advocates at the time knew that obesity, hunger, access to proper meals as well as making the cafeteria a place of learning would not be a reality if changes were to be implemented in silos at a handful of schools. Creating school-based initiatives here and there was certainly a good thing to do. At the same time, it was clear that the opportunity to radically change the way school meal programs function was there already. The question then was how to engage all levels and sectors within the district and resuscitate



a fundamental part of learning and living; food and nutrition. It was of utmost importance to call out all barriers to nutrition and develop community solutions and in doing so benefit the entire student population. Policy and policy implementation are the way. This was the simple, yet lengthy and perhaps difficult process toward shifting how a School Board understands its responsibility to be when it comes to feeding students. Policy is the leverage toward demanding real action beyond the minimum done traditionally for students' nutrition. As a result of local policy work LAUSD's nutrition standards are stricter than those required by the USDA. Local policy has triggered statewide changes since 2005 and those have helped update changes at the federal level. Today LAUSD and California are at the forefront of great school nutrition initiatives. It is clear, Policy Matters.



LAUSD Board of Education votes on the Good Food Procurement Policy.

NEXT STEPS: 2016 & BEYOND

There are many opportunities for school nutrition supporters in Los Angeles in 2016 to build on lessons learned from the work underway and on the ground.

One major theme of challenges described during conversations with students, parents, administrators and advocates is uneven progress. Some policies are well-executed at some schools; other sites appear to have taken few steps to implement updated nutrition laws, regulations and best practices. Here is a menu of potential strategic actions that organized parents can work on in the coming years to ensure more students at more schools benefit from changes already on the books.



Implementation of the Blueprint for Wellness, LAUSD's Wellness Policy

The Federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires that schools participating in the provision of federally funded nutrition programming must have a Local School Wellness Policy. From 2014 to the end of 2015, HSFC and several organizations and student health advocates built a Nutrition and Physical Activity task force to work with the LAUSD Chief Operating Officer staff on updating the district's 2006 Blueprint for Wellness. This policy is intended to ensure schools adherence to policy and support students remain wholesomely healthy throughout their school career. At the same time, it calls for schools, parents and families along with communities to be connected and active to achieve wellness goals. The Blueprint for Wellness was ratified by Superintendent King in January 2016 and presented to the District's Central Coordinating Health and Safety Committee composed of district staff and now school food and nutrition policy advocates are part of this body. The Blueprint contains several sections, the first one is the Nutrition Section which was updated and adapted according to advocate input. This is a tool to inform and educate school communities about the expectations for the district to offer a health-promoting environment on all campuses, and to



be used as an accountability mechanism. Engaging, educating and collaborating with parents, students, school administration, as well as local agencies will ensure more cohesive and leveled implementation across the district geographic areas.

Good Food Procurement Policy

School year 2015 - 2016 began with an opportunity to continue to push the envelope and ensure implementation of all landmark policies described before, including the district's broad labor and environmental platform, known as Good Food Procurement Policy. For months the Board contemplated changing and reducing vendors that

have not complied with the terms of this policy, 2016 may be the year of chicken-less menus in LAUSD. Significant advocacy by the HSFC along with the Food Chain Workers Alliance, Los Angeles Food Policy Council, and others successfully stopped Tyson Foods and Pilgrim's Pride from seeking a contract from LAUSD and pressured the Board of Education to award the chicken contract to Gold Star Foods, a local southern California vendor that will provide hormone-free chicken for students' meals. Coming up are contracts for produce, bread and dairy. HSFC foresees opportunities to garner more support and ensure allies are focused on the Board to carry out policy for Good Food at every step of the way. This includes working more intensely with students and parents as menus can be shifting given procurement.

Wellness Centers

Since 2010 HSFC has worked with school sites and organizations involved in the district's wellness centers and school health clinics among these at sites such as Fremont High School, Manual Arts High School, Roosevelt High School, Belmont High School and Hollywood High School. There are 30 health centers based in school campuses in LAUSD. These settings, outside of Parent Centers and classrooms, are prime locations within schools to expand the access to education and training on school food and nutrition policy and advocacy. As local and state health benefits soon will roll out to expand coverage to a greater number of uninsured, wellness centers and school health clinics are hubs for services. Our vision is to incorporate topics such as school food rights and advocacy toward implementation to embolden communities visiting these centers. This is an opportunity to create greater awareness, and action, around school food and integrate it to wellness.

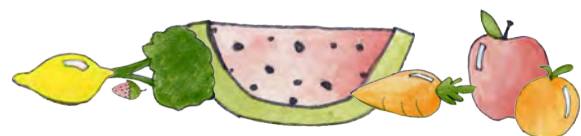
Another major theme of conversations in schools this year is the optimism surrounding progress in public schools. With the surge in state resources provided to school districts triggered by the passage of ballot measures 30 and 38 in 2012, as

well as dramatic declines in suspensions, expand arts education programming and more site-level input at schools, many education activists are hopeful. Here are two ways organized parents, students and advocates might use the changing landscape of local schools to accelerate nutritional improvements.

- 🍌 Use annual Local Control Funding Formula meetings at school sites to prioritize critical nutrition investments from facilities improvements to open functional kitchens to water equipment, all of which have a strong evidence base to link spending to student achievement.
- 🍌 Track progress at schools. Surveys of students' preferences, data about the foods students choose and their health habits outside school hours are important tools to measure how the changing environment is influencing eating. These measurements are also critical to ensure school leaders in Los Angeles continue to innovate to meet students' health needs.



Evergreen Elementary campaigning for water access in school.



CONCLUSION

School Food and Nutrition Policy work remains pivotal within not only the food justice, but the student health and wellness and community frameworks.

Since the turn of the century both HSFC and CFPA have partnered and remained focused on moving LAUSD and its Food Services Division toward breaking food access barriers. In the last four years, more organizations have begun to focus on school nutrition and look to us for support and guidance as well as partnerships and connections to the district and how to work within school campuses.

School nutrition remains a crucial building block for student health and a food resource, and the largest government-sponsored food purchasing program in the region and nationally. These safety nets galvanize dozens of stakeholders concerned about the provenance and production of food, as well as the nutritional content and benefit of participating in all nutrition programs at schools as well as the health outcomes of those rates among students, families and communities.

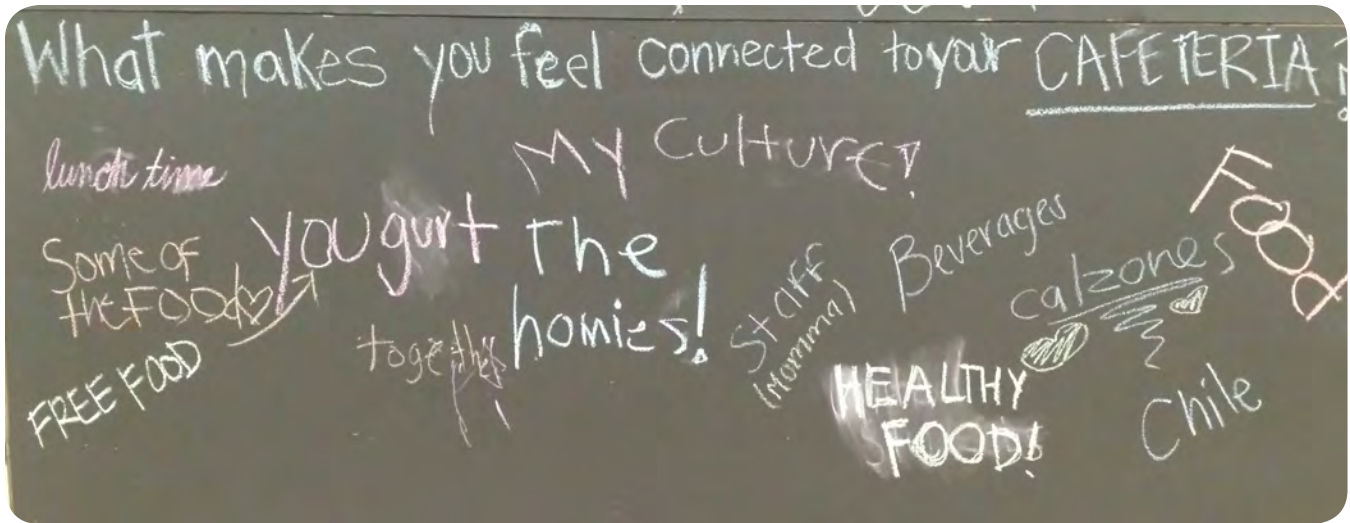
The work to elevate school food in policy debates, particularly the work by parents, students and partner organizations, has resulted in an important and expanding advocate constituency pushing toward a more nutritious, accessible and just school food system. Over the years school sites as well as other school districts have reached out to learn about design and implementation of school food strategies, including technical assistance to build the capacity and leadership of local parents at the district and board levels. Given LAUSD's Breakfast and Supper program expansions and local food procurement in the last four years, organizations from the labor movement as well as health sectors now also focus on school food policy.

Nutrition and school food was selected as a high priority issue within the BHC sites, and schools are still sitting in the middle of those community boundaries. Schools in Los Angeles are not only



Stevenson Middle School parents.





hubs for education, but are tremendous community benefits and assets to be tapped into daily and on an ongoing basis. There is no question that students, families and therefore communities are impacted by either students' participation or non-participation in nutrition programs available. Schools are not going anywhere, not for a while, and much work and investment are currently taking place to improve students' overall experience and learning. It is then imperative that stronger connections be made between cafeteria nutrition programs, health and wellness, and really all aspects of students' and families' involvement throughout their educational career. These intersections support a more cohesive discourse and work thus connecting school communities to discussions and actions around wellness policies and goals. At present LAUSD is looking closely at the outcomes of policy implementation ranging from training of all Principals to education and actionable tasks to ensure schools are safe places for students, teachers, staff and the community.

The HSFC will continue to work with allies toward consistent uplifting of nutrition policy work while expanding outreach and impact, learning and advocacy outside of traditional settings such as Parent Centers and after school programs. Among the tasks forward is working to solidify connections at wellness centers and school-based health centers

in Los Angeles schools. Central to this work are parents' and students' leadership in monitoring of policy implementation as well as measuring the reach, depth and success of policy work. Working in coalitions is key to the advancement of communities and has proven to fortify messaging about the role of school nutrition in individual students and communities at large. Just as critical is developing collective and community oriented short-term and long-term plans and strategy that are centered around on students' food, nutrition and wellness needs.

“We held meetings in the cafeteria. I participated in workshops. I am making changes at home. We even went to talk with the school board.”

- Pilar, a parent of a student at Stevenson Middle School



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