

## MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Budget and Finance Committee

Honorable Paul Krekorian, Chair  
Councilmember Mitchell Englander  
Councilmember Paul Koretz  
Councilmember Bob Blumenfield  
Councilmember Mike Bonin

**From:** The Los Angeles Food Policy Council and Center for Good Food Purchasing

**Date:** 5/07/18

**Subject: Good Food Purchasing Policy and Meal Costs for City of Los Angeles' Department of Aging**

### Summary:

- Seniors deserve the best quality food possible as they are amongst the City's most vulnerable populations. Higher meal reimbursements could lead to better food for seniors; **however, increased costs are *not required* to solely meet GFPP's standards for quality, nutritious, sustainable and fair food, as has been repeatedly demonstrated.** Any considerations to increase meal reimbursements should be independent of the cost of compliance with GFPP, as GFPP does not of itself require any additional cost to the food service provider.
- **The Department of Aging does not seem to fully understand GFPP, and their cost estimates reflect a misunderstanding of what is required.**
  - **GFPP does not require specific kinds of food to be purchased** (e.g. GFPP does not require products be sourced from farmers markets or that all chicken be antibiotic free.) Rather, GFPP provides a roadmap to more local, sustainable, humane and fair food. Departments, working with food vendors, have an extensive menu of options to achieve points within the Good Food Purchasing Program. Points accumulate to reach a star rating (from 1 to 5 stars) by the Center for Good Food Purchasing, a national nonprofit organization. See addendum for an example of how the menu of options works for one value category within the Good Food Purchasing Program's Good Food Purchasing Standards.
  - **GFPP does not require DoA or vendor staff to have specific expertise related to local economies, environmental sustainability, animal welfare or fair labor.** Despite repeated and extensive efforts to educate

DoA on how Good Food Purchasing Program monitoring and verification works, DoA continues to fundamentally misunderstand the Program. The purpose of the Center for Good Food Purchasing, in partnership with the LA Food Policy Council, is to provide expert verification support, technical assistance and access to a network of resources to make progress in purchasing aligned with program values with current staff and vendors, and no department is expected to maintain internal expertise in these areas.

- **The key to implementing GFPP is reporting data for analysis by the Center for Good Food Purchasing.** To achieve points and a star rating in GFPP, a department requests vendors to share product purchasing data that indicates the source of the product. This type of data is collected as a standard business procedure by most food service companies as a matter of traceability. Therefore, no additional cost should be incurred associated with data reporting. **The last time DoA and their primary food service contractor Morrison shared data to verify compliance in GFPP was in 2013.** Recently, Morrison provided partial data to the Center for Good Food Purchasing on April 12, 2018.
- At the outset of adoption of GFPP in 2013, the Department of Aging was already meeting the baseline level in three of the five GFPP value categories, **within their then existing budget.** Achieving baseline in the remaining two categories would not have required additional costs (and in fact align with existing City policy, including the City's Sweatfree Purchasing Ordinance).
- DoA has had difficulty in adopting the slight modifications to its practices that would bring it up to an acceptable level of compliance with program guidelines, as public institutions across the country have been able to do. Submitted with this memo are copies of press clippings showing the success of other institutions across the country, in complying with GFPP without additional cost.
- The Center is considering a separate track for DoA but for the purpose of this memo, is addressing the issue of cost, per the DoA budget request to your committee.

## **Background:**

In 2012, the City of Los Angeles adopted the Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) through Council Action (CF-11-1678) and Executive Directive 24 by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, directing all departments with annual food budgets over \$10,000 to support local, nutritious, sustainable, humane and fair food procurement. City departments participating in GFPP include: the Department of Recreation and Parks, Los Angeles World Airports, Department of Aging and the Los Angeles Convention Center. GFPP implementation does not require increased meal costs, and in some cases actually leads to decreased costs. By simply prioritizing how food is purchased with GFPP values, departments can increase values-driven food procurement without increasing food budgets.

The Good Food Purchasing Policy transforms the way public agencies purchase food through standards based on five core values: local economies, nutrition, valued workforce, animal welfare and environmental sustainability. GFPP in the City of Los Angeles has captured transformative impacts in the local food system, through increased purchases of union-made food products at the Department of Recreation and Parks' Greek Theater and improved nutrition and sustainability of food served through the City's Summer Meal Program. It also identified close to 30% of produce sourced from local farms through the Department of Aging. The birthplace of the Good Food Purchasing Policy in the City of Los Angeles has also led to catalytic impacts throughout Los Angeles and the nation. In 2012, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) followed the City in adopting GFPP, redirecting nearly \$15 million into Los Angeles' local economy.

Today, the Good Food Purchasing Policy has expanded to 12 cities and 24 public institutions nationwide, with several others in the pipeline. To achieve this scaled impact,



the Los Angeles Food Policy Council supported the creation of the Center for Good Food Purchasing, a national nonprofit that sets standards and verifies compliance for the Good Food Purchasing Program. While The Center for Good Food Purchasing continues to provide verification services to the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Food Policy Council now serves as the local technical assistance provider to staff within relevant City departments, and offers public recognition opportunities to celebrate the City's progress.

### **GFPP Implementation in the Department of Aging:**

The Department of Aging serves approximately 4,500 congregate meals and home delivered meals each day to low-income seniors throughout Los Angeles. These meals are provided through nonprofit grantees such as: St. Barnabas Senior Services, Watts Labor Community Action Committee, Jewish Family Services and San Fernando Valley Interfaith Council, which are also contracted to provide other wrap-around services for seniors.

In 2013 and 2014, the Department of Aging submitted food purchasing data as required to the Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC). LAFPC conducted a baseline assessment of the Department of Aging's food purchases to determine compliance with GFPP standards. Data was submitted in two intervals for two periods, January 2013 - June 2013 and July 2013 - December 2013, from their largest food supplier, LA Morrison. The baseline assessment revealed that the Department of Aging met GFPP standards in the categories of: Nutrition, Local Economies and Environmental Sustainability. Over 24% of the Department's food was purchased locally-- exceeding GFPP's minimum local purchasing requirement **while maintaining low meal costs at less than \$3.29.**

The Department of Aging did not meet the baseline in Animal Welfare and Valued Workforce categories. Recommendations for achieving baseline standards in Animal Welfare and Valued Workforce included: (1) requiring suppliers to comply with existing

labor laws, such as the City's existing Sweatfree Purchasing Ordinance; and (2) increasing purchases from businesses with humane animal practices by 14% or, reformulating their menus by reducing meat consumption.

**No GFPP assessments were conducted for the Department of Aging for 2014, 2015 and 2016 because no purchasing data was submitted by the Department, despite repeated requests.** After multiple efforts to obtain this information, including Council requests during multiple Committee hearings (CF 11-1678-S2), the Department submitted purchasing data on April 12, 2018. Outcomes of this assessment are still pending due to missing data.

**GFPP Implementation Does Not Require Increased Meal Costs:**

The Department of Aging's baseline assessment demonstrated its ability to comply with at least three of the five value categories without incurring any additional costs.

Compliance with the two additional GFPP value categories did not require additional funding, only prioritized purchasing aligned with GFPP standards.

Meeting Baseline for Valued Workforce- Department of Aging would have achieved baseline compliance in Valued Workforce by simply engaging suppliers in their supply chain who were identified as having serious labor violations, with an inquiry to learn what measures had been taken to mitigate and prevent future violations. This would have had no budgetary impact, and is part of existing City policy through the Sweat-Free Purchasing Ordinance (CF- 02-2167). The Department could have also met Valued Workforce standards by procuring from suppliers with union contracts. The Center for Good Food Purchasing has found little to no cost differential between union and non-union food products.

Meeting Baseline for Animal Welfare- To achieve baseline standards for Animal Welfare, the Department of Aging was recommended to implement a "less meat, better meat" strategy, such as Meatless Mondays, which are proven cost savers for institutional meal

programs. Oakland Unified School District, for example, learned how to serve healthier food on a tight budget by redesigning menus to replace some of their more expensive meat purchases with produce and alternative proteins, while adhering to strict federal nutrition standards as set through the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act. In just two years, Oakland Unified went from a two-star GFPP rating to a four-star GFPP rating by doubling the amount of sustainable and humane foods purchased, while decreasing their per meal costs by \$.02.

Furthermore, in November 2012, Los Angeles City Council adopted a Meatless Mondays resolution (CF-12-1721), to “protect health, animal-welfare and the environment”. Therefore, adopting Meatless Mondays can help the Department of Aging reduce per-meal costs while advancing the City’s comprehensive goals for health and sustainability.

### **Recommendations for Managing Meal Costs:**

In 2016, the Department of Aging incorporated GFPP into its Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to provide senior meals through the Multipurpose, Social Services, Nutrition, and Transportation Project grant. Selected grant recipients signed the GFPP pledge and were instructed to incorporate GFPP into their meal programs. In 2017, with approval from City Council (CF-17-0127), the Department of Aging amended its contracts with nonprofit grantees to increase the floor price per meal.

As mentioned above, the Department is currently requesting an additional \$1,849,552 to cover cost increases which they attribute to raising the price floor for compliance with City policies such as: sustainable packaging requirements (pursuant to the City’s Sustainable City pLAN), the Minimum Wage Ordinance (CF-14-1371) and the Good Food Purchasing Policy. Specifically, the Department of Aging states that implementation of sustainable packaging requirements and GFPP have resulted in “an



increase of \$1.37 per home delivered meal which amounts to \$988,197 (721,312 projected actual meals served for FY 2018-19 x \$1.37) for the Home Delivered Meals program; and an increase of \$1.27 per congregate meal which amounts to \$861,355 (678,232 projected actual meals served for the FY 2018-19 x \$1.27) for the Congregate Meal program."

Based on our experience in implementing GFPP across the country, it seems more likely that the increased cost identified by DoA is more attributable to packaging, and to a misunderstanding of how to comply with the program.

The Department of Aging has also remarked that GFPP data reporting can be challenging for nonprofit grantees to comply with due to limited capacity and service delivery requirements for other programs provided through the Multipurpose, Social Services, Nutrition, and Transportation Project grant.

Based on our experience thus far with the Department and its subcontractors, as well as our experience over the past several years in implementing GFPP at 24 other institutions around the country, we, offer the following recommendations:

- 1) While many of Department of Aging's non-profit grantees have limited staff and capacity, most of the grantees subcontract their food services to other companies. These food subcontractors vary in size, from small family-owned caterers to large multinational food service corporations. On March 21st, the Department of Aging noted in a meeting with LAFPC that at least two large distribution companies are subcontracted to provide over 75% of its senior meals-- LA Morrison and Sodexo. Both of these companies are multinational corporations with their own separate procurement departments that can easily handle the data reporting requirements for GFPP compliance. In fact, they already have, in providing data in 2013 for the baseline assessment. Therefore,

**we recommend that the Department of Aging correspond directly with the corporate food providers, exempting non-profit food providers and small businesses<sup>1</sup>. GFPP and sustainable packaging requirements are two separate programs. The costs should be separated by program to determine the exact amount attributed to GFPP implementation.** This information can help inform more specific purchasing changes large distributors can make to move toward or achieve full compliance with GFPP without incurring any additional cost. Making purchasing changes amongst large distributors is how 24 public institutions across the Nation, including the City's Summer Lunch Program and Greek Theatre, have achieved success in GFPP implementation without reporting any additional costs.

- 2) Currently, subcontracted corporate food distributors do not have a direct contractual relationship with the City and are thus not mandated to comply with GFPP reporting requirements. Current contracts for the Multipurpose, Social Services, Nutrition and Transportation Project grant expire after June 30, 2018. ***We recommend that the Department of Aging release a new RFQ for FY 2018-2019 that includes specific language requiring nonprofits that subcontract to large corporate distributors to incorporate GFPP reporting mandates and procurement standards.*** This new bid opportunity can also allow for more price-competitive food distributors to meet GFPP standards.
- 3) Seniors deserve the best quality food possible as they are amongst the City's most vulnerable populations. Higher meal reimbursements could lead to better food for seniors; however, increased costs are not required to solely meet GFPP's standards for quality, nutritious, sustainable and fair food. ***If the Department of Aging's budget is expanded to improve meal quality with continued expectation of compliance with GFPP, then City Council should require strict and timely reporting of food purchasing data from the***

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<sup>1</sup> Per their industry classification as defined by the U.S Small Business Administration's Small Business Size Regulations.



***Department to ensure that seniors reap the most benefit from the increase. Participation in the Good Food Purchasing Program can provide the necessary accountability and verification.***

For these reasons, we encourage continued implementation of GFPP by the Department of Aging. The Department should focus particularly on large corporate distributors with: 1) capacity to make changes in purchasing, 2) ability to meet reporting requirements with a good faith level of commitment, and 3) the ability to comply with limited to no additional cost.

The Los Angeles Food Policy Council and the Center for Good Food Purchasing are eager to continue providing technical assistance to the Department of Aging, as well as other departments implementing the Good Food Purchasing Policy.

Attached is an addendum with news clippings outlining institutional achievements within Los Angeles, as well as across the country, in implementing the Good Food Purchasing Program.

**Attachments:**

- 1. Example of how the menu of options works for one value category within the Good Food Purchasing Program's Good Food Purchasing Standards.
- 2. News clippings regarding implementation of GFPP in LAUSD, Oakland, San Francisco, Boulder, Austin.

**ATTACHMENT 1:**

**Example of how the menu of options works for one value category within the Good Food Purchasing Program’s Good Food Purchasing Standards.**

The institution can choose one of the two options below to meet standards in the Environmental Sustainability category: (1) increase sustainable purchases based on existing and widely used third party certifications, or (2) reduce meat, poultry and cheese purchases and support food waste reduction.

**CENTER ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Environmental Sustainability is defined based on two options available to an institution:

- 1** Increasing sustainable purchases as based on existing third party certifications
  - Protected Harvest
  - Seafood Watch
  - ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED
  - CENTER FOR GOOD FOOD PURCHASING
  - USDA ORGANIC
  - SAFE
  - CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD MSC
  - FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CERTIFIED
  - FOOD ALLIANCE CERTIFIED
  - American Grassfed
- 2** Reducing carbon and water footprint of meat, poultry, and cheese purchases AND auditing food waste to implement food waste reduction strategies

Baseline requirement: An institution purchases at least 15% (by total dollar value) of product that meets the Environmental Sustainability standards OR an institution reduces its carbon and water footprint by 4% from the first year of participation.

# L.A. Unified offers lifeline to farmers with healthful eating program

By BY TERESA WATANABE  
FEB 12, 2014 | 3:00 AM




Bob Knight drives a tractor that pulls a transplanter as workers drop cauliflower seedlings into spindles for planting on Jan. 7 in Redlands, L.A. Unified is buying vegetables from local farmers such as Knight to encourage healthful eating among students. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

## Column One

# LAUSD food effort makes local farms healthier too





Bob Knight drives a tractor that pulls a transplanter as workers drop cauliflower seedlings into spindles for planting on Jan. 7 in Redlands, L.A. Unified is buying vegetables from local farmers such as Knight to encourage healthful eating among students. [More photos](#) 

The district is working with local farms that produce vegetables, a program that offers relief as growers switch from fruit over worries about an invasive and deadly citrus pest.

By Teresa Watanabe

Photography by Gina Ferazzi

February 12, 2014

Down a dusty road surrounded by orange trees and the rolling hills of Redlands, the farmer in a battered straw hat and worn jeans worked his land, just as his father and grandfather and great-grandfather did before him.

Bob Knight remembers pulling weeds from the soil almost before he could read. He was 6 years old and could barely reach the pedals when he first steered a truck, then began picking and packing the fruit, and checking drip irrigation systems.

Now 54, lanky and long, Knight tends 67 acres bursting with thousands of orange trees bearing sweet Valencias and seedless navels, knobby Gold Nuggets and deep

red Moros.

Advertisement

But on this warm January afternoon, this man whose family has painstakingly cultivated citrus for more than 100 years was planting a cauliflower.

Knight is fighting to save his family's livelihood and the farming heritage of Redlands — a city so named for the deep red earth that once produced the nation's largest crop of navel oranges.

And his unlikely ally in the high-stakes gamble is the Los Angeles Unified School District.

In an effort to support local farmers and bring more healthful food to schoolchildren, the nation's second-largest school system has pledged to take whatever high-quality produce Knight and others in his 31-member local farming alliance can grow.

The timing couldn't be better: Knight and other farmers around the world are battling a pest that carries bacteria that is fatal to citrus. The Asian citrus psyllid, an insect the size of an aphid, has been found in all four of the nation's major citrus-producing states and eight Southern California counties. The deadly Huanglongbing disease spread by the pest has also arrived, discovered in a Hacienda Heights citrus tree in 2012.

The Visalia, Calif.-based Citrus Research Program proclaimed the disease a death sentence for a \$2-billion industry that produces 80% of the nation's fresh market oranges and 87% of its lemons.

Knight fears that it is only a matter of time before his trees become infected. So he's hedging his bets by turning to vegetables.

L.A. Unified's commitment, Knight said, significantly minimizes the risk of investing more than \$100,000 in new equipment and other necessities for what he called a major cultural shift from fruits to vegetables.

"What makes this possible is knowing there will be an institutional partner," Knight said. The district "gives us that stability that makes this whole transition more feasible and less stressful."


He paused, looking out at his trees as wispy white clouds cast shadows over the dust-colored canyons.

"They should rename this area LAUSD," he said.







Knight walks among his orange trees in Redlands. As the trees age, they produce smaller fruit, and they are being threatened by an invasive pest, so Knight is switching to growing vegetables. [More photos](#) 

The partnership between L.A. Unified and Knight's alliance of San Bernardino County farmers began two years ago, brokered by Sean Leer of Gold Star Foods Inc., a school food distributor based in Ontario.

Leer and David Binkle, L.A. Unified's food services director, were charged with carrying out the Los Angeles Board of Education's 2012 directive to buy more school food from producers within 200 miles of the city, with 5% of produce specifically from small- to medium-sized farms.

The district became Los Angeles' second institution — city government being the first — to pledge to support local purchasing in a "good food" program developed by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council. Besides oranges, the district has shifted to sustainably grown wheat from Fresno rather than the Midwest, and beef from Chino instead of Cincinnati, among other purchases.

I was a cog in a huge machine and in the end, it felt empty.”

— Bob Knight, farmer and ex-engineer

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Even before the pest arrived in 2008, Knight's orange business was struggling. As trees age, the fruit becomes sweeter but smaller — less suitable for the retail market, he said, which demands large oranges. At the same time, the growing domination of



the industry by highly efficient megagrowers and foreign competitors in Australia, Chile, Spain and South Africa were driving down prices.

But Binkle and Leer, scouring the region for local producers, discovered Knight and began placing orders that doubled his alliance's business overnight, taking half their orange crop for the district's 600,000-plus daily meals. Last year, the farmers sold more than \$171,000 of oranges to L.A. Unified through Leer.

Knight credits the deal with single-handedly keeping a quarter of his farmers in business.

"It changed our world," he said. "Without [L.A. Unified], some of the growers would have poked along and eventually sold out."

Now Binkle and Leer have begun discussing vegetables with Knight: Persian cucumbers, cauliflower, kale and fingerling potatoes. Leer said the district would work with the farmers to ensure high quality and a fair price.

"We've committed to this journey," Leer said. "As soon as they tell us what they can do well, we're committed to carrying this through to the child's plate. We try to eliminate the risk so they can be confident that they'll get a return on whatever they put in the ground."



Knight quizzes Castlebay Lane Charter School students on the health benefits of sweet potatoes as he shows off some of the fresh produce he grows on his Redlands farm. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times) [More photos](#)

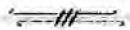
The shift to vegetables isn't the first gamble for the Knight family farm.

Launched in the 1880s by Knight's great-grandparents, who fled famine in Ireland, the family farm hummed through the 1940s, part of Redlands' burgeoning citrus empire. Then root fungus hit scores of trees, devastating the industry. When property values soared, many farmers sold their land. And the rise of agribusiness began squeezing out small growers, Knight said.

To survive, Knight's father took a leap of faith in the 1970s and converted some of his orange groves to New Zealand kiwifruit. The then-rare fruit was a hit; revenues helped pay for Knight's tuition at Columbia University, where he majored in engineering and economics. By the early 2000s, however, production plunged to one-seventh of its peak yields when rising temperatures threw off growing patterns. Once again, the farm was in peril.

Knight, however, had long left the land and was trotting the globe as a telecommunications engineer. He was filled with wanderlust — instilled, perhaps, by his voracious reading of Russian classics and the action-packed adventures of the Hardy Boys and Capt. Horatio Hornblower. Knight worked in Indonesia, Japan and Saudi Arabia until the 9/11 attacks made life too tense to be an American in Riyadh. He returned to Redlands with his wife, Aki Nakamura, and their two children, Anna and Kaito. And he found a new appreciation for his land.

"In a huge global corporation, no one knew what I did. I was a cog in a huge machine and in the end, it felt empty," he said. "As a farmer, you make healthy food. You're building something your family and community can inherit."



Now Knight is an agricultural evangelist of sorts, spreading the gospel of local farming to secure its future. He and his alliance have launched a program, [oldgrovefarmshare.com](http://oldgrovefarmshare.com), which delivers weekly boxes of locally grown produce. The farmers also make regular visits to schools as part of a national movement to educate students about the importance of locally grown food.



Knight talks with workers to try to adjust a transplanter to plant cauliflower seedlings on Jan. 7. [More photos](#) 📷

During a recent visit to L.A. Unified's Castlebay Lane Charter School in Porter Ranch, Knight donned his straw hat and regaled more than 700 students throughout the day with stories about his farm, his dogs and the "superpowers" of vegetables. Beets to help stop bleeding. Carrots to see better. Cucumbers to fill you up without making you fat. Then he invited each student to choose three items from the farmers market he had set up.

Akasha Dukkupati, 7, chose a carrot, a cucumber and a beet. "I bleed a lot, so I'm going to eat this beet instead of wear a Band-Aid," she said.

But even with L.A. Unified's support, the future of local farmers is hardly assured. For starters, Knight said, he has to be able to produce vegetables to bridge the gap between the possible death of his trees and the development of citrus that is resistant to the disease. But vegetable growing is more complex. With oranges, you plant a tree, watch for weeds and gophers, and it pretty much bears fruit every year. Vegetables have multiple life cycles, more precise harvesting schedules and a whole new world of equipment — like the secondhand transplanter that Knight and his six-man crew struggled with during his recent cauliflower-planting day.

The machine, rigged to a tractor, was supposed to place the cauliflower seedlings into long mounded rows and close up the dirt around them. But one of the pieces broke, causing the plants to drop on top of the dirt instead. And the contraption — a total \$50,000 investment — had to be periodically adjusted to the slant of the land.



Knight watched his crew start and stop, making adjustments and repairs. Frustration lined his face.

"If this doesn't change, we'll probably end up doing a lot more hand planting," he said. "But we'll work these issues out.

"Otherwise," he said, looking out at his land, "this will all go away."

**Contact the reporter**

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# School lunch menu is about more than taste, price

By Anna Lappé May 16, 2016 Updated: May 16, 2016 6:10pm

3



Photo: Paul Chinn, The Chronicle

On May 24, the San Francisco Unified School District Board of Trustees is poised to pass the Good Food Purchasing policy to help usher in a new era for school meals.

When asked to picture a typical school lunch, most of us think of sad-looking chicken nuggets or soggy french fries. For many of the millions of public school students, that's not far off mark. To transform what's on kids' plates, parents, teachers and administrators have been working for years, battling entrenched industry interests and paltry school budgets. Now advocates have a powerful tool to help them: a new procurement policy that helps put core values at the center of school food purchasing.

On May 24, the San Francisco Unified School District Board of Trustees is poised to pass the Good Food Purchasing policy to help usher in a new era for school meals, expanding on and codifying the transformational work already under way. The district would be, after Los Angeles Unified, only the second in the nation to do so.

Looking at the policy's effect in Los Angeles, it's clear to see the changes it has helped spark. When the district passed the policy, one of its largest suppliers, Gold Star Foods Inc., was inspired to ask tougher questions of its of bread, produce and poultry suppliers. As Gold Star CEO Sean Leer explained: "The way most school districts purchase, lowest price wins, but it should be more thoughtful. Buying food isn't like buying toilet paper." Leer is now able to attribute real worth to the suppliers who align with five values of sustainability, nutrition, local economies, animal welfare and worker rights.

Leer also started looking with fresh eyes at his supply chain: What could he localize that wasn't already? How could he improve the food they offered to students? One answer was produce — and sourcing more of it locally: Before the policy, roughly 10 percent of the produce served in L.A. schools was sourced within 200 miles of the district. Today, from 50 to 72 percent is, depending on the season. That works out to a



roughly \$12 million redirection of resources to the local economy.

Leer found another answer in wheat. Gold Star had been sourcing out-of-state wheat for its 45 million to 55 million annual servings of bread and rolls. Leer discovered Shepherd's Grain, a company with growers in Central California. "I committed to turning our entire bread and roll line over to Shepherd's Grain," he said.

Understandably, the bakery Gold Star worked with was hesitant to change a key ingredient like flour, but the bakery made the leap. Today, nearly all of the L.A. school district's bread and rolls are made from wheat grown in Central California, milled in downtown Los Angeles. Compare that with pre-policy wheat: grown in the Dakotas, trucked to Denver, milled there and shipped to California. "The policy gave us a chance to make this huge change," explained Leer. "And it didn't cost any more. In fact, we've kept the prices the same for the last three years."

The policy, originally developed by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, also puts workers at the heart of purchasing decisions — from farmers to delivery workers. Shaun Martinez from the Teamsters union, said: "In school food,

margins are extremely thin. Having a policy like this creates a market for people who do good things to actually survive.”

The policy has been used to review relationships, too. In 2015, the five-year, \$60 million contract with chicken processor Tyson was up for renewal. Before, the contract always went to the lowest bidder. Now the district was seeking poultry suppliers that didn’t employ practices like the unsustainable use of antibiotics. Gold Star received a \$20 million contract to provide the district with chicken raised without the routine use of antibiotics.

All this sounds so promising, but what arguably matters most is what the kids think. Perhaps that’s best summed up by Maylin Brunall, a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School in Los Angeles: “School — it’s my fancy restaurant now,” she said, with a big smile. “It’s local. It’s fresh. Everyone is treated fairly, and everyone is happy.”

San Francisco has a chance to continue to prove itself as a national leader in school-food reform. The school board trustees can pave the way by approving the new policy.

*Anna Lappé is author of “Diet for a Hot Planet” and an advocate for sustainability and justice along the food chain. A native San Franciscan, she lives in Berkeley.*

# Berkeleyside

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## Already a leader, OUSD ups ante on feeding students

By Kate Williams, Oct. 20, 2016, 1:41 p.m.



Students in an Oakland Unified School District cafeteria.  
Photo: Center for Ecoliteracy

On Oct. 26, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) will officially commit to a set of sustainability- and health-focused food purchasing standards for its district-wide meal program. These standards, outlined by the Center for Good Food Purchasing (CGFP), a Berkeley-based organization working to create a “transparent and equitable food system.”

Unlike organizations that do things like certify organic or non-GMO products, the CGFP works directly on food procurement for large institutions, primarily school districts. It aims to establish sustainable, ethical networks between farms and public schools, which help to get money in the hands of farmers and healthy food in the mouths of school children.

The CGFP has outlined a values-based set of standards called the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP), which it helps school districts to adopt. The CGFP wants institutions to pay attention in particular to five key values of food

suppliers: local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutrition.

In short, institutions adopting the GFPP agree to show supply-chain transparency for all minimally processed ingredients (produce, meat, fish, etc), so that it is easy to trace each product back to its origin. Institutions also agree to meet at least a baseline standard for each value category. The CGFP helps institutions get familiar with these values, and helps get their vendors up to speed with the expectations. Each institution is evaluated annually, and CGFP helps “celebrate successes,” according to CGFP Executive Director Alexa Delwiche.



Local fish tostada with brown rice at OUSD. Photo: Courtesy of OUSD

The CGFP was created in July 2015 within the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, which developed the original values and standards used in the GFPP. These values were adopted by both the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District in 2012. San Francisco Unified School



District, and now OUSD, followed in 2016. Nationally, school districts in Chicago, Ill.; Austin, Texas; Cincinnati, Ind.; Madison, Wis.; Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn., and New York City are looking into whether to adopt the program.

“The program helps institutions implement the spirit of the policies [adopted in Los Angeles],” said Delwiche. She and her organization help institutions set long-term and short-term goals to improve their procurement practices.

OUSD has already been working towards a more sustainable and healthy meal program. “Oakland is seen as a national leader in this work,” said Delwiche. “They’ve done a tremendous amount in the last five years.”

Starting in fall 2010, the district began offering more vegetarian meal options through a Meatless Monday program, and in 2013 launched a California Thursdays initiative, a program of the Center for Ecoliteracy, in which one meal a week is sourced entirely from California farmers and companies. Starting in fall 2012, OUSD began participating in School Food Focus’s National Learning Lab, a 26 district-large collaboration to increase purchasing of regional, antibiotic-free chicken, and reduced the usage of chopped and formed “chicken products.”

The district began working with the CGFP in spring 2014, and the organization helped OUSD to review its work, as well as “how to make an educated and informed decision about how to move forward, and how to make our progress continue,” said Jennifer LeBarre, the director of nutritional services at OUSD.

Currently OUSD sources around a quarter of its poultry through Mary’s Chickens, and some of its beef through Mindful Meats, which sells organic, pasture-raised beef from retired dairy cattle. It has introduced local seafood sourced through Real Good Fish, and has increased direct purchasing of organic produce like squash, oranges and strawberries through ALBA.



Oakland Unified School District is using local beef supplier Mindful Meats as a part of its California Thursdays program. Photo: Courtesy of Mindful Meats

Part of the work that will happen once OUSD formally adopts this policy is working on sourcing more humanely raised meat, as well as food and other products from companies following fair-labor practices and paying a living wage. “They hadn’t had the bandwidth to take this on before,” said Delwiche. “They’re gradually making these changes.”

The district also is in conversation with a few small local farms from whom it hopes to source in the future.

OUSD has been able to afford more expensive ingredients, like Mindful Meats beef, through creative menu writing, said LeBarre. “We make use of less traditional proteins like beans. So, instead of serving a meat chili, we’ll do a meat and bean chili. We can reduce the amount of beef, but still meet our protein requirements.”

Crucially, OUSD is also finishing up construction of a new central kitchen and educational urban farm which will have space for a bakery, a meat processing facility, and a produce processing facility. The new kitchen will be open to students, who can observe the cooks at work preparing meals for the 38,099 school children. There will also be a teaching kitchen that will provide classes for students, nutrition service staff and the community.

As far as procurement standards go, the new kitchen, said LeBarre, will allow the district to do more with raw materials than it could in the limited cafeteria kitchens in schools.



Beef and bean chili made with Mindful Meats ground beef at OUSD. Photo: Courtesy of OUSD

This sort of work around institutional food procurement isn't sexy, but it can have a huge impact. OUSD serves about 7,000 breakfasts, 22,000 lunches and 3,000 dinners per day. Around 68% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

And it's not just students who benefit, said Delwiche. "As individual institutions, school districts buy lots of food," she said. "This has significant impacts on how suppliers are doing business." In school year 2014-15, OUSD spent over \$9.1 million on food. Los Angeles Unified spends around \$150 million a year.

When Los Angeles Unified adopted the policy, Delwiche said, it asked one its main suppliers, Gold Star Foods, to shift to more responsibly sourced food. "For Goldstar, this relationship is critical," said Delwiche. "They made intentional changes with their suppliers for Los Angeles Unified, but it had a ripple effect across the 400 other school districts it supplies. ... As more and more institutions adopt this policy and work toward a more unified vision, it sends a clear signal to suppliers."

The effect was, indeed, evident in Los Angeles. Over the course of two years, LA Unified increased its use of local produce from 10% to around 60%. According to the Center for Good Food Purchasing, this shift brought \$12 million into the local food economy, adding 150 new local food-processing jobs.

Delwiche also hopes that this shift in priorities will also change the conversation around how much government money goes towards public-school meals.

"We can think about how to leverage all of these institutions to advocate for higher reimbursement for meals in schools," she said. "This can affect the national conversation."

National organizations like Slow Food USA and the Union of Concerned Scientists, as well as Oakland-based Real Food Media have gotten involved with CGFP. Real Food Media has been working with CGFP since its inception; it helps the organization with its media outreach, web presence, and storytelling around its policies.

Real Food Media director Anna Lappé, who grew up in Oakland but now lives in Berkeley, has been particularly passionate about the project.

"It's really inspiring ... to [see] what a difference it has made over the past few years in Los Angeles," said Lappé. "I've been writing and talking about food and agriculture for 15 years, and through all those years, have been working to find solutions. ... The reason I am so passionate about the Good Food Purchasing Program is that I think it is one

of the most exciting tools out there. The potential for broad change is huge.”

The official launch of the OUSD purchasing program will be marked by an event at the David Brower Center in Berkeley on Monday Oct. 24, co-hosted by Real Food Media. Ricardo Salvador, of the HEAL Food Alliance and the Union of Concerned Scientists, will deliver the keynote speech. A post-keynote discussion, hosted by Lappé, will feature LeBarre, as well as Doug Bloch (Teamsters Joint Council 7), Shakirah Simley (Bi-Rite Market) and Sandra Lee Fewer (San Francisco

Unified Board of Education). The event will take place from 6-9 p.m. and will include cocktails and light bites. Details at Real Food Media.

*Connect with the Center for Good Food Purchasing on Facebook and Twitter.*

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## With the Adoption of a New Food Procurement Policy, OUSD's School Lunch Program Gets a Grade

By Luke Tsai

Email

Print



LUKE TSAI

Food service workers at Oakland High School.

How do you provide lunch for an entire city of hungry schoolchildren on a budget of just \$1.25 a meal — and do so while also making sure the food is highly nutritious and sustainably sourced, and that it puts money back into the local economy?

That's the kind of impossible puzzle that any large public school district faces. But the Oakland Unified School District's food services program may soon have a new tool with the potential to make solving this puzzle slightly more manageable. This week, the district's school board will vote on whether to adopt the **Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP)**, a set of purchasing standards that assigns participating school districts a "grade" based around five core values: nutrition, environmental sustainability, animal welfare, valued workforce (i.e., labor issues), and local economies.

OUSD is the third school district to adopt the Good Food Purchasing Policy, joining the school districts of Los Angeles — where the Los Angeles Food Policy Council first created the program in 2012 — and San Francisco, which adopted the policy earlier this fall. The Center for Good Food Purchasing, a Berkeley-based nonprofit, administers the program. Its executive director Alexa Delwiche said that OUSD was a natural fit because the district already espouses many of the policy's values.

During the tenure of nutrition services director Jennifer LeBarre, OUSD has been nationally recognized for its role as a leader in the so-called "farm to school" movement going as far back as 2010, and recently began

incorporating organic beef into its \$1.25-per-meal lunch budget. The district has also broken ground on its long-awaited West Oakland central kitchen, which, when it opens sometime during the 2017-18 school year, will allow the food services program to buy even more produce from local farms, and prep and cook a higher proportion of that food onsite.

The GFPP aims to give those values around sustainability and nutrition some teeth.

In a nutshell, the Center for Good Food Purchasing collects and analyzes reams of paperwork from each participating school district to determine where every purchased ingredient came from — tracing it back to the name of an individual farm when possible. The Center then evaluates all of the data against the five criteria in its rubric, and assigns the district a star rating. In fact, even prior to officially adopting the policy, OUSD already went through this part of the process — twice, actually, in a kind of voluntary test run. The district received two stars, out of a possible five, for the 2012-13 school year, and went up to a three-star rating for the 2014-15 school year. Moving forward, the Center will work with OUSD to set short-term and long-term goals, and it will help hold the district accountable for reaching those benchmarks. The goal, after all, is to achieve that perfect five-star rating.

The OUSD school board is expected to vote in favor of adopting the Good Food Purchasing Policy at its October 26 meeting, though it won't be until after a later vote in March or April that the procurement policy would officially get written into the district's priorities.

"Measurement matters," said Anna Lappé, a prominent Bay Area writer and sustainable food advocate who has been helping to promote the policy through her nonprofit, **Real Food Media**. "*What you measure matters. If you're just measuring the quantity of food served or the price, you're not measuring what people care about.*"

Part of the reason that Lappé and other food activists — from First Lady Michelle Obama on down — have placed so much emphasis on school food is because of the massive scale of these operations. OUSD, for instance, serves roughly 21,000 lunches each school day, plus a slightly smaller number of breakfasts, snacks, and suppers. There isn't a restaurant in the city that operates on that kind of scale. It follows, then, that even relatively small changes to a district's sourcing can wind up having a huge impact.

When the Los Angeles school district adopted the Good Food Purchasing Policy, it was preparing to negotiate a \$60 million chicken contract with Tyson Foods, a multi-billion dollar company that has been fined for worker-safety violations. The upshot: After these concerns were raised, Tyson withdrew itself from consideration for the chicken contract, and the district instead committed a large chunk of that money — about \$20 million, according to Delwiche — to buying antibiotic-free chicken through a different distributor. The district also went from purchasing just 9 percent of its food locally to 50–60 percent — a shift that put \$12 million into the local economy and helped create about 150 jobs.

As Delwiche put it, "A small change for them is pretty dramatic."

With both the San Francisco and Oakland school districts most likely adopting the standards this year, and several other districts around the country interested in following suit, we are starting to see the makings of a larger movement — one that, in aggregate, has enough purchasing power to really shift the country's overall food system.

One of the notable aspects of the Good Food Purchasing Policy is that it places a priority on labor issues, which often get overlooked within the broader food justice movement. For that reason, the Teamsters have thrown their support behind the policy. Doug Bloch, the political director for Teamsters Joint Council 7, which covers much of California, noted that the policy played an instrumental role in securing a contract for union delivery drivers in Los Angeles.

Bloch said he first saw the value of a concrete food purchasing policy a few years ago, when Oakland was buying much of its produce from Taylor Farms, whose Salinas site was touted as a model for farm-worker wages and benefits. Unfortunately, the farm's other location in Tracy had been cited for dozens of worker-safety violations and launched what Bloch describes as the most brutal anti-union campaign he'd seen in 25 years of labor-organizing work. Long story short: The Teamsters lobbied the school board, and the district eventually severed its contract with Taylor Farms. But what if the union hadn't made the effort? Or what if LeBarre were to leave, or less labor-friendly school board members got elected?

This isn't just an abstract concern: In Los Angeles, for example, longtime nutrition services director David Binkle, who had advocated for the Good Food Purchasing Policy, **resigned last year amid allegations of mismanaged funds**. In both Oakland and Los Angeles, the policy itself ensures that these core values — of sustainability, worker well-being, and so forth — remain locked in as district priorities, even as individual policymakers come and go. And it gives suppliers such as Taylor Farms a tangible reason to change their practices.

Otherwise, it's incumbent on activists to raise these issues again and again, each time the district negotiates a new contract. Bloch hopes the Good Food Purchasing Policy will help take the politics out of that process: "Oakland is saying, 'Our procurement policy is a reflection of our conscience as a district.'"

*Bloch, LeBarre, and Lappé will discuss the Good Food Purchasing Policy at a Real Food Media-hosted event on Monday, October 24, at the David Brower Center (2150 Allston Way, Berkeley).*

Tags: Good Food Purchasing Policy, OUSD, school lunch, Jennifer LeBarre, Anna Lappe, Alexa Delwiche, Image



# Fresh approach with farm-to-school meals in Oakland

By Tara Duggan November 13, 2016 Updated: November 14, 2016 11:26am

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Photo: Michael Macor, The Chronicle

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## IMAGE 1 OF 3

First-graders Miracle Tarrant (left) and Mi' Yani Moore approve of the tabbouleh in a Glenview Elementary taste test.

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Getting a 5-year-old to try a bowl of very green tabbouleh salad isn't always easy. But kindergartner Jera Flenaugh was game to taste the chopped parsley, tomato and bulgur dish during lunch at Glenview Elementary in Oakland last week.

“It tastes like not-hot salsa,” said Jera, her smile missing a front tooth as she put a sticker under the “Loved it” column on a poster set up in the cafeteria to tally student votes. “It was awesome.”

Conducted once a week, these taste tests are part of what makes the Oakland Unified School District a national model for farm-fresh school food. Up to 80 percent of the produce it serves comes from nearby farms, and some of its pasta and meat brands are commonly seen on Whole Foods shelves. As a sign of its commitment, the Oakland school board is now expected to adopt the Good Food Purchasing Policy, which is basically a pledge to buy fresh, healthy and sustainable food.

“It’s something we can measure ourselves by,” said Jennifer LeBarre, director of student nutrition services for the district, which has focused on getting food sourced from within 250 miles since starting a farm-to-school program in 2008. “With that, we’ve been able to achieve double-digit decreases on our carbon footprint.”

Part of the impetus for Oakland’s farm-to-school program is funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Obama administration, so it’s unclear what will happen to such grants in the next, Republican-led administration.

Advocates of progressive school food policies are concerned there will be a rollback of programs serving low-income communities.

The Good Food Purchasing Policy that the Oakland district is adopting is like the LEED certification — the green rating system for buildings — for school lunches. The term “good food” in this context doesn’t apply to taste alone; it denotes food that meets certain standards for animal welfare, nutrition, fair labor, sustainability and support of the local economy. Institutions following the Good Food Purchasing Policy receive star ratings when they work with producers that meet standards in those five categories.



Photo: Michael Macor, The Chronicle

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Second-grader Greer Alderman gave the tabbouleh salad a “liked” rating during taste-testing Glenview Elementary School in Oakland.

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“In our current food system, we have very few suppliers that would be able to meet all five of those definitions,” said Alexa Delwiche, executive director of the Center for Good Food Purchasing. But baseline standards can apply to only 10 percent of the food purchased in the district, so changes can start small.



The program was created in Los Angeles in 2012 and is being used by its school district, the country's second-largest. San Francisco Unified has also signed on, but hasn't begun analyzing its purchases, a process Oakland started in 2014. Other Bay Area districts, such as Sonoma Valley Unified and Novato Unified, also have ambitious farm-to-school programs, but for a much smaller student population than Oakland.

"Oakland is such a great model," said Sheila Golden of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, which connects farms to institutions and communities, and recently recognized Oakland Unified for its program. "They're one of the biggest districts doing the things they do."

Which raises the question: How does a district where 73 percent of students qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch, serving 6 million meals a year, manage to buy organic, local food? All on a \$1.25-per-meal budget?

In some cases, it actually saves money. LeBarre was surprised to find Sacramento delta brown rice at half the price of the national brand she had been using. The district also gets a competitive price on the food-service line of whole-grain pasta from Oakland's Community Grains, now being used in dishes like torchiette, a type of twirly noodle, with chorizo and greens.

Meat and fish require more creativity, said Oakland Unified's farm-to-school coordinator Alexandra Emmott, but it helps that most of the food is made in-house.

The nutrition staff augments ground meat from Mindful Meats, an organic supplier of pasture-raised beef from Marin and Sonoma, with beans for its chili and beef tacos, to get the USDA-required 2-ounce serving of protein per lunch.

"It's the less-meat, better-meat philosophy," Emmott said.

Oakland Unified also buys grenadier, a bycatch of the local black cod industry that is normally wasted, from Monterey's Real Good Fish. Some local universities declined to buy the fish, saying \$5 a pound was too expensive compared with farmed tilapia from China, said Maria Finn of Real Good Fish, while Oakland Unified found a way to serve it sparingly in fish tacos.

Oakland has 84 schools and 20 child care centers serving 38,000 students 21,000 lunches a day, along with breakfasts and suppers at some locations. There are 30 on-site working kitchens where food is made fresh, but lunches are presented in plastic-wrapped trays similar to airplane meals.



Photo: Michael Macor, The Chronicle

Sherry Carpenter of the Oakland Unified School District prepares the samples of tabbouleh for student taste tests.

It's also impossible for individual farms to deliver produce to so many sites, which is part of the reason the district is building a central processing kitchen that's due to open in the 2018-19 school year. It will be able to receive a larger variety of seasonal vegetables, like butternut squash, to be peeled and chopped, then sent to individual schools, where staff will finish cooking it.



The commissary, financed by a bond measure voters passed in 2012, will do away with 80 percent of the packaged meals served at the schools, LeBarre said.

But those changes don't happen overnight. For example, kitchen staff received training to handle raw chicken because the district now buys raw drumsticks from Mary's Free-Range Chicken in the San Joaquin Valley, known for its animal welfare standards. Before, the district served only precooked chicken.

"The training was to help shift the operations from a heat-and-serve model to a fresh-prep model," said Chris Smith of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, which funded it.

Creating demand for sustainable products on a district-wide level can have a huge impact, especially at Los Angeles Unified, which is the largest purchaser of food in the city and serves 650,000 meals daily. It recently signed a \$20 million contract for antibiotic-free chicken.

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MORE BY TARA DUGGAN



**'Ugly' fish a prized catch for Bay Area school cafeterias**



The battle to get local food into school cafeterias

However, when districts want to change vendors, they need to go through a lot of paperwork required by the USDA. The Center for Good Food Purchasing can help with that, but Smith is concerned that it could make the process even more burdensome.

“What’s challenging for people to realize is the level of complexity that’s needed to improve school food,” said Smith. “The good outcomes are clear and self-evident — better student performance and public health, an improved local economy, and obviously, the environment.”

Regardless of the potential benefits, the kids still have to like the food. Not all the Glenview kids were on board with tabbouleh.

“DEEsgusting,” said kindergartner Sophia Hallin. “Because it had too much spicy, and I hate spicy.”

But overall, the latest addition to Oakland Unified’s farm-fresh menu got more thumbs up than down. It will likely be served in school cafeterias in the very near future.

*Tara Duggan is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer.  
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# SCHOOL FOOD NEWS

by Edible East Bay on [November 16, 2016](#) in [Winter Holidays 2016](#)



At Berkeley's David Brower Center, an expert panel discussed the new food purchasing policy adopted by the San Francisco and Oakland school districts. Left to right: Commissioner Sandra Lee Fewer of the SF Board of Education; panel moderator and author Anna Lappe; Alexandra Emmott, OUSD farm to school supervisor; Shakirah Simley, community programs manager for Bi-Rite; and Doug Bloch, political director at Teamsters Joint Council 7.

Photo: Rosalyn Lee

## Oakland Schools Embrace Good Food Plan

Purchasing program bolsters nutrition, sustainability, and local sourcing

by Rachel Trachten

Can public schools influence our nation's food policy?

They can, and San Francisco schools recently signed on to direct their substantial purchasing power toward healthy, local food. As this magazine was going to press, Oakland was poised to join San Francisco and become the first city in the East Bay to adopt the Good Food Purchasing Program. Participation requires food purchases to meet criteria based on five core



values—environmental sustainability, worker well-being, health and nutrition, support for local economies, and animal welfare. Transparency is also a priority, meaning that it's easy to trace produce, meat, and fish back to their origins.

According to Alexa Delwiche, executive director at the Center for Good Food Purchasing, institutions can participate to varying extents, with three levels tied to each core value. Asked about some of the concrete actions that schools have already taken, she cited Meatless Mondays as well as the option of serving higher quality meat, but less of it. For example instead of burgers, a cafeteria might offer tacos or chili made with both beef and beans. Delwiche and her staff help schools with planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Real Food Media works closely with the purchasing program and hosted the event Good Food Rising at Berkeley's David Brower Center to help spread the word. Author Anna Lappé, who directs Real Food Media, says she's excited to see incentives for big changes up and down the supply chain. Farmers and other food producers enjoy the certainty that comes with institutional purchases and can reduce prices when they can count on sizeable orders. Food-chain workers, from farm laborers to truck drivers, appreciate higher standards related to wages and working conditions.

Los Angeles was the first city to sign on back in 2012, and others around the country, including Chicago and Austin, are taking a serious look. After two years in the program, LAUSD increased local sourcing of produce to an average of 60% from less than 10%. At the same time, 150 new food-processing jobs were created and 600,000 Los Angeles students were served healthier meals.

The potential for magnifying these types of changes is huge, given the likely addition of more school districts and the possibility that public hospitals, airports, and prisons may also opt in. The total spent on food by the Los Angeles, Oakland and San Francisco districts alone is \$200 million per year. "Harnessing the power of public dollars for food that's good for planet, people, animals, and our communities is a commonsense idea that's capturing the imagination of cities around the country," says Lappé.

[goodfoodpurchasing.org](http://goodfoodpurchasing.org)

Contributing editor **Rachel Trachten** writes about food, gardens, and cooking as tools for social change. She also contributes to Oakland and Alameda magazines and The East Bay Monthly. You can view her stories at [racheltrachten.contently.com](http://racheltrachten.contently.com) and contact her at [rachel\(at\)edibleeastbay.com](mailto:rachel(at)edibleeastbay.com).

FOOD

# School Lunches Across the U.S. May Be Moving Towards Healthy Organic Food

***Schools are beginning to explore sustainable food procurement policies.***

By Anna Lappé / Earth Island Journal      January 18, 2017, 12:00 PM GMT

32 COMMENTS

When you picture school lunch what comes to mind? Goopy pizza and floppy French fries, or fresh organic produce and chicken raised without routine antibiotics? My guess is the former. But thanks to advocates around the country, someday it may just be the latter.



Group Of Pupils Sitting At Table In School Cafeteria Eating Lunch

Photo Credit: SpeedKingz/Shutterstock

Every year the National School Lunch Program spends almost \$13 billion to feed over 30 million children. For years, school leaders and community activists have been working to improve the food purchased with those public dollars. Now advocates have a new tool to help achieve just such a lofty goal: It's called the Good Food Purchasing Policy and after its successful passage in 2012 by the Los Angeles Unified School District and the city of LA, school districts and cities across the country are exploring its possibilities for shaping how public food, like school lunch, is procured.

The policy is similar to LEED certification, only for food instead of buildings. It's a tool for school districts and the city government's to make purchasing decisions based on a set of core values. Imagine that!

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Under the policy, suppliers must meet basic criteria across five values: supporting local economies; promoting health; providing a safe and healthy workplace and fair wages; protecting animal welfare; and promoting environmental sustainability. Like LEED, the policy inspires suppliers to reach higher than the basic minimum, to “score” better and better across these criteria.

“The Good Food Purchasing Program provides institutions with the framework and tools to achieve an alternative vision for the food system,” says Alexa Delwiche, the head of the [Center for Good Food Purchasing](#), a nonprofit launched by the masterminds of the policy to help cities and school districts pass it and evaluate its implementation.

After the City of Los Angeles and LA Unified School District passed the policy, procurement decisions for more than 750,000 meals a day were made with a whole new lens: not just which suppliers are cheapest, but which suppliers best reflect those five values.

It's making a big difference.



Consider the case of Tyson. Two years before the policy was passed, in 2010, the multinational chicken giant was awarded the \$60 million, five-year poultry contract with LA Unified. By 2015, when the Tyson contract was up for renewal, the school district had a different set of questions for the company, such as its record on animal welfare, environmental protection, and treatment of workers. Concerns about Tyson's poor track record on multiple fronts led school board members to question whether Tyson could meet the standards of the Good Food Purchasing Program. Ultimately, Tyson withdrew from the contract process, and the school board awarded Gold Star Foods, which had much better labor and production practices, a contract instead.

It's not just the source of chicken that's changed. PolicyLink found that before the policy was in place, only about 10 percent of produce served in LA schools was sourced within 200 miles of the district. Today, that's grown to 50 to 72 percent, depending on the season, bringing roughly \$12 million into the local economy.

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Inspired by its neighbor to the south, San Francisco Unified School District became the first institution outside of Los Angeles to formally adopt the policy in 2016. Across the bay, the Oakland school board is poised to pass the policy this year, too. Together, these three cities alone make about \$200 million worth of food purchases annually.

Community leaders across the nation are seeing the power and unifying spirit of this policy that brings these five crosscutting values together. Cities across the country – from Chicago to New York City to Minneapolis and Cincinnati are all exploring it.

“The Good Food Purchasing Program has energized food justice activists in Cincinnati,” says Brennan Grayson, director of the Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center. “It brings a

bold vision to food justice activism – one that brings people from all parts of the food chain together. And togetherness is what people need to make changes in the food system.”

Policy change at the national level can move at a glacial pace, if at all. So it’s exciting to see communities take action locally: to put our public dollars toward food that’s best for our bodies, for workers, and for the planet.

# School food director embraces buying power, diversity to improve menus

By Addie Broyles - American-Statesman Staff

2



Austin school district food services director Anneliese Tanner is serious about making school food even better, from changing how the district buys food to how her staff prepares it. She's overseeing a handful of initiatives that will forever change how you think about school lunch.  
RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Posted: 11:00 p.m. Monday, January 23, 2017

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One rainy day last fall, Anneliese Tanner scrolled through photos of sweet potatoes on her phone.

The managers at some of the 114 school cafeterias under her watch in the Austin Independent School District were posting photos of the vegetables as their cooks made baked sweet potatoes for the first time. All morning long, Tanner kept an eye on how everyone was reacting to the change.

"They have a lot of pride in their work," she says. "They like to show off their kolaches and parfaits, especially."

Like countless other dishes served in the schools, those kolaches and parfaits are handmade, a fact that continues to surprise parents and Austinites who think school food is ... well ... something else.



Being able to see what's going on in all the schools every day has been a huge boost for Tanner, a finance-turned-food-policy savant originally from San Antonio, but it's far from the most revolutionary change she's implemented in her 18 months in the position.

Tanner left the world of managing retirement portfolios in pursuit of something that would leave "a different kind of legacy," enrolling as a food policy grad student at New York University with the intention of becoming a school food services director.

"When I was in finance, I was in this phase where I was making my own bread and ketchup and mayonnaise, and I had this really naive notion that people should make all their own food and eat healthier and do things the way I did them," she says.

Living in the country's biggest city, Tanner, now 33, realized how this labor-intensive way of cooking was not feasible for the vast majority of Americans. "It's only fun when you get to choose to do it, and there's a benefit for our quality of life not to do those things. I don't think anyone wants us to go back to subsistence living."

That was just one of the reality checks she had about food during the course of all her careers, which included working as a seafood distributor in New York City, trading containers of food between the U.S. and Asia. "That's where I learned the power of volume, and I realized that if I wanted to change food, change happens through education and volume, and that's what we have in the school system," she says.

Tanner got a job as a supervisor with the Aramark-run food services program at the Round Rock school district, but within three years of finishing graduate school she applied for the top job in the Austin district and found herself in charge of feeding 84,000 students.

Tanner didn't waste any time getting to work. "My very first priority has been Breakfast in the Classroom," she says. By the end of this school year, nearly 30 schools will be offering free, universal breakfast to students as they enter the classroom, including hot sandwiches made in the cafeteria each morning.

The district is now serving 5,000 more breakfasts per day, an increase from 23 to 29 percent of enrolled students, with fewer tardies and absences to boot, Tanner says.

Texas requires schools with more than 80 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-cost lunch to serve universal free breakfast, but not necessarily Breakfast in the Classroom, a program where students eat the hot breakfast or cereal in the classroom with their teacher and peers. Tanner wanted to expand Breakfast in the Classroom to schools with more than 60 percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

"It's the absolute best way to make breakfast accessible to students," she says, and increasing food access is crucial when 1 in 3 children in Central Texas experiences food insecurity. Students eating together with their teacher helps everyone start the day off on the right foot, and it helps reduce the stigma of eating school food in general.

This was the first year that they went to scratch cooking for the breakfasts, and it took some adjustment for the staff, mostly in the advanced planning.

"We have to think more like a restaurant operation. You have to think three days before, two days before and day of with each item. You have to have the dough and sausages thawed to wrap and proof and bake and cool and package by the time the students walk in the door," she says.

They've added positions in some schools to handle the extra load, a piece of evidence to support Tanner's point that good food in schools means more jobs in the local economy, from cooks in the kitchens to farmers in the fields.

Eventually, Tanner would like to see 50 percent of students eating breakfast in the school and 75 percent of them eating lunches.

That goal might seem unrealistic, but if you walk through an Austin school cafeteria now you might for a second think that you were in Whole Foods. There might be roasted drumsticks seasoned with Moroccan spices; bright cherry tomatoes and cucumber slices from the same farms that sell at the farmers market; banh mi sandwiches and Indian curry with perfectly cooked zucchini and squash.

The high schools get their hot dog buns from Texas French Bread, a new partnership since Tanner took the helm, and Johnson's Backyard Garden has fields full of carrots that will be served in the district this semester thanks to an innovative partnership that has the schools buying directly from the farm instead of a distributor.

And you won't find a better blueberry cobbler, not even at Grandma's house, than the one they served at the Thanksgiving lunches this year.

Local school districts have been improving the quality of food they've been serving for years, but Tanner wanted to see the district leverage its considerable buying power to serve higher quality food to more students, more consistently.

A few years ago, the Texas Department of Agriculture launched a Farm Fresh Fridays campaign to challenge schools to serve locally sourced produce on Fridays. Even without any additional funding from the department, schools across the state have increased their local food spending.

In Austin, Fridays weren't enough. Tanner decided that if they were going to forge these buying relationships for one day a week, they could do it for three, so now Farm Fresh Fridays takes place Mondays and Wednesdays, too.

The marketing works. More parents send their kids to eat the school lunch on Fridays, which Tanner credits to the local food campaign. If those students ate the school lunch on the other two days a week that feature local produce, the schools could do even more.

"Higher volume ultimately means higher quality because of the increased buying power," and that means that previously unrealistic changes, such as serving organic milk, grass-fed beef or antibiotic-free chicken, are now within reach.

The school district's efforts to buy better quality ingredients from local businesses fit in well with the city of Austin's Good Food Purchasing program, an initiative to harness the buying power of big institutions to benefit the local economy and support the city's sustainability goals.

Tanner hopes that they'll eventually spend 65 percent of their food budget locally and 25 percent on organic. Right now, they are at 47 percent local spending last year, with a much longer way to go on the organics side, which is around 4 percent.

Tanner is already seeing food suppliers changing their production methods and sourcing to meet the district's increasingly rigorous standards. They should soon have a vendor who can provide grass-fed beef patties for hamburgers, and after the upcoming bid season, all but two of their chicken products will come from antibiotic-free chickens.

"We have a vendor who came to us. He sells carnitas and barbacoa. I said, 'I need a clean label, and here are the seven ingredients you can't have on it. Get a clean label and we can talk,'" she says.

Months later, he's become as passionate as Tanner is about providing better quality ingredients to as many people as possible. "It was a competitive business opportunity for him," she says. "The volume gives us the chance to change the way things are made."

Another big win in the past year has been an increase in the number of after-school meals served to students who participate in sports, tutoring or other afterschool activities. When Tanner started, only nine schools were offering this option, but now they are serving 4,000 additional after-school meals a year from more than 70 campuses.

To bump up lunch sales at Anderson High School, the district opened a food truck last year that did well enough that they decided to add a second truck, which starting next month will rotate between the other 13 high schools.



Salad bars are yet another way that Central Texas' largest school district is educating kids about healthy eating habits and providing access to new flavors.

The majority of elementary schools in Austin are now serving themed entree salads twice a week that look more like what you'd order at a restaurant than what you'd assemble from an all-you-can-eat salad bar. For instance, last week at Sanchez Elementary they served a winter harvest salad with a choice of ingredients that included chicken or turkey, homemade croutons, pumpkin seeds, roasted cauliflower, sweet potatoes and carrots.

A handful of campuses across the district had salad bars when Tanner started, but she wanted more uniformity. "I don't want to do something at two schools," she says. "I want to do it at 114 schools."

With the support of the Whole Kids Foundation and the Life Time Foundation, two local nonprofits that support community wellness projects, the district has been able to install these more curated salad bars in more than 50 elementary campuses. By the end of the year, all 80 elementary schools will have them, and then they'll start piloting in the middle schools, followed by high schools. The financial support from Life Time and Whole Kids also helped buy Vitamixes and food processors to help cafeteria staff chop whole vegetables and make dressings.

"We're teaching them that salads don't have to be a side and that vegetables should be the center of the plate," she says.

Louis Ortiz, the charismatic culinary instructor you might have taken a class from at Central Market, is now the executive chef for the district, and whenever a school gets their new salad bar, he spends a few days with the staff to give them additional knife skills and culinary training so they understand the scientific how, not just the practical why, of the food they are preparing.

Ortiz has also been key in developing recipes for globally inspired dishes that not only send a message to kids from all over the world that they are welcome here but also teach cultural foodways to all students.

"We have a diverse city, so we have to have a diverse menu to meet the needs of all of our students," Tanner says. "But I also tell my team, 'The cafeteria is a classroom, and it's not just nutrition; it's the food system and cultural foodways, too.'"

For instance, with two dual-language Vietnamese schools in the district now, Tanner and her team added banh mi and pho to the menu served at all the schools, not just the two with a focus on that language and culture.

Increased demand for vegetarian meals means that schools have a hummus plate available on most days, but also that they are serving vegan lentil chili Frito pie that has a 25 percent take rate. Let that

soak in: A quarter of students pick lentils for lunch.

On a lunch date with my youngest son last fall, I wished I would see more of the students try the yellow chicken curry with squash that I thought was so delicious. Sampling such newer dishes is the only way to get kids to open their minds to picking them over familiar ones, so Tanner hopes to see an increased take rate over time.

“Kids are having moments of discovery, and they are never going to learn to like it if we don’t serve it,” Tanner says. “If a kid says, ‘What are migas?’ this is exactly why we have migas on the menu. Now this kid is going to know what they are.”

The importance of this subtle shift in menu planning became clear during a work session with Whole Foods chef Tien Ho, who was helping Tanner and her staff design the new mobile food truck and the global sandwich recipes for the menu. “When his family immigrated to Houston from Vietnam, he didn’t speak English and went to school and didn’t recognize the food,” Tanner says. “He said, ‘Now I have the opportunity to make at least one student feel comfortable. That’s really exciting.’”

Although Tanner’s goal is to have 75 percent of students eating the school lunch, that number is now 53 percent, 2 percent lower than last year. Tanner isn’t too frustrated by that number, though. She knows that the lingering stigma of what school lunch might have looked like when parents were in school will start to go away the more that students come home asking about hummus and roasted organic carrots.

She encourages families to apply for the free and reduced lunch program, even if they don’t think they need it or qualify. “The district has so many programs that the community wants it to offer, but if our community understood that by filling out that form, that could mean more teachers, books, computers, there’s no reason not to.”

### **Indian Chicken and Vegetable Curry**

This curry is mild enough to appeal to all kinds of eaters. In Austin school district elementary schools, where this dish was served last month, cooks use seasoned fajita chicken meat, but you could use any kind of pre-cooked (or leftover) chicken. You could also leave it out to make a vegetarian version.

1 Tbsp. butter

2 tsp. minced garlic

1/3 cup chopped onion

2 cups canned garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed

2 1/2 tsp. curry powder

1 1/2 cups vegetable broth

2 tsp. lime juice

1 cup sliced yellow squash

1 cup sliced zucchini

1/8 tsp. salt

6 oz. cooked chicken strips

1 Tbsp. chopped cilantro

2 cups brown rice, cooked, for serving

Melt butter in a large pot over medium low heat. Add minced garlic and onion and cook about 5 minutes until softened. Add drained and rinsed garbanzo beans and stir. Add half of the curry powder and continue cooking for 6 to 8 minutes, stirring. Add the vegetable broth, raise the heat on the stove and bring to a simmer. Cover and cook for 5 minutes. Add remaining curry powder, lime juice, squash, zucchini, salt and chicken. Lower the heat slightly, stir, cover and cook for 5 to 7 minutes. Mix in cilantro and serve over rice.

— Adapted from a recipe from the Austin Independent School District Food Services Department

# Less Meat, Better Food, Happier Kids: Oakland Unified Reinvents its School Lunch

Emphasizing higher-quality meat and plant-based proteins has helped the California school district reduce its school lunches' carbon footprint, serve healthier food, and save money.



BY KRISTINE WONG  
Climate, Nutrition, School Food  
03.09.17

Cash-strapped school districts that want to feed students healthy meals often find themselves in a bind. But through a pilot program that served up less meat and cheese—and puts higher-quality meat, more beans, and more fresh produce on kids' plates—the school district in Oakland, California has shown that it's possible to get kids eating better food within a limited budget while reducing its carbon footprint.

That's the takeaway of a report recently released by environmental nonprofit Friends of the Earth, which analyzed Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)'s efforts by comparing the impact of its carbon and water footprints, money spent, and types of food purchased over a two-year period.



Kari Hamerschlag, head of FOE's food and technology program and lead author of the report, points to the fact that "overconsumption of factory-farmed animal meat and dairy has a huge impact on climate change and other environmental issues." But aside from a several hundred Meatless Monday programs around the nation, most school districts don't believe they have the bandwidth to plan their menus around addressing the problem.

### Positive Changes Afoot

By increasing the district's fruit, vegetable, and legume purchases by 10 percent, reducing its meat and dairy purchases by 30 percent, and improving the quality of its meat by buying organic grass-fed beef from retired dairy cows in Northern California, FOE found that OUSD reduced its carbon footprint by 14 percent, reduced its water use by nearly 6 percent, spent 1 percent less per meal, and saved \$42,000 in the process.

"It turns out that kind of strategy is a triple win for environmental, health, and financial savings," says Hamerschlag.

The school district already had health- and environment-focused programs in place including Lean and Green Wednesdays and California Thursdays (which serves food only from the Golden State). It was motivated to make the additional effort in the interest of controlling costs and improving the quality and sourcing of its food, according to Alexandra Emmott, the district's Farm to School Program supervisor.

"This fits into our Farm to School program and our goal to get five stars from the Center for Good Food Purchasing on how our food purchasing impacts local economies, health, animal welfare, environmental sustainability and having a valued workforce," Emmott said, referring to the Center's mission to help institutions improve the impact of its food purchasing in those five areas.

So after consulting with the Center, Emmott started working with Hamerschlag to devise the strategy that OUSD implemented in the fall of 2013.

Key to the plan was the decision to buy less meat and cheese and more plant-based proteins.

"Cheese has the third-highest carbon footprint after beef," said Hamerschlag, referring to an Environmental Working Group report she authored in 2011, which tallied the lifetime greenhouse gas emissions of close to two dozen protein sources. Cheese's footprint derives from the fact that it takes 10 pounds of milk to make one pound of cheese, coupled with the emissions of methane (a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide) that cows belch into the atmosphere.

And because OUSD chose to source organic, grass-fed beef from Mindful Meats, which sources its meat from retired dairy cows, the beef has a smaller carbon footprint, since it is spread across a greater number of uses over the course of the cow's life.

Emmott said that the students didn't notice having less meat on their plates. In order to meet the USDA's school meal nutrition standards (which has a protein requirement), the school substituted in more legumes.

“Generally, it’s been a positive reaction,” she said. “We’re careful with how we do rollouts of new recipes—we test at the secondary and elementary school level to make sure that students like the dish.”

Dishes like bean and cheese tostadas using fresh salsa, or chicken drumsticks with red beans and rice have been hits, Emmott said.

### **No Small Task**

Changing school food menus requires an immense effort. But since OUSD has an established Farm to School program, thanks to grants from the USDA and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the district had already formed working relationships with local farmers and sustainable food suppliers.

Still, controlling costs are challenging when OUSD can only budget \$1.25 per meal, Emmott says.

And having the right kitchen and food storage infrastructure in place—along with staff training and communication since workers are spread out across 85 schools—is another challenge, she adds. But with the opening of a new OUSD central kitchen, farm and educational center in the works for West Oakland (funded by a city bond measure that passed in 2012), OUSD hopes to be able to shift away from prepackaged food even further, thanks to a fruit and vegetable processing room that will be on site.

“The district will be able to buy fresh foods in bulk at cheaper prices,” Emmott says.

Despite its challenges, Hamerschlag says that OUSD’s program can be used as a model for all types of institutions, including workplaces or hospitals.

“It’s not going to be feasible for all places to do the same kind of analysis we did [with OUSD],” she said. “But they can still make an impact by just serving dishes with more plant-based food and reducing the amount of meat in meals.”

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L.A. NOW

# Chicken nearly disappeared from L.A. school lunches. Now, it's making a comeback



By HOWARD BLUME  
APR 13, 2017 | 5:00 AM



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Chicken will soon be making a comeback to school menus across L.A. (April 13, 2017) (Sign up for our free video newsletter here <http://bit.ly/2n6VKPR>)



For more than a year, one of the foods Los Angeles students like best has been all but absent from school menus.

Last month, high school students, with two entree choices at lunch, were offered an oven-baked drumstick on the 24th — but that was it for chicken.

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Los Angeles Unified School District had been budgeting up to \$20 million on chicken a year. Then its school board set new standards for how suppliers should treat their poultry, their workers and the environment. Contract talks with Tyson Foods and Pilgrim's Pride, the nation's largest two suppliers, fell apart in 2015.

This month, the Board of Education finally cleared the way for a chicken comeback, approving contracts with three new vendors — including powerhouse Perdue Farms — that more closely meet its criteria. As soon as May, students should see the return of chicken frankfurters, patties and tenders.

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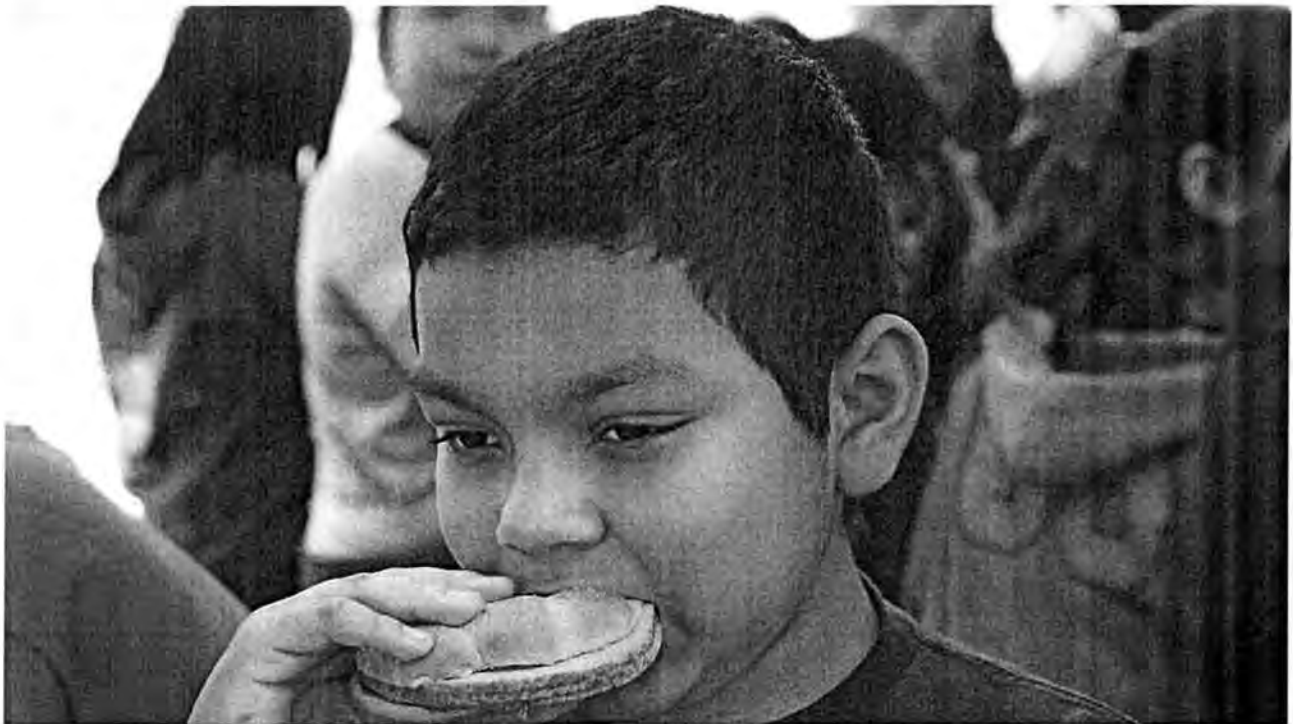
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Food advocates say the nation's second-largest school system led the way with standards for food suppliers.

"The district has done a good job and they have the commitment," said Clare Fox, executive director of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, which advises and evaluates local institutions on food purchases.



Entrees such as an oven-roasted turkey breast sandwich, consumed by Marco Felix at Belvedere Elementary School, filled in for chicken after a dispute between L.A. Unified and major chicken producers. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times)



Still, some observers question such attention to wings and thighs in a school system

struggling with below-average test scores and a potential budget crisis.

Accounts of just what caused the standoff differ.

L.A. Unified's negotiator said a major sticking point was the district's insistence on a right to audit company operations. A Tyson spokesman recalled a disagreement over price.

The two versions are not entirely at odds, given that stricter requirements can drive up the price of a product. Pilgrim's Pride said it simply decided to pursue other business opportunities.

After negotiations collapsed, turkey showed up more frequently on district menus. In the interim, distributor Gold Star Foods, which does not raise its own chickens, was able to provide only a limited supply.

The origins of the chicken crisis date to 2010, when Tyson was the finalist for the primary, five-year chicken contract. When the contract came before the Board of Education, school board member Steve Zimmer said he'd heard that Tyson had a poor reputation. As Zimmer recalls it, a senior staffer then assured him that the company's problems were in the past. Zimmer immediately searched the Internet, found evidence of ongoing concerns, including worker safety, and turned his laptop screen around to let people see what he'd found.

He got the vote delayed and also won over two colleagues on the seven-member board. But a four-vote majority approved the contract.

"It was fairly heartbreaking for me," Zimmer said.





Senior cafeteria manager Anita Gonzales checks the temperature of cooked drumsticks at Belvedere Elementary School. More chicken will be on the lunch menu after a deal was struck this month between L.A. Unified and chicken producers. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times)



The rest of the Board of Education had come around by 2012, when L.A. Unified may have been the nation's first school system to adopt rules to evaluate food suppliers in five areas: the nutritional quality of their products, animal welfare, environmental impact, help to the local economy and treatment of the workforce.

Early on, the district had success, such as expanding the purchase of locally grown produce. But the 2015 chicken contract was seen as a watershed. Activists and some prosecutors had targeted Big Poultry, with its massive farms and slaughterhouses, accusing companies of polluting the environment, exposing workers to danger and treating chickens in a needlessly inhumane manner. Some of their practices were secretly filmed.

"Every big issue you see connected to the food system is manifested, is most dramatic, in the chicken industry," said Alexa Delwiche, executive director of the Berkeley-based Center for Good Food Purchasing, which helps large institutions monitor and improve food procurement practices.

In recent years, consumers, distributors and institutions have exerted increasing pressure on suppliers to move away from feeding chickens with meal made from meat byproducts and from pumping them with antibiotics. Scientists have said the use of antibiotics in farming could hasten the evolution of disease-resistant bacteria.

In 2016, fast-food giant McDonald's announced that it would no longer purchase chickens that received any antibiotic used to treat people.

L.A. Unified, meanwhile, helped build a consortium of the nation's six largest school systems to strengthen their clout with food providers. And last year, San Francisco and Oakland Unified passed their own versions of L.A.'s good-food policy.

The school system has a long history of activism. It supported divestment from apartheid South Africa, used school construction bonds to pay for a local job-training program, and led the pack on paying a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and providing health benefits to part-time workers and their families.

As with some other stands, the poultry principles come with a price — the potential to make chicken as much as two-thirds more expensive, according to an estimate last year by a senior manager in food services.

"While examining the nutritional health of food products is worthwhile," said Lance Izumi, an education specialist at the conservative, San Francisco-based Pacific Research Institute, "one wonders why the school board is spending so much time promoting a social-activist agenda in its cafeterias rather than focusing on improving the poor



achievement of so many district students."

Criticism on this front recently entered the school board campaign in a negative mailer illustrated with photos of chicken nuggets that targeted Zimmer.

But on this issue, Zimmer and Nick Melvoin, his opponent in a May runoff election, virtually finish each other's sentences.

"When companies like Tyson Foods are cited repeatedly for [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] violations, poor working conditions and failure to meet sustainability standards, they must be held accountable and new providers must be sought," said Melvoin when he answered questions posed by the nonprofit Los Angeles Food Policy Council. "The only way to do that is through oversight — which is the responsibility of the LAUSD board, and what I'm running to promote."

Zimmer said his job takes in the whole district, not just academics.

"This is not ever what I thought I would spend a minute on," Zimmer said. "But we have a major responsibility in managing a \$7.6-billion operating budget and the impact of those funds on what will be, for some students, their only full meal of the day. And also on the impact of these dollars on the lives of the people who work in these industries."

In March, to begin to bring chicken back, the district approved up to \$50 million in contracts over five years with Perdue, Goodman Food Products and Somma Food Group, and additional spending is likely.

The incoming chicken, per district rules, has to be antibiotic-free. Perdue, as it happens, now proclaims all its chickens free from hormones, steroids and antibiotics. All chickens, Perdue says, also enjoy "a 100% vegetarian diet" — and drink oregano-spiked water as an antioxidant.

As for Tyson and Pilgrim's Pride, they may try to get back in.

"Many of our products meet L.A. Unified's Good Food Purchasing Policy standards," said Pilgrim's spokesman Cameron Bruett. "We believe there will be opportunities to do business with each other again in the future."

Tyson also has products that meet the district's standards, said Tyson spokesman Gary Mickelson: "We're proud of our company and strive to operate responsibly in all aspects of our business."

The district has yet to apply its full standards to beef and pork, although that's the plan. Even with chicken, the new suppliers don't score well across all parameters, Zimmer said.

And the hunt continues for a good breakfast biscuit with chicken.

Still, the patties and tenders should please hungry students.

"We do a lot of taste tests," said L.A. Unified Food Services Director Joseph K. Vaughn. "It became very apparent to us that the kids want breaded chicken product."

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## 5 Ways Schools Can Boost the Local Food Economy

Schools have tremendous purchasing power and influence when it comes to local food. Here are some ways they are sourcing closer to home.



**BY MAGGIE TAURANAC**  
Local Eats, School Food  
07.21.17

Getting local food into a public school system's meal program seems pretty much like a no brainer. The practice would boost local economies and support smaller-scale farms. It would likewise reduce the environmental impacts related to wide-range distribution. Perhaps most importantly, offering locally sourced lunches would provide the potential for connecting students to agriculture and providing nutrition education, paving the way for future shifts to our food system.

Yet the reality of getting local food into school districts has proven remarkably challenging for a myriad of reasons, the largest being cost. Logistical challenges such as coordination with farms, staffing lunchrooms, and processing raw ingredients have all made implementation difficult.

But despite the hurdles, providing schools with locally procured food remains a high priority for many districts, and movements are afoot to make

local sourcing the norm. Here are five different methods that schools are using, often in combination, to increase their local food sourcing.

## 1. Going Through an Existing Distributor

The challenge for individual schools or districts to identify and coordinate with farms in their area can hinder their ability to initiate local food standards. This tends to be why the default is to use food service management companies (FSMC). The majority of public schools in the U.S. lack processing abilities: Food preparation takes staff, skills, equipment, and time. Thus, most schools tend to rely on FSMCs that source, process, and distribute foods.

In most cases, school meals are delivered in pre-prepared form, allowing school cafeterias to be equipped with nothing more than microwaves. This reduces expenditures related to a fully-trained kitchen staff (with, for example, knife skills) and industrial food-service kitchens. FSMCs assure food safety, ease, and affordability, making them highly appealing to administrators and lunch staff. Most distributors focus their priorities on delivering on the promises listed above and regrettably often at the neglect of procuring locally or ethically sourced products.

However, this trend might be shifting. Sysco, which touts itself as being the largest foodservice distributor in the world, has established a system for tracking provenance that allows customers to define their local range and prioritize sourcing from within that radius. The specialty brand is called [FreshPoint](#) and has been built as part of Sysco's corporate responsibility mission. For simplicity's sake, a school might find that pressuring their existing FSMC to source their food more locally and sustainably is the most convenient method of encouraging local procurement.

## 2. Partnering with Food Hubs

Schools that have kitchens with already existing infrastructure have the potential to band together in their districts and partner with local food hubs. Food hubs are an aggregation point where multiple farms can deliver their produce, meat, and dairy, and have it distributed to institutional customers that they would not otherwise be able to supply.

[Cherry Capital Food Hub](#) is a model food hub in Okemos, Michigan that seeks to create a resilient food system by collaborating with farmers and institutions. By sourcing to preschools, K-12 public and private schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, and eldercare facilities, Cherry Capital Food Hub reduces the amount of logistical work both farmers and institutions have to do to secure an income and food supply, respectively.

In the Mid-Atlantic, [The Common Market](#) is another alternative food distributor that connects communities to sustainable family farms. These individual smaller-scale farms wouldn't have the output or consistency to partner with schools on an individual basis, but by acting as a group, they gain access to this market.

Schools using food hubs are given the ability to source locally without having to concern themselves with shortages of specific products. Because farmers negotiate directly with food hubs, they're able to set prices that provide a livable wage, which might not be the priority of large-scale distributors focused on keeping costs low.



Eva Clark, a nonprofit marketing professional and food systems specialist, hosts a website that offers marketing resources to help sustain food hubs and support their institutional customers. "Food hubs create enormous potential for bringing healthy, local foods to students' lunch plates," she says. "This results in a cheaper, easier procurement process, which are the two most important words in our current school lunch environment."

### **3. Growing Produce on Campus**

One model for students to gain access to local food is for agriculture, nutrition, and school lunch to be integrated directly into a school's curriculum. More and more schools are recognizing an opportunity for students to be better-versed in food systems and health by installing student-run school gardens. The food grown on campus can further be used to teach students basic and fundamental cooking skills and nutrition education, designating the cafeteria as a classroom in and of itself.

The connection between agriculture, cooking, culture, and community has been a subject lacking in most current educational programs, and in the past was only available as a highly gendered subject (home economics). With food grown directly on campus, school food procurement becomes about as hyper-localized as it can get. And having students learn about the difficulties of gardening and farming additionally provides an understanding of why purchasing local and supporting smaller-scale operations can be effective in boosting regional economies and reducing corporate expansion.

This shift in educational thought could dramatically affect the way our nation understands and identifies healthy food systems, could reinvigorate cooking as a staple of cultural pride, and could shift wealth distribution by empowering small and regional farms.

Alice Waters paved the way for approaching "edible education" with her Edible Schoolyard programs, the first of which originated at a middle school in Berkeley, California. With the intention of using "gardens and kitchens as interactive classrooms for all academic subjects, and a sustainable, delicious, and free lunch for every student," Edible Schoolyard is pursuing the mission of installing a garden-to-classroom curriculum nationwide. Since its founding in Berkeley in 1995, other Edible programs have developed in New York City, Los Angeles, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Greensboro, North Carolina.

### **4. Relying on Governmental Support**

Local, state, and federal governments all have a responsibility to advance our nation's school food system, and local food procurement should both remain and expand as a governmental priority. Under the Obama administration, the 2010 Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR): Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was passed, reallocating \$4.5 billion to healthy school food over a period of 10 years. The bill focused resources and funding on local food procurement, along with support for farm-to-school networks and nutrition guidelines. Along with allocating funds for local sourcing and the development of school gardens, the bill comprises training for school food staff, and encourages local food procurement on several different levels.

Under the current administration, however, relying on federal support for school food is iffy at best: These programs have been targeted for drastic

funding cuts under the budgets currently proposed. State and city governments may need to increase efforts to maintain school food funding and normalize local food purchases. A great model is New York City's *New York Thursdays* initiative. The program was organized nationally by the *Urban School Food Alliance* and seeks to support student health while boosting local agricultural economies.

The city is far from accomplishing a 100 percent local menu, even on Thursdays, but the wheels are in motion to begin local food procurement on a citywide basis. Many regions are undertaking their own efforts, allowing for programs that are tailor-made to individual localities, but sustained citizen involvement will be critical for the continued growth and expansion of these programs.

## **5. Using Nonprofit-Supported Partnerships**

A benefit of schools and school districts choosing to source locally is that it demonstrates the power of institutional buying. Schools are in a unique position: They have a consistent stream of demands throughout the academic year and have to procure substantial quantities of food. There are numerous nonprofits that have allied themselves with farmers and schools to facilitate this transaction, including the *Center for Good Food Purchasing*. With a mission that is aligned with the principles of the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act*, the *Center for Good Food Purchasing* provides resources and quantifiable metrics for institutions to make their purchasing choices based on five tenets: "local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutrition."

The Center prides itself on developing effective strategies for fostering large-scale food system changes by way of procurement power. For example, having partnered with Los Angeles Unified and five other school districts to demand institution-wide change, L.A. schools and the Center agreed to *new standards for their purchases*. Since one of the standards was that *chicken be produced without antibiotics*, Tyson lost its contract with the school district to Perdue, which sources antibiotic-free chicken.

While the change doesn't address all issues related to sustainability, the switch still sent a loud message to producers about consumer priorities. (*Editors' Note: The issue of antibiotics is complex and a blanket ban on antibiotic use is not the most humane choice for animal wellness. Furthermore, the replacement of Tyson chicken for Perdue may not be the ideal solution in terms of true sustainability.*)

The *National Farm to School Network* is another nonprofit advocacy group that enables local food sourcing. The organization provides support to state, regional, and national levels of government for developing school gardens and implementing agricultural education and locally sourced foods. According to their *website*, the *National Farm to School Network* has worked with approximately 42,000 schools in all U.S. states. The organization empowers communities to begin their own farm-to-school programs with *tools and resources*, as well as an online space designed for networking and community building.

And if school administrators are still hesitant to attempt a farm-to-school model, the *Northwest Food Buyers' Alliance* is an example for how to lessen the strain and facilitate the process of establishing local sourcing. Specifically, they have formed a group of "schools, hospitals, colleges, and universities, assisted living centers, correctional institutions, corporate

campuses, event venues, and foodservice operators of all kinds” that source regional food for large-scale institutions, showing how schools can partner with better-staffed institutions to ease the administrative load. In addition, they have provided multiple sets of user-friendly toolkits designed to encourage schools to buy locally.

The rising popularity of all five of these methods of local school food procurement illustrates a growing shift toward regional food purchasing. The amount of support from government, nonprofits, food hubs, and schools themselves indicates that parents and educators are beginning to think about the opportunity for education inherent in food. The costs of implementing locally grown school food into schools are challenging; but the costs of not doing so (industrial agriculture, corporate consolidation, childhood obesity) have been far higher.

There is real power in procurement, and purchasing local food—especially institutionally—has the potential to dramatically alter our food system, giving agency and sovereignty to farmers, vibrancy to communities, and nourishment to schoolchildren.

*This post originally appeared on the Ecocentric blog, and is reprinted with permission.*



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6500 East Arapahoe Road, Boulder, CO 80301

2/28/2018

For Immediate Release

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**Make Room Celebrity Chefs; School Districts Lead National Change in Good Food Movement**

*First 5-Star Ranking by Good Food Purchasing Program Awarded to Boulder Valley School District*

**(BOULDER, Colo.) – March 1, 2018** – It is not only white table cloth restaurants or celebrity chefs leading the Good Food revolution in this country. According to the national nonprofit measuring values-based procurement practices at food institutions across the country, it is an unlikely new sector leading the change: public school districts. For the first time in its history, the Center for Good Food Purchasing (the Center) has awarded a 5-star ranking with most points ever earned to the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) School Food Project.



Institutional food service facilities supply about \$150 billion worth of food each year according to the Union of Concerned Scientists Purchasing Power Report in 2017, and for the past six years, the Center has harnessed the buying power of major public institutions to shift the food system – for the better. Its rigorous Good Food Purchasing Program (the Program) scores food institutions across the nation on a detailed 25-point system with five core values scored in: Local Economies, Environmental Sustainability, Valued Workforce, Animal Welfare and Nutrition. At five points earned – one baseline point in each value category – the Center designates the applicant as an official “Good Food Provider.”



With the addition of two bonus points for Value Chain Equity & Innovation, BVSD earned 27 total points – the highest amount awarded for any entity to date and became the first ever to earn a 5-star ranking with the Center. BVSD achieved this highest recognition through consistently high percentages across all five values, most notably in values where many institutions typically struggle, including Local Economies (41 percent), Environmental Sustainability (26 percent) and Animal Welfare (46 percent).

“This award is to be shared with all school food and nutrition professionals. It is proof positive that a school district can actually influence a local or regional food economy,” said Chef Ann Cooper, Director of Food Services at BVSD. “I want our record high score to catalyze school districts everywhere to now believe they can be at the vanguard of not just school food improvement, but overall societal change.”

Through local food purchasing, BVSD spent \$890,700 back into the Colorado economy – over 41 percent of its total food spend, which translates to over 2.19 million meals. Almost 10 percent of these purchases came from small, local farms within 200 miles of the school district. BVSD’s designation as the highest ranking Good Food Provider proves it’s possible for school districts with very limited budgets to not only excel, but lead the way, in building a food system based on the Program’s values without increasing food costs.

“Boulder Valley School District, under Chef Ann Cooper’s leadership, has been blazing trails in the school food world for years”, said Alexa Delwiche, executive director of the Center for Good Food Purchasing. “And once again, BVSD is proving exactly what’s possible by investing our public food dollars in a food system that supports good jobs, regional producers, the environment, and high welfare standards for farm animals, while increasing access to healthy food for students.”

The Good Food Purchasing Program has been adopted by the Los Angeles Unified School District, City of Los Angeles, San Francisco Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Park District, and the City of Chicago. Together, these institutions spend approximately \$400 million annually on food. Local efforts to support the Program’s expansion are currently active in: Austin, Boulder, Cincinnati, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York City and Washington D.C. There is mounting interest in at least a dozen more cities across the country, representing nearly \$1 billion in institutional food purchasing power and increased access to healthier meals for millions of students.

[HI-RES IMAGES FOR MEDIA AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD HERE.](#)

### **About Boulder Valley School District**

The Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) is a public PK-12 school district located in the extended Denver metropolitan area with 56 pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade schools. Although designated an ‘urban’ district, BVSD occupies a 500-square-mile region along the foothills of the Rocky Mountains that includes nine major urban, suburban and rural communities. Total enrollment as of January 1, 2018, was just over 31,000. The District’s students are demographically diverse: 30% minority, 19% low-income, 10% English Language Learners, and 11% with disabilities. For more about BVSD, please visit [bvsd.org](http://bvsd.org).

### **About Boulder Valley School District’s School Food Project**

At the BVSD School Food Project, we believe that for kids to learn, think and be the best they can be, they have to eat well. Because of this, we are dedicated to improving the health of each student by providing healthy food and offering nutrition education programs to grow young bodies and minds. We serve fresh and nutritious food every day. This amounts to nearly 13,000 scratch-cooked meals each day! We use locally sourced and organic ingredients whenever possible, and we avoid highly processed

foods, high fructose corn syrup, chemicals, dyes and food additives. Salad bars are offered daily at every school and are stocked with fresh, delicious and when possible, local farm fresh produce. In addition to feeding students healthy meals, SFP emphasizes lunchroom education programs to increase students' food literacy and help them make informed decisions about the types and amounts of food they put in their bodies. Learn more at [bvsd.org/food](http://bvsd.org/food).

**About the Center for Good Food Purchasing**

The Center for Good Food Purchasing's Good Food Purchasing Program transforms the way public institutions purchase food by increasing transparency and equity in the food system based on five core values: local economies, health, valued workforce, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability. Through the Program, the Center works with institutions to establish supply chain transparency from farm to fork, evaluate how current purchasing practices align with the Good Food Purchasing Standards, set goals, measure progress, and celebrate successes in using institutional purchasing power to improve the food system. Learn more at [goodfoodpurchasing.org](http://goodfoodpurchasing.org).

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Education Center / 6500 Arapahoe, Boulder, CO 80303 / 303-447-1010

Contact Webmaster / [About this Site](#)

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# Digging Deeper

## Good Food Rising

BY ANNA LAPPÉ

When you picture school lunch what comes to mind? Goopy pizza and floppy French fries, or fresh organic produce and chicken raised without routine antibiotics? My guess is the former. But thanks to advocates around the country, someday it may just be the latter.

Every year the National School Lunch Program spends almost \$13 billion to feed over 30 million children. For years, school leaders and community activists have been working to improve the food purchased with those public dollars. Now advocates have a new tool to help achieve just such a lofty goal: It's called the Good Food Purchasing Policy and after its successful passage in 2012 by the Los Angeles Unified School District and the city of LA, school districts and cities across the country are exploring its possibilities for shaping how public food, like school lunch, is procured.



Schools across the country are beginning to explore sustainable food procurement policies.

The policy is similar to LEED certification, only for food instead of buildings. It's a tool for school districts and the city government's to make purchasing decisions based on a set of core values. Imagine that!

Under the policy, suppliers must meet basic criteria across five values: supporting local economies; promoting health; providing a safe and healthy workplace and fair wages;

protecting animal welfare; and promoting environmental sustainability. Like LEED, the policy inspires suppliers to reach higher than the basic minimum, to "score" better and better across these criteria.

"The Good Food Purchasing Program provides institutions with the framework and tools to achieve an alternative vision for the food system," says Alexa Delwiche, the head of the Center for Good Food Purchasing, a nonprofit launched by the masterminds of the policy to help cities and school districts pass it and evaluate its implementation.

After the City of Los Angeles and LA Unified School District passed the policy, procurement decisions for more than 750,000 meals a day were made with a whole new lens: not just which suppliers are cheapest, but which suppliers best reflect those five values.

It's making a big difference.

Consider the case of Tyson. Two years before the policy was passed, in 2010, the multinational chicken giant was awarded the \$60 million, five-year poultry contract with LA Unified. By 2015, when the Tyson contract was up for renewal, the school district had a different set of questions for the company, such as its record on animal welfare, environmental protection, and treatment of workers. Concerns about Tyson's poor track record on multiple



fronts led school board members to question whether Tyson could meet the standards of the Good Food Purchasing Program. Ultimately, Tyson withdrew from the contract process, and the school board awarded Gold Star Foods, which had much better labor and production practices, a contract instead.

It's not just the source of chicken that's changed. [PolicyLink](#) found that before the policy was in place, only about 10 percent of produce served in LA schools was sourced within 200 miles of the district. Today, that's grown to 50 to 72 percent, depending on the season, bringing roughly \$12 million into the local economy.

Inspired by its neighbor to the south, San Francisco Unified School District became the first institution outside of Los Angeles to formally adopt the policy in 2016. Across the bay, the Oakland school board is poised to pass the policy this year, too. Together, these three cities alone make about \$200 million worth of food purchases annually.

Community leaders across the nation are seeing the power and unifying spirit of this policy that brings these five crosscutting values together. Cities across the country – from Chicago to New York City to Minneapolis and Cincinnati are all exploring it.

"The Good Food Purchasing Program has energized food justice activists in Cincinnati," says Brennan Grayson, director of the [Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center](#). "It brings a bold vision to food justice activism – one that brings people from all parts of the food chain together. And togetherness is what people need to make changes in the food system."

Policy change at the national level can move at a glacial pace, if at all. So it's exciting to see communities take action locally: to put our public dollars toward food that's best for our bodies, for workers, and for the planet.



# Berkeleyside

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## In Oakland, rethinking school lunches starts with rethinking school kitchens

By Sarah Han, April 5, 2018, 12:05 p.m.



A cafeteria lunch at Madison Park Academy in Oakland. Photo: Sarah Han

Growing up in the '80s, when public schools began to embrace processed and packaged foods for meal programs, I rarely ate in the school cafeteria. When I did dine on a 50-cent lunch — usually on Fridays, for doughy slabs of cardboard topped with a burnt veneer of cheese that, if you squinted and used your imagination, sort of looked and tasted like pizza — it was for purely social reasons: to eat with friends.

Although, like many kids of that time, the contents of my bagged lunch were hardly health food — often, Oscar Mayer baloney sandwiches on white bread and Capri Suns — I was privileged to have homecooked meals before and after school, each and every day. Had the cafeteria been my only option for lunch — and my only reliable meal of the day — there's a good chance my understanding and appreciation of food would be pretty different today.

Oakland Unified School District serves about 42,000 meals a day for 86 K-12 schools, 20 district-run child development centers and 10 charter schools in Oakland and Hayward. About 73% of the students who attend OUSD schools qualify for free, or reduced-price lunches, and many of these students depend on these meals for their daily nutrition. Fortunately, for the latest generations of OUSD kids, the district has been making meaningful steps to improve the quality, taste and look of meals served at school, and provide more access and understanding to kids about why good food matters.

Last week, I was invited by the Oakland Food Policy Council to tour OUSD's kitchen facilities to get a first-hand look at how and where its meals are prepared, and to taste what students in Oakland schools are actually eating.



A mural in the cafeteria at Prescott Elementary School in West Oakland. Photo: Sarah Han

With an annual budget of \$21 million, Oakland Unified spends about \$8.8 million to purchase food and supplies. It would be easy to assume that

OUSD would cut corners on quality — buying more pre-made and processed foods — in order to save money, but the district has found that sourcing higher quality, more nutritious, more locally sourced fresh food, and having more meals prepared on site, is not only the best thing for their students' health, but can also be accomplished within budget.

In 2001, OUSD made waves by becoming the first California district to ban the sale of soda and candy on campuses. Its school meal program has eliminated, or limited, foods with “ingredients of concern,” including those made with high fructose corn syrup, added trans fats, or ones containing high levels of sodium. There are no fryers in cafeteria kitchens, kids eat with real forks instead of “sporks” and chocolate milk is now only served once a week on Mondays.



Vegetables being packed for school lunches at Prescott Elementary School's central kitchen. Photo: Sarah Han

Other efforts by the district include the implementation of the Farm to School Program, which works with local farms to add more produce and legumes on school menus and to offer more nutrition education in school gardens and weekly menu programs. These latter include “Lean and Green Wednesdays,” which offers more vegetarian options and “California Thursdays,” which serves a meal completely made with ingredients sourced from California farmers and vendors.

In 2016, in a partnership with the Oakland Food Policy Council, OUSD began working with the Berkeley-based Center for Good Food Purchasing (CGFP) to implement the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP), which helps the district buy sustainable and health-focused foods for its meal program. CGFP has helped OUSD source from local farms and companies that provide nutritious, minimally processed ingredients, but that also follow fair-labor practices and pay their employees a living wage. Last year, the district received a rating of four out of five stars from CGFP, an improvement of two stars in just two years.

## Many changes are due to the “Head Lunch Lady”

OUSD Nutrition Services executive director Jennifer LeBarre, or “Head Lunch Lady” as she calls herself, has worked at the district for the past 20 years and has been behind many of the changes that have occurred in Oakland Unified's cafeterias. Her department's latest initiative, Rethinking Oakland School Lunch, takes a holistic look at nutrition in school, starting with focusing on the facilities where meals are made.

Under LeBarre, OUSD is updating the kitchens on campuses and is in the process of building a large central commissary for the district. When completed, the new facilities will be a game-changer, resulting in more scratch-made meals served in cafeterias that use fresh and locally sourced ingredients.





OUSD Nutrition Services workers prepare and package meals at Prescott Elementary Central Kitchen in West Oakland. Photo: Sarah Han

## 20,000 meals a day prepared at Prescott Elementary

The first stop on the OUSD kitchens tour was Prescott Elementary School in West Oakland, which currently houses one of the district's three central kitchens. LeBarre said the facility was originally meant to make 9,000 meals a day, but today prepares about 20,000 meals a day. Here, food is delivered, stored, prepared and packaged.

In a back room of the central kitchen, we witnessed workers in a production line portioning wholegrain cheese ravioli into individual serving trays using what LeBarre called a "spoodle" (a combination ladle and spoon). The trays were then sealed with plastic and set on large racks to be refrigerated. LeBarre said the pasta is sourced from Community Grains, an Oakland-based company founded by Oliveto co-owner Bob Klein, which uses whole-milled Northern California-grown grains. Yes, kids in Oakland are getting fancy pasta, the kind you'd normally see on shelves at Market Hall and Whole Foods.

But this stop on the tour revealed the drawbacks of the district relying so heavily on relatively small central kitchens to feed its student body. Storage space is limited at Prescott, and some of the foods that are delivered are frozen and packaged products, like ones you might find at a gas station convenience store. Even food that's made on-site from raw ingredients, like fresh antibiotic-free chicken drumsticks, are marinated and cooked here, but are then individually packaged and frozen to be shipped to schools, where they are reheated for lunch two days later.

LeBarre said OUSD is trying to eliminate prepackaged food and develop recipes that can be made at the schools. One of the things that will help make this happen is an industrial combination oven called the Angelo Po that acts as a stove top, steamer and oven.



An OUSD Nutrition Services worker walks by an Angelo Po combination oven at Prescott's central kitchen. These ovens will allow schools to prepare fresh, scratch-made food for cafeteria meals. Photo: Sarah Han

Every OUSD school (except those with 25 students or fewer) will get one of these magic ovens that cuts cooking time in half. "A school will be able to cook pasta without boiling water" using one of the ovens, said LeBarre.

## The Center will have a huge kitchen, farm, education center

But even bigger changes will happen for school lunches in about two years, when OUSD's new central kitchen, The Center, is up and running. Located at 2850 West St., the former location of Marcus Foster School, the site is now an empty lot, but will eventually house a 32,000-square-foot kitchen, an instructional farm, an education center, administrative offices and a large truck loading dock. The plans include a greenhouse, an outdoor pizza oven and a produce market, where LeBarre imagines students could sell jars of "Oakland salsa" made with produce grown on the farm.

The central kitchen will have more refrigerators for bulk deliveries, a produce prep room to work with seasonal and fresh fruits and vegetables and a meat prep room, which would allow OUSD to provide quality lunch meat, something LeBarre said isn't easy to source. Rather than buying pre-sliced turkey meat, for example, the kitchen could

work with raw turkey that they'd cook and slice on-site to send to schools.



This empty lot at 2850 West St. will eventually become The Center, featuring a central kitchen, an instructional farm, an education center, administrative offices and a large truck-loading dock for OUSD. Photo: Sarah Han

When it opens and is fully operational in 2020, The Center will be the most comprehensive central kitchen at a school district.

But before then, OUSD must remodel outdated kitchens, and sometimes build new facilities, into finishing kitchens, which will have the proper equipment to receive and cook all meals made at The Center. The kitchen updates are made possible by the USDA's Equipment Assistance Grant, which prioritizes funding for schools where 50% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. So far, three kitchens have been remodeled, and another 12 are in the works.



The salad bar at Madison Academy in East Oakland. Photo: Sarah Han

## A California-sourced meal at Madison Academy

For our last stop on the tour, we visited an example of one of OUSD's 30 cooking kitchen. Food can be delivered directly by vendors to a cooking kitchen, where it is prepared, cooked and served on site. Unlike finishing kitchens, cooking kitchens will not depend on The Center, although it may receive some additional support from the central commissary once it's up and running.

At around noon, we arrived at Madison Academy, a business and art-focused school for grades 6-12 located in East Oakland. Groups of kids were finishing up lunch as we entered the cafeteria, but the smell of barbecued chicken was still in the air. Some of us on the tour opted to try the \$4.25 meal — a choice of BBQ chicken with half a wholewheat pita or a bean, rice and cheese burrito. Either option came with a salad, a small whole fruit, a carton of 1% low-fat milk, plus access to a salad bar, where black beans, roasted potato cubes, shredded carrots, cucumber slices and more salad greens could supplement a meal. As we happened to be at Madison for California Thursday, all of the food we ate had been sourced within the state.



Madison Academy is one of about 30 OUSD schools with a working kitchen. Photo: Sarah Han

Tucking in, I had few expectations — we were eating lunch prepared by a four-star school



district, not a four-star restaurant, after all — but I came away impressed. Unlike the cafeteria chicken I recall from my youth — nuggets and patties made of composite poultry parts — the drumsticks on my tray were visibly real chicken. They were moist and unexpectedly flavorful, too. Overall, the meal smelled, looked and tasted like real whole food. And while that's not the most glowing review of a meal I could give, it's still

significant, especially when we were reminded that this may be the best and most nutritious meal a student might eat all day.

And that's why LeBarre and her staff continue to do the work they do. As Le Barre put it, "Good food is possible for every community."

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Richard Williams <richard.williams@lacity.org>

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## I Do Not Support an Increase in Funding for Vision Zero LA

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**Peter Glick** <info@actionnetwork.org>  
Reply-To: PMGlick@gmail.com  
To: richard.williams@lacity.org

Mon, May 7, 2018 at 10:21 PM

Richard Williams,

RE: Council file No. 18-0600

I understand that the LA City Council is considering Mayor Garcetti's request to increase the budget for Vision Zero to \$91 million dollars.

Based on what was done on Venice Blvd. in Mar Vista, I have zero confidence that this money will be used wisely.

The road diet on Venice Blvd., what our community refers to as the lane thefts, has not made the boulevard any safer. Using 6 month project data from LADOT, we know that collisions per 1 million vehicle miles traveled have gone up from 3.00 pre-project to 3.22 post-project and injury collisions per 1 million vehicle miles traveled have gone up from 1.95 pre-project to 2.33 post-project.

What the lane thefts have done is create numerous collateral effects, among them:

- 1) gridlock on Venice Blvd which is affecting LAFD emergency response times during peak travel hours
- 2) a serious cut through traffic problem in our neighborhoods because the traffic volume on Venice Blvd has been decreased by LADOT from 46,500 to 31,000 cars a day
- 3) small businesses are hurting because reducing the lanes by 33% - from 6 to 4 - has resulted in 33% fewer potential customers driving down Venice Blvd.

Since its implementation in 2015, traffic related fatalities have increased under Vision Zero. I urge you to ask LADOT for an explanation why this program isn't performing to expectations before you give it more money.

I also urge you to join us in asking for the lanes to be restored on Venice Blvd.

Thank you,

Peter Glick  
[PMGlick@gmail.com](mailto:PMGlick@gmail.com)  
3820 Lyceum Ave.  
[Los Angeles, California 90066](http://Los Angeles, California 90066)



Richard Williams <richard.williams@lacity.org>

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## I Do Not Support an Increase in Funding for Vision Zero LA

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**Matthew Pennington** <info@actionnetwork.org>  
Reply-To: mpennington7@gmail.com  
To: richard.williams@lacity.org

Mon, May 7, 2018 at 7:55 AM

Richard Williams,

RE: Council file No. 18-0600

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I also urge you to join us in asking for the lanes to be restored on Venice Blvd.

Thank you,  
Matthew Pennington

Matthew Pennington  
[mpennington7@gmail.com](mailto:mpennington7@gmail.com)  
4274 Grand View Blvd  
[Los Angeles, California 90066](#)



Richard Williams <richard.williams@lacity.org>

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## Fwd: Provide LAPD with Greater Resources and Support in the East Valley

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Anna Martinez <anna.martinez@lacity.org>

Mon, May 7, 2018 at 3:30 PM

To: Richard Williams <richard.williams@lacity.org>, Gloria Pinon <gloria.pinon@lacity.org>

Please see email below.

--

**Anna Martinez**

**Office of the City Clerk**

200 N. Spring St., Rm. 360

Los Angeles, CA 90012

213-978-1025

213-978-1027 - FAX

Mail Stop 160-01



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Michelle Karlich** <michellekarlich@mac.com>

Date: Mon, May 7, 2018 at 3:30 PM

Subject: Provide LAPD with Greater Resources and Support in the East Valley

To: mayor.garcetti@lacity.org, councilmember.cedillo@lacity.org, councilmember.Krekorian@lacity.org, councilmember.blumenfield@lacity.org, david.ryu@lacity.org, paul.koretz@lacity.org, Councilmember.Rodriguez@lacity.org, councilmember.harris-dawson@lacity.org, councilmember.price@lacity.org, councilmember.wesson@lacity.org, councilmember.bonin@lacity.org, councilmember.englander@lacity.org, councilmember.ofarrell@lacity.org, councilmember.huizar@lacity.org, councilmember.buscaino@lacity.org, CityClerk@lacity.org, geoffrey.yazzetta@lacity.org  
Cc: jackie.keene@lacity.org, geoffrey.yazzetta

Dear City Council Members & Mayor Garcetti --

In the area of crime and public safety the city of Los Angeles is headed in the wrong direction. East Valley neighborhoods are facing a wide-range of issues that require the greater resources and attention of the LAPD. **The amount of homeless people in Studio City and the valley has increased tremendously which definitely contributes to crime and drugs. There is a crisis and it needs to be addressed. Ignoring it won't make them go away. Children should feel safe in their neighborhoods.**

Therefore, in the section labeled Los Angeles Police Protective League (LAPPL), I strongly support the work of the Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates and their 2018-19 budget recommendations. As I agree with their following recommendations, my support should be filed under "Communication from Public" in Council file 18-0600.

In advance of the 2018-19 fiscal city budget, I support the Neighborhood Council's Budget Advocates proposed recommendations to protect existing officers, improve their working environment and provide maximum benefit to the people whose taxes pay police salaries. The Budget Advocates recommends the City work with the LAPD on the following:

- Raise the recruitment budget to \$500,000.00 and give authority for greater outreach for candidates.
- Raise police salaries to discourage sworn officers from quitting to work in neighboring jurisdictions where the pay is better.
- Increase the sworn personnel to 12,500 as soon as practical.
- Mandate a minimum number of sworn personnel for each division.



-- Make the LAPD's unused budgeted funds available for officer overtime instead of returning them to the General Fund.

**-- Hire civilians to cover all non-essential desk jobs, to free up officers for policing. Engage to community to help even in small ways.**

Upon approval of 2018-19 budget, we immediately need greater resources directed to the North Hollywood and Van Nuys police divisions.

We demand action.

Thank you

Michelle Karlich

Studio City, CA 91604



Richard Williams <[richard.williams@lacity.org](mailto:richard.williams@lacity.org)>

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## I Do Not Support an Increase in Funding for Vision Zero LA

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**Rochelle Hochberg** <[rhochberg@ca.rr.com](mailto:rhochberg@ca.rr.com)>  
Reply-To: [rhochberg@ca.rr.com](mailto:rhochberg@ca.rr.com)  
To: [richard.williams@lacity.org](mailto:richard.williams@lacity.org)

Mon, May 7, 2018 at 5:13 PM

Richard Williams,

RE: Council file No. 18-0600

I understand that the LA City Council is considering Mayor Garcetti's request to increase the budget for Vision Zero to \$91 million dollars.

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What the lane thefts have done is create numerous collateral effects, among them:

- 1) gridlock on Venice Blvd which is affecting LAFD emergency response times during peak travel hours
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- 3) small businesses are hurting because reducing the lanes by 33% - from 6 to 4 - has resulted in 33% fewer potential customers driving down Venice Blvd.

Since its implementation in 2015, traffic related fatalities have increased under Vision Zero. I urge you to ask LADOT for an explanation why this program isn't performing to expectations before you give it more money.

I also urge you to join us in asking for the lanes to be restored on Venice Blvd.

Thank you,

Rochelle Hochberg  
[rhochberg@ca.rr.com](mailto:rhochberg@ca.rr.com)  
2602 Beach Av.  
[Venice, California 90291](#)



Richard Williams <richard.williams@lacity.org>

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## I Do Not Support an Increase in Funding for Vision Zero LA

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Eli Friedler <elimina@ca.rr.com>  
Reply-To: elimina@ca.rr.com  
To: richard.williams@lacity.org

Mon, May 7, 2018 at 6:59 AM

Richard Williams,

RE: Council file No. 18-0600

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Thank you,

Eli Friedler  
[elimina@ca.rr.com](mailto:elimina@ca.rr.com)  
2342 Clark Ave  
Venice , California 90291