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**THE CITY FEEDS THE POOR:
THE STRUGGLE FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS
IN SAN FRANCISCO**

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ABSTRACT

The City Feeds the Poor: The Struggle for Sustainable Food Systems

in San Francisco

by

Paula K. Jones

The literature on public procurement, sustainable development and school food is growing as many look to improve the economic viability of small and medium sized farms by expanding their market opportunities to include public food service operations. Because of their place in public bureaucracies, many advocates look to school food procurement as a domain they may rightly claim. However, many lack an understanding of the complexity of the school meal system, as well as the role of local school meal programs in communities as anti hunger programs, child wellness initiatives, and employment for communities. There is also a lack of understanding of the structural opportunities and barriers within local school meal programs that either inhibit or advance local procurement of regionally produced agricultural.

The in-depth case study of San Francisco school meals exposes the impact of federal and state policy and funding changes to a local educational system, and also reveals the role of organizational history and structure as an important actor in the

project to rebuild public school food systems to serve growing children, and advance markets for regional small and mid-sized farmers.

DEDICATION

For all who are working to improve school food.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The U.S. Conference of Mayors recently passed the resolution below to demonstrate the priorities of U.S. mayors in relation to the most recent reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act and the child nutrition programs on which their cities depend to feed children:

WHEREAS, the most recent USDA data showed that childhood hunger is rising at alarming rates and that 12.6 million children live in households facing a constant struggle against hunger; and ...

WHEREAS, there is a strong connection between the nation's agricultural production and Child Nutrition programs...provide an opportunity to improve these connections while increasing the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables served to children; and...

WHEREAS, ... the federal support for these programs has not kept pace with children's need for these programs, food and transportation cost inflation, the costs of delivering services...; and

WHEREAS, the cost of living varies widely throughout the country, and standardized federal reimbursement rates have significantly less buying power in areas with high costs of living and federal poverty definitions do not properly measure families' need and therefore deny access to many needy families; and

WHEREAS, excessive rules, regulations and paperwork burdens make administering these programs costly and time consuming...

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the U.S. Conference of Mayors urges Congress to make a substantial investment of funding in and simplification of

program regulations for Child Nutrition Programs during the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, and...

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the U.S. Conference of Mayors urges Congress to reinstate the Food Service Equipment Assistance Program to support schools in preparing and serving more fresh food, and support children's connection with agriculture, nutrition and the environment by reducing barriers and providing incentives and funding for school gardens, farm to school, farmers markets and salad bar programs (US Conference of Mayors, 2009).

Background

Across the country there are efforts to transform the industrial food system toward new models that affirm and celebrate the benefits of fresh, local foods. Though much of this new agenda is centered on private consumption (in restaurants and the homes of reflexive consumers), the struggle to redefine wellness and a healthy and sustainable diet has also begun to engage systems of public procurement and provisioning, particularly in the case of school meals. In this, the movement for sustainable food encounters the multiple levels of institutional structures, regulations, and funding that connect food, poverty, public entitlement and social welfare, public health, agriculture policy, and the market.

The city feeds the poor. It does so through multiple public institutions: schools, but also hospitals, jails, juvenile halls, food banks, free dining rooms (soup kitchens), farmers' markets, community gardens, the administration of federal nutrition programs, and the private retail sector (from restaurants to corner markets). As Morgan and Sonnino (2010) explain

A new food equation is taking shape in response to burgeoning prices for basic foodstuffs and growing concerns about the security and sustainability of the agri-food system. Far from being confined to the countries of the global south, food security is now a major issue for the global north, where cities are most exposed to the new pressures on account of their ecological and political sensibilities (Morgan & Sonnino, 2010).

This project builds on my research and experience as an activist and professional engaged in advancing a coordinated food system planning agenda in San Francisco's in order to ensure that all citizens have access to healthy and sustainable food by first ensuring that public nutrition entitlements (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly food stamps, National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Afterschool Meals Program, Supper Food Service, Child and Adult Care Food Program) are fully utilized at the local level, and that they are leveraged to serve more vulnerable San Franciscans high quality, appealing, and hopefully, delicious food.

Working on federally funded programs at the local level requires engagement with the multiple levels of regulations, funding, and structure that are regularly changing and always exert a significant influence over the city's ability to feed the poor. Working on local level food system policy, planning and programming has also connected me to state and national networks and coalitions that join together to share their work, advocate for additional funding, resist forces intent on dismantling public entitlements, and advance a national food system policy agenda with health equity and sustainability at the core.

This project also draws on the growing academic literature (the agrifood work) that has addressed many aspects of this complex movement from the perspectives of multiple disciplines and as it arises in other places. The agrifood literature provides a lens through which the multifaceted, dynamic, and at times, a highly particular alternative food movement can be understood, examined, and placed in relation to a historical context of social movements; modernization, industrialization, and corporate concentration of the agriculture and food system; the contested role of the state; and the permeable division between the public sector and private enterprises operating in the market.

Relevance of research

The literature on public procurement, sustainable development and school food is growing as many look to improve the market viability of small and medium sized farms through institutional purchasing by public food service operations, since scaling sustainable agricultural practices in regional food systems requires supportive infrastructure and markets. Because of their place in public bureaucracies, many advocates look to school food procurement as a domain they may rightly claim. However, often an understanding of the complexity of the school meal system, in general, is lacking, as well as the particular role of local school meal programs in communities as anti hunger programs, child wellness initiatives, and employment for communities. There is also a lack of understanding of the structural opportunities and barriers that either inhibit or advance local procurement of regionally produced

agricultural products. Below is a letter sent to the U.S. House of Representatives from the American Association of School Administrators, the Council of Great City Schools, and the National School Board Association regarding proposed changes to the Child Nutrition Act. The letter demonstrates the challenges of operating school meal programs faced by the leadership of school districts in the United States.

All of the national organizations representing the nation's public school districts do not support the Senate version of the Child Nutrition reauthorization bill (S. 3307) pending before the House...

School districts recognize the importance of providing healthy meals and snack options for school children, and support updating the nutritional standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. But, school districts continue to financially subsidize the federal meals program at the expense of our primary responsibility, our students' educational program.

U. S. Department of Agriculture studies document that school districts' cost of providing free lunches exceeds the federal reimbursement by over thirty cents per meal, or an annual cost of \$54,000 for school districts serving 1,000 students daily—the equivalent cost of retaining a teacher. In high cost areas, the un-reimbursed cost can be significantly more....Notably, none of the interest groups or celebrities promoting this bill bears the governmental and legal responsibility of school district officials to deliver services with an annual balanced budget.

School districts simply request that Congress pay for the costs of the federal free and reduced priced school meals, and refrain from imposing new federal requirements particularly in this economic environment.... Unfortunately, little attention has been focused on the drain of local school district funds to pay for or offset the continuing un-funded costs of the federal free and reduced-priced school meals. We, therefore, recommend a "no" vote

on S. 3307 and passage of a simple extension of the current programs (American Association of School Administrators, Council of Great City Schools, & National School Board Association, 2010).

The social, political and cultural landscape of food institutions are informed and affected by local, state and national policies and funding streams that are often obscured by narrowly defined engagements with the school meal program. Many of these contexts and activities connected to school meal improvements involve a diverse array of constituencies characterized by specific agendas that approach school food from specific parts of the food system. School lunch is a result of multiple local factors including labor costs, state reimbursements, kitchen infrastructure, and budget development. The specific form of each of these local factors precede efforts to transform public food dollars to support regional agricultural producers, and provide the foundation (whether robust or frail) for any engagement with school meal programs.

Some have criticized the alternative food movement's engagement with public procurement and school meals as advancing neoliberal forms and practices, partially because these projects rely on private resources, and are rolled out unevenly across the country. However, school food programs across the United States were created and have always existed in highly specific forms in local places. The American school food experience in local communities has also reflected a range of privatization and industrialization depending on local context; and uniformity in this national program does not exist.

This research systematically investigates how multiple contexts and conditions inform and drive the implementation of school meal programs as a profound illustration of how the city feeds its' poor.

Research questions, goals, methods

Question:

- How can SF support sustainable regional agriculture and also feed the poor?
- To what degree are sustainable food system initiatives in San Francisco successful? If so, why? If not, why not?
- How do we make significant systemic changes?
- What social structures support consumption of sustainable agriculture production
- Is the complexity of the endeavor to connect public procurement to sustainable development adequately conveyed?
- Are strategies employed adequate to yield the results?

I hope that my research will inform strategy, policy, funding and action for actors in government and community who wish to transform the food system especially in school lunchrooms, to become more environmentally sustainable, more socially just and more equitable.

This research utilizes an illustrative case study approach to empirically investigate and critically analyze how bureaucracies, institutions, and organizational

structures and functions, engage with diverse social actors to address food systems challenges and issues in society in order to provide safe, sustainable and affordable food for poor communities. Specifically, this work provides an in-depth, detailed contextual analysis of food systems activities and relationships in the City and County of San Francisco, integrating a comprehensive document review and formal archival research with unobtrusive participant observations. This work investigates how real-life situations, events, issues and problems are grounded in the historical record and how policies, rules and regulations iteratively build upon each other to inform and establish contemporary food systems approaches from an institutional and organizational scale in an American city. The methodological processes leveraged the research questions to carefully construct, assess, understand and identify the challenges, barriers, and issues in food systems activities that support or hinder the provision of safe, just, sustainable and nutritious food to members of diverse communities in the City and County of San Francisco. The case study method for this research relied primarily on a single case, the City and County of San Francisco. However, a number of shorter, illustrative cases were incorporated into the research design to provide significant data to clarify and provide analytic rigor to the single case. A key strength is this illustrative case study with supporting evidence of shorter multiple cases is the integration of multiple sources and methodological techniques to build evidence that illustrates the food systems activities, processes and issues that emanate from a series of structural and organizational scales influencing how the city feeds the poor. Collected data to inform the cases used in this research were

methodically designed to establish a chain of evidence using within-case examination and cross-case examination cast within the historical and archival documents inform current food systems practices. This methodological approach required the use of multiple pieces of evidence from diverse sources to uncover convergent lines of data that frame and shed light to the conditions of current food provision by organizations, institutions and individuals in the city.

Structure of the thesis

The study begins with a literature review that explores a wide range of issues to necessary to have a more complete understanding of and engagements with school meal programs. A historical examination of the national program provides a realistic context for examining and understanding subsequent and current policy and funding shifts, and local responses. My engagement with agrofood studies is organized around three major themes in the literature – social justice in food systems; the moral role of the state; and the role of alternative food networks as a form of economic life and of the challenge to maintain alterity within the pressures of the mainstream capitalist economy. I also review the recommendations from the sustainable agriculture community for scaling sustainable practices in order to understand the role of the public school institutions and markets to advance sustainable practices.

These themes provide a lens through which the research can be examined, explained, and perhaps utilized to yield a better understanding of the complexities and opportunities to not only utilize school food procurement to support regional farmers

and sustainable food system, but to also leverage these programs to better serve the health and well being of the children for which they are intended.

The publicly funded school meal program is governed and influenced by multiple levels of policy and funding, from the U.S. federal, the state, and the local level. Further, as a federally funded program that exists mainly within public educational systems, examinations of education requirements and funding provide a background to better understand how local school meal programs are situated within highly constrained, politicized, and challenged public school environments. To do this, I examine the research and data on public school funding as well as national studies on school meal programs across the country, and publically available reports and government documents to understand the range of regulations and funding that impact local school districts as well as the school meal programs operating within them. I utilize a broad and extensive history of research on many operational aspects of this complex national public nutrition program for data and comparative analysis.

In addition, examples from specific state level influences, as well as local districts across the country illustrate highly unique factors within local programs that could impede or advance procurement of regional farm products may be higher in cost or require additional labor to procure and process. A review of research on the growing number of programs connecting farms to school through public procurement reveal that motivations of farmers are higher prices and steady markets, while food service personnel need reliable suppliers, products that have been processed to minimize labor at the school sites, within their constrained budgets.

The contracted delivery driver is the first person to get to the school cafeteria each day. The drivers unload the frozen meals, load the aging rethermalization ovens and start the heating process. When the kitchen worker comes several hours later to set out breakfast, the lunches have already begun to be heated. The kitchen worker is only there for 1-2 hours to coordinate breakfast, and then is off the clock until needed to set out lunch, working then for 2-3 hours more (Observations from San Francisco, 2009).

A review of the myriad and growing role of private firms within the public school meals program reveals a long history and growing diversity in form of these public/private arrangements. School meal programs have evolved within the global food system, and have long ago integrated infrastructure, processes, contracts, labor arrangements and menus that reflect the influence of private food corporations. New models of private businesses and nonprofit programs that work within the market to redefine values and norms and introduce greater transparency, often privilege local and sustainable food procurement and freshly prepared food over industrially prepared, convenience meals shipped from distant locations. These forms of private engagement may replace existing private companies already operating in school systems but with traditional missions that privilege shareholder return over all other outcomes.

It's 5 am and I'm standing in the cold on the asphalt school parking lot in Visitation Valley – a neighborhood on the

south east edge of San Francisco at the edge of John McLaren Park and a few blocks from the Sunnydale housing projects. The parking lot is already abuzz with activity – a semi truck is being offloaded. There are two permanent mobile freezers on the parking lot that will store the food being offloaded today.

The food is brought in frozen from a national vendor and offloaded, literally, onto the parking lot. The national vendor is a food service company owned by a private equity investment firm located in downtown San Francisco, and the company makes over 1 million meals in the U.S. each day in production centers in the Midwest and the East Coast.

One lone produce truck is being offloaded onto the parking lot by a driver with only a borrowed hand dolly – the substitute driver was completely unaware that the San Francisco Unified School District school meals program did not have a loading dock.

A small fleet of white panel vans pull up – it's the contract delivery service that delivers the food to 113 schools via 37 routes. The district doesn't own a fleet of delivery trucks, and the company providing the delivery service is the only one that will bid on the contract (Observations from San Francisco, 2009).

The in-depth case study of San Francisco school meals exposes the impact of federal and state policy and funding changes to a local level educational system, and also reveals the role of organizational history and structure as an important actor in the project to rebuild public school food systems to serve growing children, and advance markets for regional small and midsized farmers. Through the example of San Francisco, local level actions to promote equitable and sustainable food in the

school meals have met with overwhelming resistance, especially due to the city's history of progressive labor practices which make San Francisco one of the most expensive places in which to operate a school meal program. Further, a historic ambivalence to the school meal program in San Francisco has resulted in a current system that is lacking critical infrastructure, or is in the advanced stages of decline (broken and aging kitchen equipment), lack of widespread public engagement, little understanding of the complexities of the program by district leadership or school site administration, district budgets developed to extract funds from school meals yet fund program deficits, and a food system that evolved (but has recently been dismantled) to provide one set of choices to students depending on free lunch and a different set of choices for students that can pay.

I examine the SFUSD school meal program first from the current challenges, and move backwards to review the program from a historical perspective in order to explain the impact of the history on the current operations and to highlight key moments in the program's history that held promise, but which imploded to leave a poorly funded program with inadequate infrastructure that continues to be used today. The examination of this history also reveals a reality that advocates would benefit by understanding in order to mobilize resources and attention toward key issues necessary to advance structural improvement to the program.

In the concluding chapter, I explore the opportunities for moving the school food reform agenda forward both in San Francisco as well as promising models from across all levels of government. I first provide current realities of the school meal

program in San Francisco to illustrate possibilities and continued challenges. In addition, I briefly examine innovative cases of structural engagements with public sector food service from the federal, the state, and the local level that recognize and understand the fiscal and political context within which school food service operations exist in order to engage with the institutions and physical, political and economic structures that regulate these operations.

I conclude with a reengagement with the agrifood literature and offer a proposal that organizational infrastructure and behavior, and the multiple influences of local, state and federal policy and funding, are important actors to be understood, engaged and transformed in order for school meal programs to be fully active partners in the project to utilize public procurement to advance sustainable development and to provide markets for local agricultural producers practicing sustainable practices; and, to most importantly, to serve children with healthy, fresh, appealing food during their school day.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

School food programs have increasingly become the subject of scrutiny, intervention, and economic pursuit. Many are concerned by the rise in preventable diet related diseases in children, and look to remake school meal programs to promote children's health. Others are concerned by rising childhood hunger, and a lack of participation in school meal program by eligible low-income children. Still others ranging from large food corporations to entrepreneurial local caterers and those seeking to increase profits for small and midsized farmers look at the purchasing power of these public institutions as a lucrative market.

Society, the state and the market

This research draws on literature from a wide range of fields and perspectives to understand and engage the myriad issues surrounding the school meal program as a tool to build local food systems and improve children's diets. I utilize multiple in-depth examinations of the history and influences on the federal school meal programs to provide data on the complex array of political, economic and social influences that have shaped the historic evolution of the program. I also draw on a broad and extensive literature on many operational aspects of this complex national public nutrition program for data and comparative analysis. Since local school meal programs exist within a much larger arena of public education, I also examine

national statistics on education finance to show the different local financial conditions in which these nutrition programs exist.

My engagement with agrofood studies is organized around three major themes in the literature – social justice in food systems; the moral role of the state; and the role of alternative food networks as a form of economic life and of the challenge to maintain alterity within the pressures of the mainstream capitalist economy. These three themes support the weight of evidence that informs this work by illustrating how social justice, the state and alternative networks navigate, inform and determine the implementation of numerous food systems projects on multiple levels across a number of scales.

Some researchers approach the issue grounded in the pursuit of social justice, civil society, food access and poverty. Many proponents believe in the transformative potential of the alternative food movement as a social movement that can bring about food systems that are less controlled by global corporate forces and are instead locally controlled and socially just (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996; Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010); although some challenge the movements to focus more on social justice issues (Allen, 2004, 2008, 2010) social inclusion, (Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002) and alignment with radical agendas (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). In the United States, school food projects focused on local food emerge out of alternative food projects focused on building alliances between the urban and the rural, and on cultivating urban consumers' commitment to expanded markets for local farmers. (Kloppenber & Hassanein, 2006; Kloppenber, Wubben, & Grunes, 2008).

Other literature informative to my study focuses on the role and expectations of the state to bring about sustainable development. Concepts of moral economy, multilevels of governance, the “Green State,” and the potential of public procurement guide the direct engagement with the state (Morgan, Marsden & Murdoch, 2006; Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). Although much of the research has been focused on the European experience that evolves out of different understandings and expectations of the state than in America, the concepts of multilevel governance can be applied to alternative food projects’ engagement with public school meal programs.

Additionally key research and examinations of how patterns of capital have driven the global food economy, and how local food projects co-exist with and depend on the market, although they reflect new values and ways of doing things, can be helpful in explaining both strategies and obstacles that affect the transformation of school meals into markets for local farm products (Goodman, DuPuis and Goodman, 2012). As school food programs have evolved over many decades in a globalizing food economy, structural features of these programs reflect a high degree of industrialization and are dependent in critical ways on market actors outside of the public realm.

Critiques of alternative food initiatives focused on connecting school meals to local farms have charged that the school food initiatives known as farm-to-school have exacerbated neoliberal governance, partially based on the premise that these programs diverge “from the uniform, national traditional school food program” (Allen and Guthman, 2006, p. 405). However, as will be discussed in this study, the

National School Lunch Program, as well as public education, has evolved unevenly in local places, and there has never been a “uniform” school food program in the U.S. A critical examination of this program in San Francisco calls into question whether farm-to-school programs actually promote further privatization or whether they may substitute existing privatizations. Further, it also questions whether an uncritical view of public sector labor and publically “owned” work is justified given the locally specific labor arrangements of public sector employees, as well as the lack of uniformity of national unions’ engagement with critical local public issues including employees’ benefits, compensation and protection, as well as children’s welfare.

School meal programs exist in school food environments which are multifaceted, encompassing and being imprinted upon by a confluence of history, culture, advocates, the state and the market. Through the study of the school meal program in San Francisco, I engage the question of if and how sustainable agriculture can serve the needs of the poor. By doing so, I also interrogate the possibilities for this program to meaningfully connect with and contribute to efforts to build regional foodsheds, and I examine the role of school food actors in connecting or inhibiting school food linkages to local sustainable agriculture. The study reveals the role of organizational history and institutional identity as important factors to be considered, engaged and transformed in the project to remake local food systems, build local food economies, and ensure food justice.

Histories of the school lunch program

The National School Lunch Program has long been the subject of extensive inquiry. Gunderson's (1971) *The National School Lunch Program: Background and Development*, provides a comprehensive overview of the long history of local school meal programs including the early history of programs in multiple European countries and cities, and programs in several large U.S. cities. He reviews how the U.S. federal government provided aid to local programs prior to the approval of the National School Lunch Act in 1946, as well as after the establishment of the National School Lunch Program.

In her book, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program*, Levine (2008) examines the politics and culture of food, especially the way in which diets for America's children are decided, and the policies that support these decisions. She highlights the role of the National School Lunch Program in the U.S.'s welfare programs, and describes how the program has developed through the years. Beginning as a program primarily intended to absorb surplus agricultural products to provide meals to all children in schools (while receiving support from local public funding), it evolved to serve primarily needy children. Levine also discusses the structural funding inadequacies of the program (relative to the goal of feeding children), the changing nutrition requirements, and the evolution of and increasing involvement of the food industry.

In her introduction, Levine (2008) mentions the efforts of celebrity chefs and notes that these efforts are usually heavily underwritten by grants and other private funds. She examines the role of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in promoting agriculture, not nutrition – and discusses how nutrition policy intersects with agriculture policy (Levine, 2008, p. 153). During the Nixon administration, food as welfare became an institutional part of the U.S. federal budget. By the 1970s, USDA spending on domestic food programs exceeded payments for farm programs.

Despite the relatively recent high profile support for school meals, the social commitment of safe and healthy food for children is thwarted by a national history of negligence, indifference, opportunism, and at times, contempt. The problems of the school food system are becoming increasingly visible, as activists with competing interests (wellness, environmental sustainability, food education, markets for farmers and food security) confront local school food programs in systems suffering from decades of neglect of public attention.

School food began as a local concern. In the industrial cities at the turn of the last century, settlement house workers and others with charitable concerns took up the problem of children's food. Initial funding was charitable or municipal (Gunderson, 1971; Levine, 2008). During the Depression, some (but not all) states began to participate in funding school lunches. Similar local and later national initiatives were appearing in the other industrial counties. The UK enacted the Education (Provision of Meals) Act in 1905. Initial programs were concerned with the nutrition of all

children; parents were expected to pay, but those who could not were often forgiven (Gunderson, 1971).

Federal Depression-era programs in the U.S. emerged as part of initiatives both to make use of agricultural surpluses and to foster the employment of women at a time of high unemployment. Federal rules developed during the Depression and World War II required that in order for the agencies that sponsored school meals programs to receive commodities in surplus, they must formalize an agreement with the state agency responsible for distributing the surplus commodities (Gunderson, 1971, p. 12). The sponsoring agency such as a board of education, a parent teacher association, or some other community organization must agree to the following:

- That the commodities would be used for preparation of school lunches on the school premises.
- That the commodities would not be sold or exchanged.
- That the food purchases would not be discontinued or curtailed because of the receipt of surplus foods.
- That the program would not be operated for profit.
- That the children who could not pay for their meals would not be segregated or discriminated against and would not be identified to their peers.
- That proper warehousing would be provided and proper accounting would be rendered for all foods received (Gunderson, 1971, p. 12).

The provisions supported and emphasized local responsibility for the program.

Some operational support for labor in the program was provided just prior to and during the Great Depression through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and the New Deal program, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The federal support was greatly expanded through the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.)

(Gunderson, 1971). Unemployed women across the country in every community were provided employment in school cafeterias. By March 1941, 64,298 cafeteria workers in all states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico were employed in school lunch programs in 26,160 schools. Along with funding for part time school lunch staffing provided by another federal agency, the National Youth Administration, by February 1942, there were 92,916 schools serving 6 million children daily (Gunderson, 1971, p. 13).

During the War, the requirements of the Army drew away the surplus food, and support for children's lunches fell dramatically. As more Americans were employed in defense industries, W.P.A. labor assistance for school meal programs declined, and the agency was closed in 1943. In the years after WWII, new federal laws began to provide cash subsidies replacing parts of the federal support provided under New Deal programs, but without the intentions of also underwriting the local employment of women. Cash subsidies were not to be used for labor or equipment. Subsequent legislation, such as the National School Lunch Act of 1946, continued the distribution of commodities (or funds in lieu of commodities) through state agencies to the schools, and continued the prohibition against discrimination or public identification of needy children. Funds for the capital needs of school facilities were to be separately authorized (Gunderson, 1971).

Free food and the path to privatization, convenience, and junk food

The 1966 Child Nutrition Act extended federal support to a pilot School Breakfast Program and returned to (now partial) underwriting of facilities and equipment costs. At this time, other school nutrition programs, which had been spread across a number of federal agencies, were centralized under the Department of Agriculture. Participation and compliance was still highly variable. In 1969, two civic commissions studying hunger in the late days of the Civil Rights movement, found widespread limits and inequities in the effects of the federal programs. In 1970, President Nixon signed HR 515 making children's access to food a national priority by requiring that free or reduced-priced lunches were provided for all needy children, stating that "this legislation will help the administration achieve its goal of expanding the school lunch program for all children providing a free or reduced-cost lunch for every needy school child" (Nixon, 1970). Uniform national criteria for program eligibility were established at a federal level, when previously it was the responsibility of the local school boards to decide eligibility for the program (Gunderson, 1971, p. 26).

"Children's nutrition was caught in an ongoing struggle for resources that pitted state and local communities against federal mandates" (Levine, 2008, p. 157). As the federal mandates increased, private corporate actors entered the public feeding arena. The program at this point was not viewed as only a federally funded program, and local and state contributions were expected by federal officials, though not

forthcoming by local governments. However, with the mandate to feed more poor children and the rising costs of food, local communities struggled to fund this new requirement. Prior to the federal mandate, communities relied on fees from paying children to fund local programs, and poorer children participated in fewer numbers. Once the federal government mandated the local operation of free meal programs, prices for paid lunches rose, driving paying students out of the program (Levine, 2008, p. 154-155). States and local districts were less open to funding public education and expanded meal programs, and started to look to private food businesses to step in to fill the need.

Since the 1950s, the USDA had defined and subsidized three types of lunches – Type A, Type B, and Type C. Type A was considered a “complete meal” and was mandated to contain one third of a child’s daily required nutrition. Type B lunches contained fewer items and smaller portion sizes, and a Type C only provided milk (School Nutrition Association, n.d.). According to Levine (2008), only 37 percent of all meals were Type A meals. In 1970, Type B, and Type C were no longer available, requiring that only complete meals were served under the program (Levine, 2008).

Underfunding has been a structural characteristic of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and has led to the privatization of many areas of the program. Since the beginning of the federal government’s engagement with local school meal programs, program architects and advocates had intentionally kept private interests out of school lunchrooms in order to protect students from school

cafeterias driven by corporate profit motives. However, this was about to change. With the complete restructuring of the program to require free and reduced priced meals for all low-income children, and abandoning the formerly subsidized Type B and Type C meals, the opening for privatization and industrialization of school food, and the abandonment of nutrition protections for all children in schools was beginning.

With the new requirement for one accepted type of federally subsidized lunches, and the constrained infrastructure for cooking, many felt that the private sector which had made great strides in incorporating technology to gain efficiencies in food service might be better equipped to provide lunches to the expanding number of low-income children participating. Levine's research reveals that it was an alliance between corporations and community advocates that advanced the corporate food agenda through the school meals program. Levine's review of Congressional Records shows that even children's advocates at the time promoted the idea that especially in low-income urban areas, school should "buy freezers and microwave ovens" in order to feed more children (Levine, 2008, p. 160).

Once free lunches were mandated for all poor children, public officials and hunger activists alike began to cede the program to the private sector. Because neither Congress nor the public in general seemed willing to fund children's "right to lunch," perhaps the corporate market might be better suited to ensuring equal opportunity for all (Levine, 2008, p. 160-161).

In 1969, the Secretary of Agriculture announced regulations that would allow private companies to run school lunch programs under contract by school districts. He invited a small number of school districts without kitchen facilities to enter into contracts with private food service management companies for the preparation, transportation and service of school food, framing these contracts as “experiments” (Levine, 2008, p. 161). The shared public belief that the nutritional health of the nations’ children deserved strict protection from corporate interest was transformed when the nation’s most vulnerable children were the focus of the public expenditure. This entry by corporations into the nations’ public child nutrition programs continued to expand to the entire school campus. As more poor children received lunches through the NSLP, a new market opportunity appeared concurrently, as paying children left the federal program.

Although the original National School Lunch Act in 1946 prohibited the selling of competitive food (food outside of the NSLP), “in 1972, the National Soft Drink Association finally succeeded in securing an amendment to the school lunch reauthorization bill that would eliminate the restriction on “competitive food” (Levine, 2008, p. 162). This new competitive food market was available for children able to pay cash, and resulted in further segregation of low-income children in cafeterias. “School lunch rooms became increasing racially and economically segregated zones” (Levine, 2008, p. 156). Additionally, competitive food was not under the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture, and there were no nutrition standards required. Further, the competitive food program seemingly operated

without federal financial support, yet federal requirements did not mandate the separation of accounting between the nonprofit NSLP, and the for profit competitive food program, leaving the opening for the use of federal funds intended for nutritionally balanced food for low-income children to be appropriated for underpriced junk food for students who could pay cash (Kavanagh, 2010). All of these issues are just now being examined and addressed on a federal level – over forty years after the introduction of this market based program into the public school sites.

The federal regulatory framework necessary for cultivating a system of privatized, and often unhealthy, school food environments broadened in 1979, “when the Department of Agriculture issued new guidelines allowing for the sale of ‘foods of minimum nutritional value’ in school lunchrooms” (Levine, 2008, p. 164). This change, along with the allowance of private industry into the lunchroom permitted even further expansion of convenience food, increase in disparities between the National School Lunch Program and other food sold in schools, and the growth in profit opportunities gained at the expense of children’s health.

In sum, as the regulatory framework for the NSLP adjusted in ways that required local school districts to feed more low-income children without the financial means or cooking infrastructure to do so, it forced them to seek premade industrial convenience products, as well as the freezers and microwaves necessary to serve these products. At the same time, the NSLP rules changed to allow for private food companies to be contracted for key areas of the program (food preparation, distribution, and serving). In addition, NSLP program rules further rolled back

protections for children's health by allowing schools to sell junk food in competition with the NSLP balanced meal, and without putting in place protections for neither nutrition quality nor financial oversight.

Draconian budget threats and further strangling of local school lunch programs

In 1981, shortly after Ronald Reagan took office, Congress and the Reagan Administration proposed huge cuts to the school lunch budget, reducing reimbursements, commodity entitlements, and portion sizes, and ending the Food Service Equipment Assistance Program, which had been designed to help financially needy schools buy the equipment necessary to efficiently prepare and serve school meals. Though some of the proposed cuts were defended by the public and eventually rejected by Congress, the grants for equipment were eliminated, reduced portion sizes were approved, and the administrative burden of operating the program increased significantly with new lengthy applications for parents and the new requirement for school districts to verify information on the applications. With these changes, even more school food directors were forced to abandon scratch cooking and source prepared food from private industry. As Levine documents "popular sentiment saved the school lunch program from the axe of the Reagan budget cuts but could not save it from the fiscal problems that made privatization the only viable option for many schools around the country" (Levine, 2008, p. 178).

Between 1980 and 1982, the number of school lunches served in the U.S dropped by 14.4 percent, and participation by paid students dropped 21.76 percent (United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service [USDA-FNS], 2012a). Public outcry forced reconsideration of Reagan's draconian cuts, but federal disengagement from the protection of child nutrition continued quietly. At the same time, clever industry food executives armed with the popular American fast food model for food service, and with technical advances in food preservatives, chemical additives, and food fortification, were successful in replicating the fast food model in school cafeterias. French fries fortified with vitamin A and iron, along with fortified pizzas, hotdogs, shakes, cookies, etc. became nutritionally acceptable and reimbursable under the NSLP (Levine, 2008, p. 169-171). The changes to the NSLP program rolled out in the 1970s and 1980s have continued to today. As will be seen in the subsequent chapters, schools across the country are depending more and more on private provisioning, resulting in reduced local employment and control, inattention to cooking infrastructure, highly standardized products produced to meet minimum standards and to have long shelf lives, expanded and guaranteed markets for large food corporations, and struggles to serve freshly prepared food for growing children.

In *Free For All: Fixing School Food in America*, Poppendieck (2010) examines school food comprehensively on a federal programmatic level, presenting information through the following perspectives – history, policy, nutrition, participation, equity, environment, etc. Poppendieck covers issues rarely, if ever,

interrogated in the literature on school food including the structure of reimbursements, and segmentation of students into reimbursement categories (free, reduced, and paid), as well as the effect of this programmatic structure on student participation, stigma, the presence of competitive foods, etc.

For Poppendieck, the highest priority for the school meal program is the issue of “access and inclusion” at times stymied by “bureaucracy and stigma”

if an application is not submitted or the certification process breaks down or the child is deterred by stigma or other social pressures or the price is too high or the lines are too long or the bus arrives late, the meal does not find its intended target (Poppendieck, 2010, p. 244).

My research connects with and supports Levine’s and Poppendieck’s to provide a comprehensive case study and historical account of one of top 100 largest urban school districts in the country, an analysis of the complexity of the program, description of procurement focused interventions, as well as interventions not related to procurement that have dramatically impacted participation. Though Levine mentions efforts of celebrity chefs to transform the school lunch program, her analysis does not engage with the issue of using the school lunch program to transform regional food systems. The case of the school lunch program in San Francisco builds on these studies of the school meal program by providing additional information on issues discussed, their effect on low-income students, local funding commitment, and the outsourcing of key operational functions to private companies,

which can result in the inability of the local program to act on high priorities. For example, a local school district that relies on private companies for critical functions like food preparation and distribution can be severely constrained when attempting to integrate locally grown, sustainable food into the school meal program.

School Food Operations

There are many national studies of the school meal sponsored by the USDA which utilize information from nationally representative samples of all school food authorities. These studies provide critical information on many issues on student participation in the programs, characteristics of meal preparation systems, program revenue and expenses, staffing, purchases, etc. These studies provide invaluable information to not only examine the national program, but also to show trends in the program, and by which to compare many local program details.

These studies include the *School Lunch and Breakfast Cost Study I and II*; the *School Nutrition and Dietary Assessment I, II and III*; and *School Food Purchase Study I, II, and III*. In addition, the data generated by these studies has been utilized in additional research reports including reports on school food environments and policies (Finkelstein, Hill, & Whitaker, 2008; Story, 2009; Kavanagh, 2010) as well as numerous articles on specific aspects of nutrition quality. There are also reports utilizing original data collected on food production systems, school operations, etc. by researchers, the national School Nutrition Association and other associations such as

the Council of Great City Schools. I utilize these studies as additional data to analyze trends in the national program, as well as by which to compare the San Francisco program.

Agrofood Literature: Finding justice in the food system

The practice of localizing the procurement of food in school food programs emerges out of popular movements that brought together issues of domestic hunger and food insecurity, the decline of the family farm, the failings of U.S. farm policy, and the industrialization and globalization of the American food culture. The movement was as much about filling in the missing gaps in the American food system, and especially in low-income urban areas, as it was about resisting globalizing forces.

The focus on food justice has been articulated partially out of the community food security movement, which emerged from the integration of multiple constituencies including “urban food interests, sustainable agriculture advocates, farmland preservation groups, and rural development advocates” (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996, p. 198) which came together to advocate for specific changes in the 1995 Farm Bill. Community food security evolved from an expanded view towards domestic food security that focused less on individual hunger and embraced a more “*community-based* and prevention oriented framework” to the problem of food insecurity, with the framework including the concept of food needs being met by “local, non-emergency sources” (Gottlieb et al., 1996, p. 196). The approach focuses

on community development and entrepreneurialism to address the food needs of communities experiencing food insecurity and less on maintaining or expanding federally funded nutrition programs.

One of the early leaders of what later became known as the Community Food Security movement, Mark Winne, chronicles his long history as the Executive Director of the Hartford Food System, starting in 1979 in his recent book *Closing the Food Gap: Resettling the Table in the Land of Plenty*. Winne (2008) reviews the work in Hartford that was the first implementation of ideas advanced in the book *Food for People, Not for Profit* which was published in 1975 by Catherine Lerza and Michael Jacobson. Winne recounts how his first task as Executive Director of the Hartford Food System was to implement the newly developed food action plan for Hartford, written by Lerza (Winne, 2008, p.8-10).

Hartford's food action plan, commissioned by the city in 1977, and submitted to the city government and community organizations in 1978, was one of the first American municipal food plans to advance a food system agenda that included the nutrition needs of low-income urban consumers as well as regional farmers. The strategy to address the food needs of Hartford's low-income residents focused on addressing the rising cost of food, as well as its poor quality and growing lack of supermarkets, by building a network of neighborhood food based initiatives including garden and other urban food production, food distribution projects including coops and farmers markets, and food processing centers. The action plan relied on food

grown in close proximity to Hartford, which also opened new market opportunities for local farmers (Winne, 2008, p. 14-15).

At the same time that social activists in urban areas were advancing food agendas to improve the lives of low-income urban residents, there was also a growing awareness and critique of the unsustainability of industrial agriculture and the restructuring of rural America at the hands of corporate agribusiness (Hightower, 1972). Although the social and ecological sides of sustainability in the food system had been advanced separately, many were challenging the movements to integrate (Allen, 1991).

The idea of sustainability in agriculture and rebuilding urban food systems focused on local communities and local farmers, and these ideas were advanced through the concept of “foodshed.” For some, the foodshed “serve[d] as a conceptual and methodological unit of analysis that provides a framework for action as well as thought” (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, & Stevenson, 1996, p. 35).

The foodshed represented a place of opposition, the opening of spaces of secession - of withdrawing from the dominant food systems and the commodity and market relations under which it operated and for uniting of disparate communities (Kloppenburg et al., 1996, p. 38). Kloppenburg et al. (1996) write “a foodshed will be embedded in a moral economy that envelopes and conditions market forces” (p. 36) and they cite the progress of the Hartford Food System to achieve openings for more equitable access to food and to decision making about the food system (p. 38).

As Allen (1999) points out:

Community food security (CFS) seeks to re-link production and consumption with the goal of ensuring both an adequate and accessible food supply in both the present and the future. In its focus on consumption, CFS has prioritized the needs of low-income people; in its focus on production, it emphasizes local and regional food systems (Allen, 1999, p. 117).

She also points out how these objectives can be contradictory, and that local food insecurity emerges out of nonlocal forces. The federal nutrition safety net that has been established as entitlements is a necessary responsibility of the state to ensure that all citizens have food when the market economy fails. Allen's critique of community food security and her emphasis on the role of nutrition entitlement programs (food stamps, school lunch, child care food, etc.) in urban food systems keeps the state in a central position responsible for food provisioning.

School Food and Public Procurement (farm to school)

There is a growing body of literature on sustainable and local food procurement projects in the public sector (hospitals, universities, parks, etc.) and especially around school food procurement. These projects partially emerged out of the community food security movement, and the idea of voluntary local succession from the global food system, toward foodshed agricultural actors. Kloppenburg et al. (1996) write "...restaurants or schools may be encouraged to purchase more of their

food supplies from local producer cooperatives as these foodshed alternatives generate capacity” (p. 38). For them, schools were not identified as unique types of organizations, but were included with for profit businesses, restaurants, with the ability (and duty) to become actors in global food secession for the benefit of the foodshed. With the underlying belief in the “moral economy”, public institutions like a school represented an important actor in the “moral economy” that could “envelope...and condition...market forces” (Kloppenburger et al., 1996, p. 36).

School food procurement projects initially emerged from community food security activists’ motivation to provide a consistent market for small or medium scale farmers, and to promote sustainable economic and environmental development of a region. Although farm to school programs differ by district, they generally involve actors outside of the school food program as well as additional grant funding both from public as well as private sources.

In, *Together at the Table: Sustainability and Sustenance in the American Agrifood System*, Allen (2004) interrogates the alternative agriculture movements of sustainable agriculture and community food security. She highlights the challenge to these movements of including deeper structural barriers to social justice issues such as poverty, power, and hunger into the movements’ aim to improve environmental problems through ecological approaches to agricultural production. Allen analyzes the discourse and activities of these movements as they “integrat[e] into traditional agrifood institutions in the United States” (Allen, 2004, p. 7). I find her observations of sustainable agriculture research especially intriguing.

In general, working toward agricultural sustainability is still seen primarily as a natural/technical process of people interacting with nature, rather than as a part of a complex web of social relations. This absence of attention to the social causes of nonsustainability and food insecurity can severely limit the efficacy of proposed solutions (Allen, 2004, p. 98).

“Generally there has been little or no serious investigation into the social, political and economic relations that are needed to encourage sustainable agriculture” (Allen, 2004, p. 99).

She cautions, “too much focus on the local can lead to a lack of wider-scale organizing” (Allen, 2004, p. 175). This lack of wider-scale organizing is especially a concern with the movements focused on local food in schools. What is becoming apparent is that the historic lack of funding and declining infrastructure for supporting cooking and preparation in schools is a national problem, especially in urban school districts. At the same time, there is a lack of participation by needy children in the programs, and children often go hungry. These issues have both local as well as national causes and solutions. Further, by focusing only on procuring food from local farms, other critical problems within the programs are obscured.

For many alternative food advocates, expanding markets for regional agricultural producers is a strategy to keep agricultural space in agricultural production, and oppose the growing loss of fertile farmland at the urban periphery. Vallianatos, Gottlieb & Haase (2004) discuss farm to school efforts in the context of urban planning objectives that include improving the health of school-age children, supporting local farmers utilizing sustainable production practices, reducing urban

sprawl and preserving farmland, and supporting the building of community based food systems as opposed to globalized food systems. They see the school food market as providing economic opportunities for urban edge farmers that are significant enough to keep regional farmers in the business of farming. They provide an example of a farm in Southern California that invested in purchasing urban edge land that they had been previously been leasing because of the increased market they gained from the connection to Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) through a CSA (community supported agriculture) program with classrooms. Through this project, students were exposed to fresh organic produce during their nutrition education project. This program operated for three years through grant funding,(Haase, Azuma, Gottlieb, & Vallianatos , 2004) but despite the project's success in educating students about new types of produce, unfortunately last year the farm suspended operations, ("Tierra Miguel Foundation CSA," 2011) signaling that perhaps saving prime urban edge farmland may require a multipronged, integrated approach that brings together not only market relationships that are profitable for farmers, but also a set of strategies and tools (policy, financial, technical assistance) to ensure long term land preservation.

Many researchers have pointed out that too much focus on the local scale can be problematic. Food system relocation efforts have been rightly challenged for conflating geography, ecology, and fairness. Allen (2010) reminds that "historical processes have shaped regions and social relations with vast differences in wealth, power and privilege and this has implications for thinking about and enacting equity

through food-system localization” (p. 295). Hinrichs examines the role of social inclusion in a community supported agriculture program in the Midwest. She also challenges the framing of “local” and asserts that environmental and social goals may not easily map to the same definition of “local”. Dupuis and Goodman (2005) argue for a more reflexive conception of “local” that can promote equity and social justice. Similarly, Born and Purcell (2007) challenge the assumption that “local” is naturally environmentally sustainable and socially just – terming these assumptions as “the local trap”.

In addition to social and justice issues, the question of the capacity of local agriculture to provide food for the population is explored in the study by Peters, Bills, Wilkins and Smith (2003). In their examination of the potential of local food production and consumption for New York state, they examine the role of dietary requirements and dietary food guides in informing consumers about eating local and seasonal. They utilize data from *1994-95 Continuing Survey of Food Commodity Intake Database by Individuals (CFSII)* to determine the consumption of different foods, and then analyzed this data in relation to production data. Their method for analysis to explore the potential for food sheds based on consumption patterns (national data), dietary requirements and production capabilities seems useful. Their study provides a structure to examine the complexities and the realities of providing the products necessary for a nutritionally adequate local diet for a particular population. The analysis revealed that New York produces enough apples, processed apples, and processed cherries to meet New York state consumption demands as well

as generate a surplus amount of these commodities. However, overall for fruit consumption needs of New Yorkers, New York producers grow only 18 percent of the fruit needed (Peters, Bills, Wilkins & Smith, 2003). Although their analysis does not incorporate the issue of affordability, the authors provide a realistic voice exposing the challenges of local food in the chorus of local food system proponents.

Although school food procurement changes can benefit low-income children, many proponents of local procurement focus their energy almost exclusively on how to economically benefit farmers, and often overlook the needs of the children whose nutrition is the real focus on the program. Allen (2010) cautions, correctly, that in order to address injustices like hunger and food insecurity, alternative food projects must prioritize these issues. She finds that institutional purchasing could be used to attain social justice goals by including social justice standards in their purchasing decisions and operations, saying that privatization and devolution in school food service operations may be contrary to social justice goals. Although this may be the case, labor in school food operations and unions in particular, are not a homogenous group, and are also a product of historical and place based values and decisions. While some food service workers in public schools are actively engaging with their district and the public to improve food service possibilities for their district's school children (see Unite Here Local 1, 2012a; Unite Here Local 1, 2012b), many do not and instead focus exclusively on their members' wages and benefits.

The term “food justice” has become a popular term utilized by many advocates working on alternative food projects. This term has evolved from other civil rights and environmental justice movements, and from the intent to bring the social back into sustainable food systems, and is now used widely in the popular literature. In the recent book, *Food Justice*, Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) provide an explanation of the term “food justice” by describing the settings where it can be achieved, and potentially providing common elements through which separate social justice movements can unite. The pathways to food justice they describe are

1. Food Justice and Growing and Producing Food
2. Food Justice and Local Preference
3. Food Justice and the Environment
4. Food Justice and Economic Development
5. Food Justice and Fresh and Healthy Food for All
6. Food Justice and Preparing, Cooking, and Eating Food
7. Food Justice and Public Health and Nutrition
8. Food Justice and Hunger
9. Food Justice and Race, Ethnicity, Class, and Gender Issues
(Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p. 223).

They propose that food justice groups need to unite with advocates on related issues like housing and healthcare, into a social movement that establishes a long term change agenda that also connects to social movements across the globe.

While this vision is compelling, it will require much collaboration, communication, and sustained commitment. An important incremental step would be for a food advocates to recognize the complexities of food work identified through “pathways to food justice” since advocates often focus on only one or two issues.

Uniting food advocates into a common change agenda will also require prioritizing certain issues over others to practically move programs forward. This concept builds on and furthers the focus on social movements and communities as the central change agent in solving social problems.

Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) highlight the global food crises and also call on the uniting of food movements; however, not to bring about vast social change, but to specifically bring about food regime change. According to them, the current corporate food regime:

is currently characterized by the unprecedented market power and profits of monopoly agrifood corporations, globalized animal protein chains, growing links between food and fuel economies, a ‘supermarket revolution’, liberalized global trade in food, increasingly concentrated land ownership, a shrinking natural resource base, and a growing opposition from food movements worldwide (Holt-Giménez et al, 2011, p. 111).

They feel that the nature and extent of food reform change will be related to the different forces engaged in global food movements, and the nature of their actions. They identify two major trends on global food movements including “progressive” and “radical” (Holt-Giménez et al., 2011, p. 115). According to them, “progressive” movements include groups with the philosophy of carving out alternative spaces in the global food system. These groups include the community food security and other food justice movements. They find that the progressive movements tend to be locally based and somewhat decentralized, with less opportunity to affect the structural roots of hunger and poverty (Holt-Giménez et al., 2011, p. 126). On the

other hand, the “radical” trend shares with its progressive counterparts, the focus on locally and community based food systems and sustainable agricultural practices, but also focuses on the concept of “food sovereignty” and works to change the structural roots of food insecurity including challenging corporate controlled food resources, and redistributing wealth and power in the food system to ensure community controlled resources to produce food (Holt-Giménez et al., 2011, p. 128). Activists tend to engage in the international arena and include groups like Via Campesina.

The food sovereignty perspective has recently been more widely discussed within the progressive food movement; however, it is not yet clear if the movement will embrace the radical agenda. Since farm to school programs have been a popular strategy of the progressive food movement, it is also unclear how these programs can realistically support a radical agenda in both the domestic and international arena.

The role of the state

In *Worlds of Food*, Morgan, Marsden and Murdoch (2006) suggest that agrifood studies could benefit from including discussions focusing on the role of moral economy and multilevel governance. They say:

As well as opening itself up to moral economy, agri-food studies could also benefit from more critical engagement with theories of multilevel governance because, far from being a local matter, food chain localization will need to draw support from every tier of the multilevel policies that govern our lives today (Morgan, Marsden, & Murdoch, 2006, p. 5).

Through their three case studies (Tuscany, California and Wales) they provide examples of how local farmers not producing for global markets are recovering a sense of meaning and culture through connecting with local consumers. They examine how food safety and nutrition are motivating consumers in advanced capitalist countries to demand quality products that are regionally produced, and how this demand is creating ecological food chains that lead to different regional and local food production patterns that are markedly different than the dominant agricultural production activities and patterns. They also examine the role of nature in different production systems, as well as the political institutions that exist at multiple levels of the state (Morgan et al., 2006).

They also describe the difference in agriculture policy in the European Union which is more focused on multifunctionality and sustainability, while in the U.S., the agriculture policy remains focused on protecting internal markets while maintaining intensive production for export markets (Morgan et al., 2006, p. 36). “In both the EU and the US, to differing degrees, the role of the state remains critical in providing opportunities and in creating barriers for alternative networks” (Morgan et al., 2006, p. 87). One important insight is that in the agriculture policy in the U.S. aims to reduce differences in local places, whereas in the European Union it focuses on protecting regional differences.

They find possibilities for economic development as well as sustainable development within the spaces of locally based alternative food transactions. The local is seen as a space

for rearranging possibilities that attempt to counter the prevailing forces in the agrarian landscape...for reassembling of resources and value; a place for evolving new commodity frameworks and networks; a place of defense from the devalorization of conventional production systems (Morgan et al., 2006, p. 75).

They go on to say that “overall...sustainable wealth creation and local economic development require new entrepreneurial initiatives that focus on investing in the local environment, creating and strengthening local institutions, and employing people and their resources” (Morgan et al., 2006, p. 74). The focus of this is clearly on the producer side of the consumer/producer equation, and assumes that the consumer is economically able to privilege the local quality product over the global placeless commodity, and has the necessary information to make the decision. However, this is most often not the case for the poor.

Elsewhere, Morgan engages with the role of public procurement in building sustainable and local food systems (Morgan, 2006). Issues of moral economy, multilevel governance, ethics of care, and the Green State emerge as Morgan and Sonnino's (2007) examination of public provisioning and local food systems in Italy and the UK looks at the regulatory barriers to public provisioning of quality local food in different places. In *The School Food Revolution: Public Food and the Challenge of Sustainable Development*, Morgan and Sonnino (2008) utilize three case

studies, London, Rome, and New York, to examine school food through the lenses of health and well being of students, and sustainable development. They explain that changing the sourcing of the food to regional sources is complex requiring rebuilding a system that involves multiple challenges including kitchen facilities, stigma of participating in the school meal program, competing foods that are nutritionally poor, and children's food habits.

Drawing on the belief that the public sector has a unique opportunity as well as responsibility to both act as a protector of the environment, Morgan and Sonnino (2008) make the case that public food procurement has the potential to support the Green State which has four concepts

1. The state has *the greatest capacity to discipline investors, producers and consumer...* (citing Eckersley, 2004)
2. The (reformed) state is the most powerful actor in *facilitating and nurturing the cultural change that is necessary to promote sustainable consumption...* (citing Carter, 2007, p. 65)
3. The state possesses *more resources and more 'steering' capacity* than any non-state actor when it comes to monitoring ecosystem change, creating ecological knowledge and solving ecological conflict... (citing Lundqvist, 2001, p. 457; Barry & Eckersley, 2005a, p. xii)
4. The state is the only legal and political institution capable of offering *systemic resistance to the forces of globalization* and to the social and ecological costs of capitalism through its influence not only on investment and production but also on reproduction, distribution and consumption – 'three areas that are often neglected in existing sustainability strategies' (quoting Barry & Eckersley, 2005b, p. 260) (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008, p. 15).

Morgan et al. (2008) explain that school meal programs in their case studies are examples of the ability of the Green State to act as an intermediary between the local and the global, and it draws from both the alternative and the conventional food system and might even borrow from the corporate sector for strategies and discourse:

the emerging Green State does not confine quality to ‘alternative’ food networks embedded in place, tradition and trust.....In their efforts to achieve the objectives of sustainable development, public authorities involved in the school food revolution often devise notions of quality that also encompass attributes of the conventional food system, such as cost reduction, convenience, consistency and predictability” (Morgan et al., 2008).

The Green State exists within the multilevel governance system being influenced by local, state, national and international requirements and responsibilities. Morgan et al., 2008 discuss how innovations in the Green State often occurs at the subnational level, making the local level one of the most contested spaces for advancing the ideals of sustainable development. Local school meal programs and local procurement contracts have been the object of alternative food activists’ attention due to this more realistic possibility of influencing policy at this level. There are parallels with this trajectory of policy advancement in the realm of public health where local laws to protect health are often adopted and adapted at the state and eventually the national level. An example of this is nutritional labeling requirements at chain restaurants which began in local jurisdictions in the U.S., but were then mandated nationally in the Affordable Care Act.

Morgan et al., 2008 discuss the concept of moral economy which deals with rights and justice, but that it should be supported by and integrated into an “ethics of care” (p. 166), which is based on relationship and nurturing. They see the school food programs in their case studies as tools to promote sustainable development because they are actors in the Green State, guided by ethics of care rooted in a moral economy. Their case studies take place in very different political spaces, and the expectations of the social community, legal entitlements and social rights for citizens are different in different countries, and also at different levels of government. These differences may be revealed in the organizations of education and supportive programs (like school meals), which have evolved in particular ways in local places. The expectations of and engagement with the state by the public may also be reflected in the historical and current support for the school meal program, and it likely varies according to place. Further, the issue of how school meal programs are funded and governed and the struggles to feed the needy are important considerations when interrogating the opportunities of public institutions, as agents of the Green State, to support sustainable development through their contracting.

School food systems are product of multilevel governance supports and regulatory constraints. Morgan et al. (2008) assert that in the United States, the “regulatory confusion is now the biggest single barrier to the use of locally produced food in American public schools” (p. xvii). Although many local food advocates have focused on advancing the ability of school districts to give preference to local unprocessed agricultural products in their bidding process, and succeeded in getting

new language included in the 2008 Farm Bill that specifically allows geographic preference in purchasing, the ability of local school meals programs to incorporate local produce is dependent on many other critical factors including distribution, processing, managing multiple vendors, revising menus, and often, paying higher prices.

Public food programs are funded to feed the poor. Although public food procurement involves billions of dollars, the funding is often not adequate to operate existing programs, and additional funding from federal sources to improve the programs is not likely. This situation limits the power of public food procurement to shift the globalized food system to more local and sustainable food systems and must be addressed if the public purse is to fully realize its transformative potential.

Placing the local in the market

Goodman, Dupuis and Goodman (2012) review alternative food networks, and discuss how activists in the U.S. are building networks of food relationships through direct marketing and civic engagement with policy making (Goodman, Dupuis & Goodman, 2012, p. 131). They trace the current localist focus to the early sustainable agriculture practitioners and their urban supporters, but also document a “retreat from a national agenda” (Goodman et al., 2012, p. 135). They trace the work of Allen, FitzSimmons, Goodman and Warner (2003) which highlights the challenge that these initiatives may face in working for social justice by focusing only on strategies that limit their action to the local scale. In this study, 37 leaders of

California alternative food initiatives were interviewed to understand the visions of the world from inside of the organizations, as well as the strategies they used to accomplish their missions. Their study assessed the transformative potential of the organizations based on their strategies, and found that “the most frequent solutions they suggested were local entrepreneurial initiatives” (Allen, FitzSimmons, Goodman & Warner, 2003, p. 71). Although there was some recognition of larger structural issues like income inequality, poverty and lack of healthy food environments, requiring larger state and national policy engagement, the approach of initiatives remained with a focus on creating economic development at the local scale.

In this genealogy of California AFIs, the collective oppositional politics of social justice has been displaced by locally-focused programs to create entrepreneurial opportunities to enhance the economic reproduction of small farmers (Goodman et al., 2011, p. 137).

Typically, alternative agrifood programs view change as coming through the connection to a particular type of farmer since farmers are agents of change and deserve the benefit of change. “This emphasis on economic reproduction makes the simple but key point that the success of re-localization initiatives depends on the existence of markets that are sufficiently robust to generate producer rents that can sustain local farm livelihoods” (Goodman et al., 2012, p. 142).

In recent years, a debate on the role of these initiatives, and particularly farm to school as it relates to questions of equity, neoliberalism was highlighted in the Allen/Guthman (Allen & Guthman, 2006) and Kloppenburg/Hassanein (Kloppenburg & Hassanein, 2006) debate. Goodman et al. (2012) refer to this debate to identify two different philosophies for social change – one that focuses on “collective social change” and the other one focusing more on a pragmatic approach to making change through deliberate but incremental steps. They also reveal another disagreement illuminated through the dialog around farm to school programs that stems from the belief that these programs are reinforcing neoliberal trends, and are not comprehensively addressing the myriad of injustices of the food system including labor, gender, race, etc. (Goodman et al., 2012, p. 141).

Allen and Guthman (2006) suggest that farm to school programs strengthen neoliberal tendencies that devolve federal responsibilities for school food provisioning, and that farm to school trends are moving a somewhat homogenous federal program toward becoming locally specific, funded by foundations, and uneven in its rollout. My research on the National School Lunch Program and the unique characteristics that arise from local and state specific factors questions the assertion that there has ever been a “uniform National School Lunch Program”. They write that prior to farm to school programs, the NSLP had equal access, “regulated with the broad public benefit in mind” but that now school districts with the most resources developed the most successful programs (Allen et al., 2006, p. 408). While it is true that programs with the most resources have the most

likelihood of success, defining these resources becomes imperative to fully understanding the characteristics of programs that are likely to be successful.

The San Francisco case highlights multiple ways that local level government has stepped in with progressive social policies to fill the void left by a lack of federal action, and how these local progressive actions have dramatically constrained farm to school and local food possibilities. For example, San Francisco's direct engagement with increasing labor rates and benefits currently preclude efforts to cook in schools without significant additional operating funds. This study also reveals ways that school food programming across the country has been historically uneven for the purpose of illustrating the complexity of school food programs and highlighting the possibilities and challenges for institutional support of local food efforts and sustainable development through public food service operations.

Although farm to school programs differ by district, they generally involve actors outside of the school food program as well as additional grant funding both from public and private sources. Poppendieck (2010) notes the issue of "transaction costs," which refers to the time it takes to make the orders, deal with vendors, etc., and that many of the farm to school projects depend on foragers that are paid by nonprofit organizations with the hope that the function or position will become institutionalized at some time in the future. Poppendieck questions the model when she describes a project in New Mexico in which a forager was

not only finding the fruits but picking them up and delivering them, along with information about their history and nutritional

value and suggestions and instructions for various in-class projects. Her enthusiasm and dedication were infectious, but I wondered if a program that depends on that sort of extraordinary commitment is sustainable over time (Poppendieck, 2010, p. 240).

Poppendieck (2010) also notes a critique of farm to school from both proponents and anti-hunger advocates who are concerned that the projects may give the false impression that the school meal is “fixed” when possibly only a portion of the produce is procured locally. Anti-hunger advocates see procuring local food as marginal to the problem of food access which includes both the availability of retail food assets in communities as well as the necessary income to purchase food.

There is a growing body of literature on farm to school programs, both through community based programs as well as through academic research (Vogt, 2006; Izumi, 2008) and the problem of insufficient infrastructure and financial support for processing of local fresh food especially through public food service programs, as well as lack of easy access to food from small local farms through normal distribution channels is often cited. However, the focus of much attention still revolves around procurement. By focusing only on the goal of achieving local food procurement by school nutrition programs, solutions that could increase revenue to the school meal program (which is often needed in order to procure and process local food) could be obscured. For example, many school meals programs are losing money on their cash based competitive a la carte meal program that is not available for free to children qualified for free and reduced meals and subsidizing the loss with funds from the National School Lunch Program (Kavanagh, 2010). It is possible that

eliminating the competitive a la carte program could free up labor and financial resources needed to purchase higher priced local products or to process local agricultural produce. By viewing the school meal program as a complex system and addressing weaknesses and strengths holistically, there is a greater possibility of building a program that addresses school children's nutrition needs by serving them high quality food from sustainable regional sources.

Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable agriculture is often mentioned as the goal of alternative food movements; however the term does not have a legal definition, but is, instead, a process towards a specified set of goals. According to the National Research Council's Committee on Twenty-First Century Agriculture Systems (2011), "sustainability in agriculture is a complex and dynamic concept that includes a wide range of environmental, resource-based, economic, and social issues" (National Research Council, 2010, p. 17). The committee's definition of sustainable farming acknowledges that all farming systems have the ability to contribute to sustainability, and therefore, they do not "accept a sharp dichotomy between unsustainable or sustainable farming systems" (National Research Council, 2010, p. 17).

The National Research Council provides "four key societal sustainability goals"

- Satisfy human food, feed, and fiber needs, and contribute to biofuel needs.

- Enhance environmental quality and the resource base.
- Sustain the economic viability of agriculture.
- Enhance the quality of life for farmers, farm workers, and society as a whole (National Research Council, 2010, p. 4).

The sustainability of a farming practice or system could be evaluated on the basis of how well it meets various societal goals or objectives.

Achieving sustainable agricultural systems will require transformative changes in markets, policies, and science. ...Slow expansion of such innovative farming systems in the United States is as much a policy and market problem as a science and technology problem (Reganold et al, 2011, p. 670).

“Transformative change looks to whole-system redesign rather than single technological improvements” (Reganold et al, 2011, p. 670). This approach is inclusive, and allows the agency of local governments and school districts to support farming practices that advance the larger sustainability goals. In fact, consumer decisions are identified as an important market driver. “Part of transforming U.S. agriculture is educating more consumers to take responsibility for what they eat and how much they eat” (Reganold et al, 2011, p. 670). Consumers are increasingly interested in supporting sustainable practices through their food choices, and the authors feel that this growing interest could be expanded through public policies.

The committee cite “organic farming, alternative livestock production (e.g., grass-fed), mixed-crop and livestock systems, and perennial grains” (Reganold et al., p. 670) as production systems that promote sustainability. Supporting sustainable

agriculture through reflexive consumption is a growing market driver for food sales of products with specific qualities. In the absence of system wide requirements for sustainable production practices, it is individual decisions by farmers that are perhaps conditioned by environmental policies that drive production practices that are more sustainable. Many of the qualities of food in the marketplace are hidden, though, and only through making the qualities visible will consumers have the ability to choose products with desired qualities (Tilman, Cassman, Matson, Naylor & Polasky, 2002). In order to support sustainable agriculture through public procurement, at this time, the desired qualities of the food must be made explicit, and the desired qualities of food need to be visible through the supply chain including purchasers, distributors and other market mediators so that purchasers are informed about the specific product qualities. This system rests on third party certifications to verify the qualities. The challenge with this system is that there is a proliferation of sustainable certifications, creating confusion for the consumer and challenges to the farmers to satisfy the requirements of multiple certifications (National Research Council, 2010, p. 282-285). Another challenge is that sustainably certified food is often more expensive, which is, in part, a motivator for the producer to participate in the certification, However, many people are not financially capable of paying more for their food which leaves low-income consumers and the institutions that serve them outside of the sustainable food market.

The committee acknowledges the possible higher cost of implementing sustainable practices, and that at times, the goals can move in opposite directions citing that

efforts to use environmentally friendly practices or to improve the economic conditions of farmers or farm workers can sometimes increase production costs and possibly hinder access to affordable healthful food among low-income consumers. Opinions differ widely as to whether those goals of sustainability necessarily are in direct conflict, or the extent of tradeoffs involved, but nonetheless balancing the different goals clearly has to be addressed (National Research Council, 2010, p. 23).

The committee says that although policy and market incentives are needed to support the expansion of farming practices that advance sustainability goals, more research is needed to understand the factors that influence farmer reaction to incentives or disincentives in order to develop tools that drive the adoption of sustainable practices (National Research Council, 2010, p. 2).

These issues identified by the committee are central to public procurement, and expanding the ability of public institutions, like school meal programs, to support sustainable agricultural practices through their procurement. Through my decade of work, I have found that mainstream distributors are not aware of sustainable qualities of food or certifications other than organic. Additionally, their ability to identify products that meet specific sustainability qualities is limited. School food programs exist in the market, yet are uniquely poised to deliver sustainable food equitably to the nation's children, many of which are from low-income families. However, many

of these public programs are operating in highly industrialized, financially constrained systems, often relying on market mediators to supply them with product cheaply and easily. In order to effectively utilize the market potential of school meal programs, investments must be made into making sustainable practices visible to mainstream institutional buyers, assisting them with identifying in procurement bids the specific qualities of the food that differentiate it as sustainable, and ensuring that sustainable products are available in a processed (value added) form to institutional food service programs that may not have labor to process raw products. These issues must be addressed in order for institutional food buyers and their clients to be able to consciously support sustainable production practices.

Chapter 3: Scales of agency - School meals and particularities of place

The provision of affordable, safe and nutritious food from sustainable food sources powerfully coalesces around a child's access to food in institutional settings such as schools, the abilities for such institutions to engage with the distribution, consumption and recycling arenas of the food system and the capacity of institutions to morally act in the provision of food to diverse communities. Within these contexts, a series of constraints provide calculated opportunities for private and public entities while reinforcing and reifying an increased reliance on practices that entrench inequities and quality in the food system. How communities engage, respond and adjust to a number of efforts to mechanize and industrialize the provision of food is dependent on robust contextual factors that bring forward actions, or lack thereof, targeting specific areas of food provision and programming. Understanding these contexts within the framework and operations of school food illustrates and highlights the various challenges, opportunities and actions that are deeply positioned within an arena of sociocultural environments that iteratively build on a series of societal conditions and dynamically interacting actors that situate a variety of engagements with the food system.

The constrained role of procurement

Many wishing to utilize the school lunch program to promote sustainable development and transform school lunches through local food systems equate success with switching food vendors to local, small and medium sized farmers using sustainable production practices. However, this straight forward solution only targets a very narrowly defined problem (i.e. expanding markets for farmers). Procurement changes depend on many connected factors and are often only possible as a result of a systemic reform of a district's entire school food system including upgrading skills of kitchen staff, increasing management, replacing equipment, renovating kitchens and cafeterias, securing financing for additional costs and ongoing operations, and including nutrition, garden and cooking education for all students.

Morgan et al. (2008) promote the transformative power of public procurement to advance sustainable development. However, in the U.S., federal, state and local policies exert extensive influence over a school meal program's procurement through nutrition standards, administrative requirements, food safety regulation, labor agreements, etc. Depending on each district's wellness policy, additional rules can be placed on a school lunch program including more stringent nutrition standards, procurement goals, minimum time to eat, etc. Additional regulations placed on public nutrition programs most often increase cost for goods, labor, and program administration.

For school districts with constrained resources and higher wage rates, cooking may have already been outsourced to food service companies in order to either balance the budget for the school meal program, or generate income for the district's general fund. In these situations, food may be precooked at a production center, frozen or blast chilled, transported, and then reheated at the school site. Individual school sites that still have kitchen staff and onsite cooking often purchase a varying percentage of their food pre-prepped and precooked and/or frozen from local, regional and national food vendors.

A food service operation that uses fresh food purchased from farmers requires trained kitchen staff to process, cook and serve the food. Managing a food service operation with production kitchens in schools requires adequate oversight and supervision from management to ensure food safety, adherence to nutrition regulations, proper portion sizes, as well as a myriad of other rules. It also requires proper facilities and equipment to ensure worker and food safety, as well as energy and labor efficiency. Sourcing from many vendors requires additional administrative management staff to coordinate the pricing, logistics, vendor relations, menu changes and staff training.

A significant amount of a school district's food is sourced from free commodities made available from the USDA through funding from the Farm Bill (Section 4, Section 32, Section 416) (USDA-FNS, 2010b). The commodity food (also called USDA Food) is ordered once a year, and the amount a district receives

depends on the number of meals it served the previous year. In 2011, the value of commodities to a school lunch is approximately 20 cents per meal (USDA-FNS, 2010b). In 2005-06, on average, the value of USDA commodities accounted for approximately 12 percent of district's total food costs (Gordon, Crepinsek, Nogales, and Condon, 2007, p. 3-7). Since school lunch operations depend so heavily on utilizing USDA commodities, other food items are added after commodities are figured into a menu.

As communities seek to transform their public school lunch program and support local or regional farmers, it is important to understand that there are many local level issues that must be examined, considered, and possibly transformed in order to achieve the vision they want for their school meals program. Often advocates wishing to transform their school meals program have heard of other programs that they think are the model for doing this. However, highly publicized successes in school meal transformation are generally not highly detailed, so the specific ways the program operates are rarely completely explained. Because of this, many people interested in transforming school lunch are completely unprepared to engage with this safety net program, and often are under the impression that transforming school lunch is heavily dependent on the will of the food service director to purchase food from local farmers. Unfortunately, for the majority of students who rely on school meals for their nutrition, there are significant structural barriers to improving their meals.

In their attempt to implement a farm to school program in Madison Metropolitan School District, Kloppenburg, Wubben, and Stevenson (2008) confront many obstacles saying “the most difficult had to do with structural conditions in which the program existed” (Kloppenburg, Wubben & Stevenson, 2008, p. 446). These structural conditions exist at the school district, region, and state level. In addition, local public school meal programs are each unique and a product of a specific history shaped by local context. Although the National School Lunch Program is federally funded and governed by federal regulations, but it is also a product of state and local level funding, policies, infrastructure, history and culture. In this chapter, I review the multitude of issues that are at least partially controlled by funding or requirements from the federal, state and local levels of government and also review the areas where privatization occurs within this public program, and some of the possible consequences.

In general, the school meals program is considered by most districts to be part of the school operations (like garbage collections and toilets) as opposed to part of the educational experience, giving it a lower priority in the educational system than academics. Many school meal programs are expected to operate like a business (albeit nonprofit) within the district, with revenues covering expenses. It may be because of this that school meal programs have generally been considered to be a necessary and mandated burden to school districts.

School meals in the context of public school funding

School meal programs exist within the context of the overall school district. Depending on the fiscal situation of the district, labor agreements, and the condition of facilities, school meal programs may be extremely constrained and will likely experience increasing struggles to improve meal quality and student experience and to be an effective tool to support local and regional farmers. Transforming the nation's publically funded school meal programs into agents supporting environmentally sustainable and socially just food systems will require significant additional investments in quality food, infrastructure, culinary training, and ongoing operations.

Public schools are funded differently depending on the state and local level particularities, since the vast majority of funds for public schools come from state and local funds. Therefore, it is critical to understand the funding of particular public school districts in order to engage with transforming the school meal program to be fully able to maximize the purchasing potential to source from local farms. However, the ways schools are financed varies greatly from state to state depending on many factors including court and legislative decisions, and gubernatorial actions, as well as other factors (Carroll, Krop, Arkes, Morrison & Flanagan, 2005). Comparisons between states are generally difficult and can be misleading; however, it is interesting to examine some general characteristics of funding for the five states with the largest student populations.

**Table 3-1: Funding sources for 5 states with the largest student population
(in thousands of dollars)**

State	Student Population	Total Elementary-Secondary Revenue (2009)	Revenue federal sources (2009)	Revenue state sources (2009)	Revenue local sources (2009)
California	6,165,884	\$71,453,144	13.64%	56.10%	30.26%
Florida	2,623,067	\$26,487,591	10.17%	34.16%	55.67%
Illinois	2,116,919	\$26,371,090	12.69%	29.88%	57.43%
New York	2,696,860	\$55,677,184	5.74%	46.28%	47.97%
Texas	4,647,205	\$47,930,801	10.25%	41.12%	48.63%

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b, Table 1, Table 18)

Table 3-1 shows the wide range of funding from federal, state and local sources for these states. It is interesting that overall revenue for New York was more than double of that in Florida, even though their student population was relatively the same. California receives the highest percentage of their funds from state sources, while Illinois receives the highest percentage from local funds.

The range of funding across the country is even wider. In 2009, the percent of states' education budgets from federal sources ranged from a high of 15.61 percent in Louisiana to a low of 3.96 percent in New Jersey. The range of state contribution to education budgets ranged from a low of 29.88 percent in Illinois to a high of 88.67 percent in Vermont. The range of local contribution to education budgets in 2009 was a low of 3.42 percent in Hawaii to a high of 57.8 percent in Connecticut (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2011b)¹. Local funding comes from taxes, charges, miscellaneous revenues. Parcel taxes have become a common way to fund community priorities for the overall operations of the schools including small class sizes, art, music, libraries, custodians, retaining teachers, teacher housing, student support services, transportation, etc. This range in funding sources for overall education highlights a number of unique contexts ranging from where resources may be constrained, or where resources may be possibly untapped. It also sheds light on the impact of funding cuts from state and local governments.

Individual school districts' programmatic priorities are heavily dependent on their funding sources. Generally, funding for public schools is increasingly restricted with less going towards general purposes like operations and more going towards specific services, incentives for specific activities, and competitive grants (Carroll et al., 2005). For this reason, it may be very difficult or impossible for some school districts to fund the necessary changes to the facilities, infrastructure, higher quality food and additional operational costs needed to transform their school meals to fully cooking facilities utilizing food from local farms.

Although federal funding is a somewhat minimal percentage of school district's budgets, the requirements for this funding exert a significant influence on districts' priorities and how schools operate. Federal funding for education is heavily focused on the following major programs: Title I grants focused on serving

¹ Figures for the District of Columbia are not included in this analysis, primarily due to the fact that schools in the District do not receive state funds, and are primarily funded through what is considered *local* funds. DC city budgets are approved by Congress.

disadvantaged children; IDEA- Part B grants to states; Improving Teacher Quality; 21st Century Community Learning Centers; English Language Learners; and Impact Aid (schools impacted by military bases) (U.S. Department of Education [DOE], 2005). The federal law Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was first authorized in 1965 and was the country's first formal entry into public education. In 2001, ESEA was reauthorized by Congress and called "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) (P.L. 107-110). This Act provides the majority of the federal requirements for K-12 education. This Act has significantly impacted how and what schools teach, the amount and kind of testing, and the time allocation during the school day. This can directly impact school meal programs by cutting into the time allowed for lunch periods or the elimination of lunch periods in schools with multiple lunch periods resulting in overcrowding of cafeteria facilities, long lines for students to wait to get meals, reduced time for teachers to be available to monitor cafeterias, etc.

Accountability measures instituted through NCLB have been criticized as placing a heavier burden on schools with low-income and diverse student populations because of they rely on mean proficiency scores for all students (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). For schools with higher levels of English language learners and disadvantaged families, achieving these standards requires additional investments into special programs, leaving fewer general funds for improving operations like school meals. NCLB has been criticized as creating 'unfunded mandates', but the Department of Education's position states:

Federal education program “requirements” are not unfunded mandates because the conditions in federal law apply only when a state (or other grantee) voluntarily chooses to accept federal funds. Any state that does not want to abide by a federal program’s requirements can simply choose not to accept the federal funds associated with that program (DOE, 2005).

Realistically, it is not so simple for school districts to forgo NCLB funds, and program requirements tied to the NCLB funding become district priorities. Further, district funds are likely supplementing federal funds for programs required but not fully funded.

It is interesting to note that the USDA child nutrition programs constitute the second largest federal funding source for elementary and secondary education programs. The primary federal department funding education is the Department of Education with 54 percent of total funding. The USDA child nutrition programs constitute 20 percent of federal funding, Department of Health and Human Services 11 percent, Department of Labor 7.6 percent, Department of Defense 2.6 percent, Department of Veterans Affairs 2 percent, Department of Justice 1 percent, with the Department of the Interior and other departments comprising the remaining funding (Snyder & Dillow, 2010). Federal reimbursements for child nutrition constitute on average 19 percent of the revenues local school districts receive from federal sources (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b, p. 2). However, for some districts, child nutrition program funding constitutes a much larger or smaller percentage of their federal funding. For instance in 2009, Aldine Independent School District in suburban

Houston, Texas which had 84 percent of their 61,500 students qualified for free or reduced meals (Federal Education Budget Project, 2012a), derived over 37 percent of their federal funding from child nutrition reimbursements (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009c); while Boston Public schools, which had 75.6 percent of their 55,900 students qualified for free or reduced priced meals (Federal Education Budget Project, 2012a), receive only 10 percent of their federal funds for child nutrition reimbursements (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009c). The relative importance of child nutrition funds to a district's overall finances undoubtedly influences local decisions about the program.

Public school funding allocations

Expenses for the entire elementary-secondary school system in the U.S. in 2009 were \$604.9 billion with 85.6 percent for current spending (60.2 percent instruction, 34.5 percent support services, 5.2 percent other), 11.2 percent for capital outlays, and 3.2 percent other. Revenues during the same time were less than expenses with \$590.9 billion nationally in revenues, with an average of 46.7 percent coming from state sources, 43.8 percent from local sources, and 9.5 percent from federal sources (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b). However, there are significant differences in how public schools are funded locally. When looking at the differences, one measure is “per pupil” spending. The average revenue per pupil in the United States in 2009 was \$12,250 and the average spending was \$10,499. However a review of the state averages for spending reveals a range of spending per

pupil from \$18,126 in the state of New York to a low of \$6,356 in Utah. The percentage of funds coming from federal, state and local sources also range significantly. For example, nationally, the average amount of revenue per pupil coming from state funds is \$5,725; however, the amount varies from a high of \$15,169 in Vermont to a low of \$3,260 in South Dakota. Similarly, the average amount of revenue per pupil from local sources in the United States is \$5,367 with a high of \$10,474 in New Jersey to a low of \$512 in Hawaii. The federal amount per student ranged from a high of \$2,401 in Alaska to a low of \$690 in Connecticut (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b, p. 11). Similarly, differences in funding can also be viewed between districts. An example of differences between districts is below.

Table 3-2: Per pupil spending and revenue for selected large school districts

District	Per pupil spending	% federal revenue	% state revenue	% local revenue
Los Angeles	\$11,108	14.7	66.1	19.2
Boston	\$18,858	9.6	20.6	69.8
Denver	\$9,630	10	29.6	60.3
St. Paul	\$13,424	9.9	69.8	21.3
San Francisco	\$9,990	13.5	27.2	59.3
Portland	\$10,792	14.6	34.4	51.1

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b. Data from 2009 – Tables 16 and 17)

These differences in funding levels and funding sources may have an impact on local priorities and the ability of local districts to significantly change their school food systems. The unique funding situation of local districts can provide an insight into

the financial structure in which local school food programs exist, and provide information that can aid comprehensive strategies to rebuild school food programs while also supporting regional sustainable agriculture.

Operations and Infrastructure

In general, public schools facilities in the United States need improvements and technological upgrades. A survey of facilities in public schools done by the U.S. General Accounting Office in 1995

found that, in 1994-1995, the largest proportion of schools reporting unsatisfactory physical and environmental conditions were in central cities serving more than 50 percent minority students or 70 percent or more low-income students (Carroll et al., 2005, p. 93).

A 2011 survey of school facilities among the members of Council of the Great City Schools² showed that school districts need significant upgrading and modernizing of their facilities. The survey showed that among the 50 responding districts, there were \$15.3 billion needed for new construction, \$46.7 billion needed for existing facilities in order to pay for renovations, repairs and to accomplish needed modernization changes; and \$14.4 billion in maintenance that has been deferred, with a total of about \$76.5 billion in maintenance needs for the 50 school districts (Casserly, Lachlan-

² The Council of Great City Schools represents 65 of the largest school districts in the United States.

Haché & Naik, 2011). Although kitchen facilities and cafeteria upgrades were mentioned as a type of facility work needed, this figure most likely does not include extensive renovations to kitchen infrastructure or cafeterias, but only minimum necessary upgrades.

Generally, states have guidelines for minimum requirements for school facilities, but guidelines are developed informally (Maryland State Office of Policy Analysis, 2002). In California, a 2011 report entitled *Schools of the Future Report* issued by the State Superintendent of Education focuses on school planning, design, finance and energy efficiency. The issue of food programs and redesigning facilities to support updated food preparation as well as promoting environmentally preferential purchasing such as local food procurement is highlighted in the report (Torlakson, 2011) indicating that the issue of food service may be beginning to be considered more often in California's state guidelines for facilities.

Local School Food Programs

Allen and Guthman (2006) critique farm to school programs for creating programs that deviate “from the uniform, national traditional school food program” (p. 405). However, the following section reveals the multiple ways local school meal programs have existed unevenly since their creation.

A school food authority is the legal entity that operates school meal programs on a local level, and is responsible for all aspects of the program. They are required to operate as a nonprofit entity. School food authorities are usually public school districts, but can also be private schools, groups of schools, or Residential Child Care Institutions which refers to juvenile detention centers, group homes, homes for mentally, physically, or emotionally disturbed children, orphanages, etc. Although generalizations can be made about the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program in terms of school food authorities, meals, participants, etc., each local school meal program is unique in a myriad of ways. The following discussion attempts to make explicit the ways that local school meal programs are unique for the purpose of providing a framework to elucidate the possibilities, barriers, and pathways, in addition to switching food vendors, to more realistically and more fully incorporate local food procurement into these operations.

Across the country there are over 14,000 school food authorities, and in California alone there are approximately 1,000 public school districts that are listed as school food authorities (California Department of Education, 2012). It is safe to say that each of these school food authorities are designed, funded, staffed, and operated in different ways. Therefore, transforming each of these would necessarily take a slightly, or depending on the situation, a radically different path.

The role of a school meal program in a community

School meals programs include the National School Lunch, the School Breakfast, the Afterschool Snack, and more recently the At Risk Afterschool Meals Program (through the Child and Adult Care Food Program). Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program can also operate the Seamless Summer Option to serve children meals during the summer. In most communities, the school meal program in public schools is the largest public food service program, most often serving a community's most vulnerable children. These programs are not only nutrition programs, they can also be considered anti-hunger programs, as well as education programs. In 2011, each school day almost 32 million children ate lunch (U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service [USDA-FNS], 2012b), and 12 million ate breakfast (USDA-FNS, 2012c).

How the program operates

The rate of federal subsidy for each meal depends on each family's income. For the purpose of the school meal program, each child in a school is classified as either being in the "free", "reduced", or "paid" category, and the school meal program is reimbursed at a different rate for each category. Income eligibility is based on the family's income in relation to the federal poverty guidelines issued each year by the Department of Health and Human Services. Children from families at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible for free meals, while children

from families between 130 percent and 185 percent of poverty are eligible for reduced priced meals. Program rules specify that children in the reduced category may not be charged more than \$.40 per meal, and not more than \$.30 per breakfast (USDA-FNS, 2011b; USDA-FNS, 2011c). Children whose family's income is greater than 185 percent of the poverty guidelines are classified as "paid", and may purchase meals at the cost charged by the school. Until recently, the USDA has allowed local school boards to determine the paid meal price. However, recent Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation will require school districts to set a paid meal price that is at least equal to the cost of producing it (National School Lunch Program: School Food Service Account Revenue, 2011), since some school districts were found to be charging a paid meal price that was less than the cost of producing it and utilizing funds intended to subsidize meals for children qualified for free or reduced meals to also subsidize meals for children not qualified for free or reduced meals.

During the 2011-12 school year, the federal reimbursement for a free lunch was \$2.77, \$2.39 for reduced, and \$.26 for paid. Reimbursements were \$.02 cents higher for each category if 60 percent or more of the students in the district that were served qualified for free or reduced priced lunches (National School Lunch, Special Milk, 2011). For the 2011-12 school year, students whose family income (for a family of four) were qualified for free meals if their family income was \$29,055 or less, reduced if their family income was \$29,056 - \$41,348, and paid if their family income was over \$41,349 (Child Nutrition Programs, 2011). In October 2011, over

67 percent of all participants in the school lunch program nationally were qualified for free or reduced meals (58.5 percent free and 8.65 percent reduced) (USDA-FNS, 2011d, p. 6), an indicator of the high need of children participating in the program.

The federal poverty guidelines are the same for the 48 continental U.S. states, while it is higher for Alaska and Hawaii because of their higher cost of living. However, local costs for housing, transportation and other necessities vary significantly across the other 48 states, and depending on the local cost of living, the existing standard federal guidelines for poverty do not accurately reflect local levels of poverty, and therefore do not necessarily reflect local need for the school meal program. This affects the “near poor” and puts pressure on school districts to deal with feeding or denying meals to children who do not qualify for free or reduced prices meals, but which may not have money to pay the full price for meals.

Generally, school districts collect applications for the National School Lunch Program each year. However, the method and rules for collections may differ according to district policy. Some districts may not be successful at collecting applications from all families resulting in either families being billed for meals when they could have been paid for through federal funds, or children without money for meals going hungry. A USDA study revealed a significant problem in which families qualified for federal benefits have been paying full price for meals “almost 8 percent of NSLP participants who paid for a lunch would have been eligible for a free lunch, and 9 percent who paid would have been eligible for a reduced-price lunch” (Ralston,

Newman, Clauson, A., Guthrie, J., & Buzby, J., 2008, p. 14). Additionally, this suggests that either families' income changed from the time they filled out the meal applications, or families didn't fill out meal applications. This figure does not include the number of students that may not have eaten lunch, but that would have been qualified for free or reduce priced lunches. This could be significant, especially considering the generally low participation in the program among middle and high school students.

Many districts have policies allowing students to charge up to a specific number of meals before they are refused a meal, while other districts serve students meals regardless of whether they are qualified for free or reduced priced meals. Some districts serve only a snack to children who do not have money to pay for lunch, and also call Social Services on their parents (Adams, 2012). Many districts pay for these unpaid charges through the food service budget, while others rely on other groups including the PTA to raise funds for these meals (School Nutrition Association, 2008). Districts are increasingly struggling with the issue of meal charges with some even hiring collection agencies to collect school lunch debts (Netter, 2010). This is partially in response to the an increasing number of families, especially in high cost of living areas, who may not qualify for free or reduced meals, but do not have enough money to pay the full price of a school meal.

As discussed, local school meal programs receive funding from federal, state and local sources including student payments. Reimbursement rates are adjusted each

year by the USDA, while major changes to reimbursement rates and program rules occur through the Child Nutrition Reauthorization process which happens every four or five years. Federal reimbursements and donated commodities account for, on average, over 50 percent of the average district's school meal revenue, with 24.2 percent coming from student payments for reimbursable meals, 15.8 percent from other non reimbursable food sales (generally called a la carte), and only 8.8 percent from state and local funds (Bartlett, Glantz & Logan, 2008, p. 6-6).

State and local policy and funding

Some states have developed mandates to feed low-income children, and/or to participate in the federally subsidized school meal program (breakfast, lunch or both), while other states do not have mandates. State agencies responsible for the administration of child nutrition programs are required to provide matching funds, and some states provide additional reimbursements to local school meal programs (School Nutrition Association, 2007). However, state level policy directives and funding are developed and administered in different ways across the states, providing a significant influence on local nutrition programs. Some states provide reimbursements based on specific policy goals. However, on average nationally, state funds provided around 2 percent of local nutrition program revenues, while a small percent of all school food authorities (6 percent) receive over 8 percent of their budget from state sources (Bartlett et al. 2008, p. 6-5, D-40). In order to utilize

school meal programs to support local sustainable food systems, understanding the sources of revenue for school meal programs may reveal strategies to increase funding for sourcing and preparing locally procured food.

Despite volumes of studies linking nutrition to improved health and or academic performance, school nutrition programs are generally considered to be a part of the non-instructional operations and are expected to be self-supporting, although local funds do provide a portion of school food authorities' budgets. According to the Bartlett et al. (2008), local funds provide an average of 6.4 percent of school nutrition budgets. However, 25 percent of school food authorities received over 8 percent of their revenues from local sources (Bartlett et al., 2008, p. 6-6). Generally, these local funds were used to bridge the gap between expenses and revenues, and were not usually tied to specific policy goals.

Nutrition funding tied to specific goals

In a few cases, state and local funding for child nutrition has been tied to specific goals. For example, in 2011 the state of Oregon passed HB 2800 that established the Oregon Farm to School Garden Program that appropriated \$200,000 to the program, the majority of which is for a competitive grants that reimbursed \$.15 per meal to school districts for purchasing and processing Oregon food (Grants to purchase Oregon food products, 2011; Farm-to-School and School Garden Program Rules, 2011). Davis Unified School District in Northern California receives funding

from Measure Q which a parcel tax passed in November 2007 to support K-12 school programs including \$70,000 to fund the purchase of local produce. The parcel tax was scheduled for renewal in the March 2012 election through Measure C, and passed again by 72 percent majority (Yolo Elections Office, 2012). California's Fresh Start Program was authorized in 2005 by the California Legislature. The program provided funding of \$.10 for an additional piece of fruit or vegetable in the breakfast and stated that when commercially available, school districts and charter schools should prioritize fruits and vegetables from California (California Fresh Start Pilot Program, 2005). However the funding for the program was not maintained beyond 2007. Another innovative local policy was passed by the City Council of Washington DC. This act, which will be described more fully in a later section, establishes nutrition and physical activity requirements, and also funds nutrition improvements in the school meal program through a local tax.

Now that funding for public schools and also local school meals programs has been discussed, other factors such as budgeting decisions, as well as the major expense categories of food, labor and other costs will be reviewed.

Budgeting

The way a Local Education Agency (LEA) or a school district develops their budget impacts the fiscal situation of the school meal program. For example, a school district may choose to charge the school meal program an indirect fee to cover

charges for shared services such as accounting, legal, etc. A district might also charge the school meal program for additional expenses such as rent, electricity, and extra services. The USDA has studied costs associated with operating school lunch and school breakfast programs and has released the findings through two major reports. The first report, *School Lunch and Breakfast Cost Study (SLBCS-I)* was released in 1994 and used data from the 1992-1993 school year. The second study by Bartlett, Glantz and Logan (2008), called *School Lunch and Breakfast Cost Study-II (SLBCS-II)* used data from the 2005-2006 school year.

In SLBCS-II, costs were examined looking at all “reported” costs, or costs that were included in the official expenses of the school meal program, and “unreported costs” or costs that were associated with operating the school meal program but were not reported in the official expense reports of the school meal program. Bartlett et al. (2008) found that 79 percent of SFAs did not report indirect costs on the expense statement (Bartlett et al., 2008). However, for the districts that charge their school meal program indirect charges, this amount impacts the overall finances of the program. If a district does not include indirect charges to the school meal program, the costs are generally regarded as part of a district’s support services expenditures; and as school district budgets become increasingly constrained, these services are more carefully scrutinized as district administration are under pressure to reduce costs. Bartlett et al. (2008) found that between 1992 and 2005, the amount of costs school food authorities reported increased, whereas, full costs declined. Some

researchers attribute this change to school districts facing budget pressures and charging higher indirect costs to the school meal program (Ralston et al., 2008).

A striking example of this is the Detroit Public Schools. In 2009 the Governor of Michigan and Michigan Department of Education declared that Detroit Public Schools were in a financial crisis, and they appointed an Emergency Financial Manager. In the district's budget documents for the 2010 fiscal year issued during the 2009-10 school year, one priority highlighted in the budget was to increase the amount of allowable charges to the food service fund for the district's general fund (Detroit Public Schools, 2010). Between FY 2008 and FY2009, the indirect funds transferred from the food service budget to the district's general fund increased from \$1,139,899 in 2008 (Detroit Public Schools, 2010) to \$2,912,205 in FY 2009 (Detroit Public Schools, 2012) despite the total revenues remaining basically the same.³ Funds that were previously used for school meal operations were appropriated by the administration to cover general fund deficits.

Expenses

According to the SBCS- II, in 2005-06 the mean cost for school food authorities to produce a reimbursable meal was \$2.91 of which 37 percent of expenses were food, 48 percent labor, and 15 percent other. (Bartlett et al., 2008, table. D28 and D32)

³ Total revenues for the food service fund in 2008 was \$39,333,040 and in 2009 was \$39,993,753.

Labor

Labor is one of the most critical parts of transforming school meal programs to procure from local farms since fresh produce and other fresh food must often be washed, chopped, and otherwise processed. Labor in the school lunch program includes management (i.e. Director, Area Supervisors) and other administrative labor, as well as labor at the school sites. Depending on the district, it could also include warehouse workers, delivery drivers, etc. Labor accounts for the largest percentage of the average school meal program's expenses. However, the percentage of costs attributed to labor reveals very little information about a program since labor costs vary widely across districts. Additionally, the amount, quality and cost of benefits for school food service workers also are significantly different across districts.

Although there is a federal minimum wage standard, many states and some cities adopt higher minimum wage levels. Additionally, benefit levels are not standardized across the U.S. In SLBCS-II, in 2005 the mean wages for foodservice workers was \$7.35 (Bartlett et al., 2008), while the federal minimum wage in 2005 was \$5.15. (U.S. Department of Labor [DOL], 2012b). Although most studies show that across the nation, labor accounts for around 50 percent of expenses in the school meal program, the amount of labor each district receives for this expense differs depending on the local wage rates. According to the Department of Labor, there are four states than have a minimum wage set lower than the federal minimum wage. There are 18 states (including the District of Columbia) with minimum wage rates

higher than the federal rate, and there are 23 states that have a minimum wage that is the same as the federal rate. The remaining 5 states have not established a minimum wage rate (DOL, 2012b). Local jurisdictions can also establish minimum wages or living wage rates. Santa Fe has one of the highest minimum wage in the country at \$9.85 as of 2009; but starting on January 1, 2012, San Francisco's minimum wage increased to \$10.24 (City and County of San Francisco, 2012a) making it the highest in the country.

In some areas, district cafeteria workers are civil service employees with often higher wages than the minimum wage. Within California, the rates of pay for cafeteria workers vary greatly. One study shows a range of hourly wage rates for entry level cafeteria workers in California in 2009 to be a high of \$16.28 in San Francisco to \$12.97 in San Jose, and a low of \$8.00 in Anderson. The average of starting wages of cafeteria workers during this time was \$10.86 (Foster, 2009). This study did not include benefit levels.

The local policy regarding whether employees are eligible for benefits and the level of those benefits also is an area of local discretion. In December 2011 total compensation per hour for private sector employees in the service sector average was \$14.01 with \$10.57 (75.4 percent) for wages and \$3.44 (24.5 percent) for total benefits, while public sector employees in the service sector averaged \$30.59 per hour with \$18.22 (59.5 percent) for wages and \$12.36 (40.4 percent) for benefits (DOL, 2011a, p. 8-10).

The cost of labor is also often influenced by the presence or absence of union representation. In 2010, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 45.9 percent of public sector employees in local government are represented by unions (DOL, 2011c). One report of school food service workers in New Jersey documents that 7,000 employees work for private food service companies while 4,000 are employees of school districts. As school district food services become privatized, worker's wages declined by \$4-\$6 less per hour. Worker also often lose full time status, and also lose critical benefits like personal and sick days (McCain, 2009).

In the United States, there is no national standard for paid sick leave, despite evidence that the lack of paid sick leave results in increase population exposure to influenza (Kumar, Quinn, Kim, Daniel & Freimuth, 2012). Three cities (San Francisco, Seattle and Washington DC) have approved city level policies that require paid sick leave, although in Washington DC, restaurant workers were exempted. Connecticut also passed the first state level mandatory paid sick leave (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2012). However, in San Francisco, union contract agreements are exempted from the mandatory paid sick leave ordinance, and cafeteria workers represented by SEIU 1021 who are considered "as needed" employees (a classification that includes between half and two thirds of cafeteria workers), are not entitled to mandatory paid sick leave benefits according to their labor agreement with SFUSD.

Having unions in public food service has, in some ways, protected employees by ensuring raises, benefits, etc. However, not all public cafeteria employees enjoy the same benefits. For example, depending on the employee's employment status, they may or may not have access to full or partial benefits. For example, in Albuquerque Public Schools (APS), employees start as a "Cafeteria Substitute" which is a part-time position considered to be needed on an "as needed" basis, and not eligible for benefits (Albuquerque Public Schools [APS], 2011a). The "Class I" position has the same job duties as the "Cafeteria Substitute" position, but is considered permanent part-time. As a permanent position, employees are eligible to receive eight (8) paid holidays and accrue sick leave and personal leave, and participate in the APS retirement fund. Since this is considered a part-time job employees are not eligible for insurance benefits (medical, dental, etc.) (APS, 2011b). The salary levels are also different – with Cafeteria Substitute earning \$7.50 per hour, and the Class I employee starting at \$8.53 per hour and increasing to \$10.46 per hour after a 6 month probationary period. The food service workers at Albuquerque Public Schools are represented by the Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO, CLC (Communications Workers of America, 2012).

While unions may have protected a portion of certain cafeteria staff's benefits, they have failed to protect the food service operations in which these employees work. Certain labor have had a voice during budget negotiations, but an increasing amount of tasks performed by these staff has been outsourced to non union workers in food manufacturing plants far away, potentially including child labor and forced labor

(Institute for Global Labor, 2007; DOL, 2011b). Today, most food is brought into the system pre-prepped, or even premade, in order to reduce the amount of labor necessary to prepare meals. Further, an entire class of workers without benefits or full union protection has emerged in unionized public food service operations, and this class of employee is growing.

The industrialization of the food system has made the outsourcing of cooking possible. Some cafeteria workers are assembling precooked food into reimbursable lunches, while others are rarely cooking at all, and instead they remove premade, proportioned lunches from ovens and serve them. One of the primary responsibilities of cafeteria workers in many districts is now to keep track of the “counting and claiming” paperwork, recording which students eat requiring basic computer and recordkeeping skills more than cooking skills.

For departments with lower benefits and wages for cafeteria workers, cooking on site may still be possible. Some school food service departments across the country still are able to handle and prepare fresh and raw food or “scratch” cook, and some are reintroducing this concept with “culinary boot camps” for their staff (Bruske, 2010). However, in areas of the country with high cost of living, higher wages, and outdated facilities, it is virtually impossible to cook on site requiring a large investment, or private sector solutions to accomplish the goal of using the school meal program to procure from local farms.

Facilities and Food Service Operations

Although there is limited information on the cooking practices in the 100,000 schools participating in the National School Lunch Program, one of the largest studies conducted is the *USDA School Nutrition and Dietary Assessment (SNDA)*. There have been three SNDAs, the most recent was published in November 2007 (SNDA III). In volume I of SNDAIII entitled *School Foodservice, School Food Environment, and Meals Offered and Served*, data on school food operations is collected, and school food authorities are stratified by the size of the school district using the following categories: “Small” (less than 1,000 students); “Medium” (1,000 to 4,999 students); and “Large” (5,000 or more students).⁴ When school food authorities were asked about the location of Food Preparation – there were 4 choices:

1. All meals prepared on-site for serving on-site only
2. Meals prepared on-site for serving on-site and shipment to other schools
3. Received partially or fully prepared meals from base or central kitchen
4. Received fully plated meals prepared off-site

The majority of all schools (70.1 percent) surveyed prepared all meals onsite for serving onsite (65.7 percent of elementary); (76.65 percent of middle schools); and 77.7 percent of high schools (Gordon et al., 2007, p. 32).

⁴ 129 School Food Authorities (SFA) and 395 schools were sampled – 143 elementary, 127 middle, and 125 high schools. The analyses in the report are weighted to be representative of SFAs that offer the National School Lunch Program.

The next most common production system was the base or central kitchen model, in which meals are prepared at the school site for both transporting to other schools as well as serving to students at the site of production. 10.9 percent of all schools, but 19.8 percent of high schools; 8.5 percent of elementary schools, and 9.7 percent of middle schools. 19.1 percent of all schools surveyed received partially or fully prepared meals from base or central kitchen. 25.7 percent of elementary schools have this production system, while 13.7 percent of middle schools, and only 2.4 percent of high schools had this system. Only 6.8 percent of all schools surveyed receive fully plated meals prepared off-site. 9.3 percent of elementary schools, 3.7 percent of middle schools but only 1.7 percent of high schools (Gordon et al., 2007, p. 32).

However it is interesting that of the schools that did not receive fully plated meals (n=362), 79 percent received “chilled or frozen foods that had to be heated” - 89.35 percent of middle schools, 77.9 percent of elementary schools, and 72.5 percent of high schools (Gordon et al., 2007, p. 32). Although the percentage of food that was received chilled or frozen was not part of the survey, this implies that schools are not likely cooking from scratch but are instead receiving at least a part of their food premade.

The remaining question that provides some information about the activity at schools kitchens was the question “assembled or completed assembly of food items (e.g. sandwiches)”. 94.2 percent of all schools indicated that they did assemble or

complete assembly of food items (Gordon et al., 2007, p.32). However, this does not mean that cafeteria workers in the schools were particularly skilled in culinary arts or utilizing kitchen equipment, and could instead mean that pre-sliced meat, pre-sliced cheese, pre-sliced tomatoes, and pre-sliced bread from national food distributors were assembled in a school site for sale to the students at that site, or premade sauce, precooked rice, precooked meat and frozen pre-cut vegetables were assembled to make a “freshly prepared teriyaki bowl.”

Other interesting data pertaining to the privatization of key parts of the school meal program is the question about the use of foodservice management companies which was part of another study cited in SNDA-III⁵. According to the USDA, a Food Service Management Company is

Food Service Management Company (FSMC) means a commercial enterprise or a nonprofit organization that is or may be contracted by the SFA to manage any aspect of the school food service. A FSMC is a company that is acting on behalf of a school food authority by actually being in charge of or directing any aspect of the food service, and must meet applicable program requirements (USDA-FNS, 2009b).

Of 2,054 school food authorities in the study, 13.4 percent used food service management companies with the majority of districts being located in the mid-Atlantic (35.2 percent), 20.4 percent in the Northeast, 16.7 percent in the Midwest, and only 10 percent in the West, 7.8 percent in the Southwest, 3.5 percent in the Mountain Plains, 1 percent in the South (Gordon et al, 2007, p. 34, citing Logan &

⁵ The data cited was from Logan & Kling (2005). School Nutrition Dietary Assessment-III, Preliminary Survey, school year 2003-2004, Table B-16.

Kling, 2005). However, California Education Code prohibits districts from contracting with food service management companies and instead allows districts to contract for food service consulting contracts, and consultants are prohibited from managing classified employees or positions. Also, according to the California law, contracting with consultants cannot adversely affect the wages, benefits or other employment conditions of food service personnel (Classified Employees, 1992). Other states may have similar provisions, and there is likely underreporting of the influence of food service companies in the management and operations of school food authorities due to the conflicting definitions of the scope of work. Districts utilizing a food service management company have, at a minimum, outsourced a portion of the school food department. Some districts also outsource the staffing of the food service program to management companies.

As for meal production systems studied in the *School Lunch and Breakfast Cost Study II*, 70.5 percent of all SFAs practiced on-site kitchen production systems; 18.4 percent used a base/central kitchen system; 2.8 percent used mostly on-site kitchen; and 8.3 percent had a “mostly satellite” system – one in which the school sites received pre-plated food prepared in another location. 91.4 percent did not use a food service management company (Bartlett et al., 2008, p. 2-12).

The *School Lunch and Breakfast Cost Study II*, examined the costs associated with all aspects of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. They found that

the mean full cost of producing reimbursable breakfasts varied by the type of meal production system used with SFAs using mostly on-site school kitchens having the lowest average cost per reimbursable breakfast (\$1.79) and SFAs using only base/central kitchens having the highest average cost per reimbursable breakfast (\$2.75) (Bartlett et al., 2008, p. vii).

However the cost of producing reimbursable lunches was less affected by the meal production system. The median cost for school food authority with all types of meal production systems was between \$2.74 and \$2.88, and the mean cost was between \$2.80 and \$3.05. When the unit of analysis was the NSLP lunch – the mean ranged between \$2.74 and \$2.95 while the median cost ranged between \$2.68 and \$2.92 (Bartlett et al., 2008, p. D-39).

The USDA data is limited due to its focus on school food authority characteristics rather than focusing on the characteristics of the food service programs by the number of meals served, or by the number of students in the districts. 86 percent of all school districts have enrollments of less than 5,000 – but only 31 percent of students in the United States attend school districts this small. 2 percent of the school districts are 25,000 or larger, but 35 percent of all students attend these schools (Sable, Plotts & Mitchell, 2010). The *School Lunch and Breakfast Cost Study II*, used as a sample frame the 2,150 SFAs that responded to the (School Food Authority Characteristics Survey - SFACS) conducted in SY 2003-04). Also, 70 percent of the respondents said that less than 60 percent of their lunches were served to free/reduced qualified students while 30 percent served 60 percent or more of their

lunches to students qualified for free or reduced priced lunches, which is much lower than the national average of meals served to free and reduced students (67 percent) (Bartlett et al., 2008, p. 2-12). In SNDA III, 67.7 percent of respondents said that the child poverty rate in their district was 20 percent or less, while only 32.3 percent said that the child poverty rate was 20 percent or higher (Gordon et al., 2007, p. 20). This sample is skewed towards smaller districts serving fewer percentages of students qualified for free and reduced meals.

The specific issues involving financing infrastructure and other aspects of the school food operations in large school districts is important to understand because of the large amount of students participating in NSLP that attend these schools.

Particularities of Large School Districts

The National Center for Education Statistics identified differences in the 100 largest school districts from the average school district in the country including larger average school enrollments, larger Hispanic and African American populations, larger percentages of English language learners; and among the school districts that reported data, large schools districts had higher percentage of students qualified for free and reduced meals than the average school district. Although the 100 largest school districts represent only 1 percent of all school districts, they are responsible for educating 22 percent of all children in the United States (Sable et al., 2010). Urban school districts have also been found to operate in more complex political and

financial environments (Uzzell, Simon, Horwitz, Amelga, Lewis & Casserly, 2010) and requiring more time from elected school board officials (Hess, 2002).

A study conducted by Nettles, Carr, Johnson, and Frederico (2008) examines the school food operations of the largest school districts in the country and provides specific data from this subset of all school food authorities. They surveyed all food service directors in districts over 30,000 students (232 districts). Ninety eight directors responded to the survey from all USDA regions.

Eighty six percent of respondents said that they used onsite kitchens, almost 70 percent used a central warehouse, and over one third had their own maintenance staff to service equipment. Almost all (98.9 percent) had district level staff that managed site operations with 35.5 percent managing 16-20 sites, 29 percent had 11-15 sites, and 25.8 percent managing over 21 sites, and less than 11 percent managed 10 sites or less. Almost 84 percent of directors had some employees that spoke little or no English, but over 50 percent said that these employees with limited English ability comprised only 9 percent or less of their staff. Almost 95 percent of districts reported that they were self-operated with only 5.4 percent utilizing the services of a food service management company. Almost 48 percent of directors said that they experience daily, weekly or monthly operations challenges with inadequate cafeteria facilities (with 32.9 percent experiencing this daily), 43.9 percent said that they experience daily, weekly or monthly political challenges in operating their program (23.2 percent said daily), while almost 34 percent reported that they face daily,

weekly or monthly challenges with inadequate food preparation facilities (25 percent experiencing this daily), and 28.7 percent said that they experience daily, weekly or monthly challenges with inadequate foodservice equipment (with 17.5 percent experiencing this daily). Although 86.3 percent of directors said that their district was renovating existing schools, the survey did not assess whether kitchen or cafeterias were included in the renovation (Nettles, Carr, Johnson, & Frederico, 2008).

Regarding the description of the food service operations employed by the respondents, 86 percent said that they used onsite kitchens, 41.9 percent said that they used centralized kitchen serving both offsite and onsite, and 16.1 percent said that they use central kitchen with no onsite service. For operations in which the food is prepared centrally, 34.2 percent were delivering cold food preplated/proportioned and 22.8 percent were delivering hot foods preplated/proportioned, implying that either the labor and/or the facilities at the receiving site were not adequate to assemble or handle food other than heating and/or serving unitized meals (Nettles et al, 2008).

The importance of rebuilding local school district's capacity to prepare food was highlighted with the 2009 Equipment Assistance Grants for School Food Authorities – a part of Public Law 111-5, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. With the signing of the law by President Obama on February 17, 2009, a one-time fund of \$100,000,000 was appropriated for equipment assistance to school food authorities with priority given to school food authorities that served 50 percent

or more students qualified for free and reduced priced meals. The funds were allocated to states based on their school meal administrative expenses, and were then to be distributed to local school food authorities through a competitive grant process (USDA-FNS, 2009a). Later in 2009, through the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, the requirements for equipment grants were modified. Through the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-80) an additional \$25,000,000 was appropriated for equipment assistance to school food authorities that had not previously received assistance through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (USDA-FNS, 2010c). One report estimates the amount of grant requests for these funds at over \$600 million (Kid's Safe and Healthy Food Project, 2011).

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) is a national association for school food service directors. The SNA conducts surveys and other research among their members. Their *SNA Operations Report: State of School Nutrition 2011* reports on responses to their most recent survey of 1,294 food service directors. The average size of respondent's district was 7,314 students, so smaller districts are more likely to participate. Over 90 percent of respondents indicated that their district has full services kitchens in their program, while approximately 25 percent indicated that they have central kitchens but only 42 percent have a central warehouse. More respondents from the West and Northwest reported that they have central facilities compared to respondents from the Southeast, Mideast and Northeast. (School Nutrition Association [SNA], 2011, p.11). It is interesting that about 25 percent

responded that they also offer food from national brands like Pizza Hut, Domino's and Papa John's, and that these items were offered both through reimbursable meals as well as cashed based a la carte programs (SNA, 2011, p. 38).

Almost 75 percent of districts responded that they prepared at least some of their offerings from scratch with bakery and side dishes being the most common items prepared from scratch. The survey also asked the respondents to provide the amount of each type of menu item prepared from scratch (SNA, 2011, p. 40). However, the term "scratch" was not defined, and it is not clear whether the respondents had the same understanding of this term when they answered the survey. Some of the different understandings of the term could relate to the amount of preparation that had already occurred to the product prior to its use in a school meal. For example, a cookie that is purchased in the form of premade cookie dough and then scooped out onto a tray and baked at a school site could be considered "prepared from scratch" in some food service operations. Similarly, corn purchased frozen or canned, and then opened, heated, seasoned, and then portioned, is considered "prepared from scratch" in other food service operations. Unfortunately, a common understanding of the terms "cooking" and "prepared from scratch" is not shared among school food service operators.

Table 3-3: Scratch prepared frequency, 2011

	Amount prepared from scratch		
	<25%	25% to 50%	>50%
Bakery items	42.5%	25.2%	32.3%
Entrée items	35.6%	43.0%	21.4%
Side dishes	28.4%	38.4%	33.1%

(taken from School Nutrition Operations Report, 2011, p. 40, Exhibit D-15)

Cafeteria Logistics

Another required burden on school meal programs is administration.

Cafeteria staff are required by USDA regulation to verify proof of eligibility and lunch counts at the point of service each day. Logistically this can pose a problem for lunchroom staff, students, and teachers, especially if there is no computerized point of service system in place, and children must use meal cards which are cumbersome to carry, especially for younger students. For districts implementing new food service models like farm to school salad bars which require additional oversight by cafeteria staff to ensure portion sizes are adequate, the administrative burden on the program can grow.

Time for lunch

Due to the stringent testing requirements under NCLB (No Child Left Behind), and the need to keep school site budgets as lean as possible, school administrators are forced to schedule the maximum number of instructional hours possible. Additionally, many older students participate in clubs and other extracurricular leadership programs, which often are forced to meet during the lunch period. The amount of time devoted to lunch can be inadequate for the number of students that might wish to eat school lunch. Lines can be long, and drive students away from participating in school lunch and either forgo eating altogether, or grab something quick from a nearby store or a vending machine.

Additionally, in many schools, cafeteria seating capacity is inadequate for the number of students in the school. Students that do wait in long lines may find that they have only a few minutes to eat (USDA-FNS, 2001; Ralston et al., 2008, p. 29). This problem not only impacts students' food availability, it also impacts participation in the National School Lunch Program and a school food program's finance. Usually it is the principal that schedules the days at the school; so in a district, one school may allow students adequate time to get through the lunch lines and eat, while another school in the same district may not. In one high school in San Francisco Unified School District, there is a 40 minute lunch break for 2,149 students of which 67 percent are qualified for free and reduced meals. During this lunch break, there are three points of service (locations where students can get a lunch),

which is inadequate to serve such a large number of students. If all students qualified for free and reduced meals wished to eat at school, 12 students would have to be processed through each point of service per minute.

USDA rules have often been criticized as not being “kid friendly”. Scaled back lunch periods reduce the time students have to go through the lunch line, and teachers sometimes hold the elementary students’ lunch cards in their possession in order to move the line faster. This is a violation of USDA regulation, and if state reviewers document this program error during one of their reviews, the district might be subject to penalty including repayment of funds for meals claimed at this school on that day. This also poses a problem for cafeteria staff required to get an accurate count of “qualified” students to submit for federal and state reimbursement. Holding these cards each day also is difficult for younger student who must also juggle holding a lunch tray, adding items to it like milk and fruit.

School Food Environment

The school food environment refers to all types of food in a school. In addition to the NSLP and the School Breakfast Program, the school food environment includes vending machines, a la carte food, food sales on campus by student clubs, parent groups, and even teachers or individual parents. Unfortunately, many groups and individuals view students as a lucrative market for food sales. In addition to these types of food sales, there are also catering trucks that often sit outside of schools

waiting to sell to students, and also class parties that often include pizza or another type of meal. Although the student nutrition departments oversee the school lunch and a la carte food sales, they rarely have any jurisdiction over other food sales that occur on school campuses.

Many school meal programs also offer food for sale that are not directly subsidized by federal reimbursements, and are available to students that have money to purchase them. This unsubsidized food, often called a la carte, competes with the subsidized meals and it may also lower student participation in the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, USDA research shows that in the average school meal program, competitive foods are being sold for a price lower than the cost of production, implying that the shortage is either being made up by district funds, or there is a transfer of federal subsidies to the non-subsidized a la carte program (Kavanagh, 2010). Almost 34 percent of elementary schools, 63 percent of middle schools, and 77 percent of high schools offered competitive meals at lunch (Gordon et al., p. 109). There is no federal mandate for the federally subsidized meal program to maintain separate cost accounting from the competitive a la carte meal program, and until recently, this issue was not recognized as a problem. However, competitive foods have increasingly been shown to negatively impact school meal program finances (Peterson, 2011), and the removal of competitive meal programs have resulted in improved participation in the National School Lunch Program (Bhatia, Jones & Reicker, 2011).

In general, these other types of food sales end up competing with the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program. Often, the proceeds from these food sales go to a school group or an individual but not to the school meal program. They are rarely subject to the same nutrition guidelines as the National School Lunch Program, and they are also not regulated for food safety unlike the school lunch program. Additionally, if these competitive food sales are not coordinated with the school's nutrition services department, they end up draining participation from the National School Lunch Program, often resulting in wasted lunches, and a financial loss to the department. This obviously poses a problem to the nutrition department's ability to serve more students, and can sabotage efforts to improve school meals by procuring and serving fresh food from local farms.

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 required that school districts develop and enact Wellness Policies by the beginning of the school year 2006-2007. Some Wellness Policies attempt to provide some guidelines for these competitive food sales. However, often, a food environment is particular to an individual school and difficult to regulate. For example, at SFUSD, vending machines are not managed through a central contract, and are instead, managed at the school site level. Often, a coach, or another staff member of the school, has taken the initiative to get a vending machine installed and then utilizes the proceeds of the vending machine to run their program. If this individual staff member is not bought in to nutrition policies governing vending machines (or chooses to ignore them), they might stock the vending machine with whatever sells. There may be several vending

machines on a particular school campus, and each may be controlled by a different staff member.

Food sales by school groups (like the French club) are also impossible to regulate by the student nutrition department. Many student and parent groups feel that they have a right to sell food to make money for their club, and resist any attempt to restrict their ability to do this. In California there has been a state wide rule restricting competitive food sales on campuses to two times per year. However, until the last several years, this rule was not followed at SFUSD. Although following this state rule is mandatory, it was also put into the Wellness Policy (adopted by the Board of Education). Eventually this policy was taken a little more seriously by some. However many schools disregard this policy and continue to promote competitive food sales on their campuses.

The root of the problem is that principals and the district administration are often not connected to the school meals program, are not bought in supporting the program, and are often antagonistic toward it. As discussed, many district administrations view school meals as a business operation that needs to, at least, break even. Others look to school meals as a profit center, and wish to extract resources from the program to fund other priorities of the district. At a school site level, if a principal were to have their job review partially dependent on meeting specific goals connected to the school meals program at their school, they would formally be connected to the success of the program. For example, return of NSLP

applications could be a measure of success for a principal. Additionally, allowing competitive food sales could have repercussions for the principal at a school.

Principals could also be required to discipline teachers that try to sell food from their class rooms, or staff members that do not follow nutrition or other guidelines for vending machines.

In some districts, catering trucks are another form of competition for the school lunch program. Often, these catering trucks pull up right next to the school, making it very easy for students to purchase food, which is often junk food. For schools with open campuses, catering trucks may be just another option for food. In theory, for closed campuses, catering trucks should not be an option for students. However, students at a closed campus, often jump the fence or “sneak” out a side door to purchase something quickly from the catering. Regardless, of open or closed campuses, catering trucks lure students into purchasing their food partially because they stock food preferred by students and often not available on campus. Some school food advocates in San Francisco, felt that catering trucks posed unfair competition for the school lunch program, and successfully advocated for a local level ordinance requiring all catering trucks to park 1500 feet from schools (Novato, California has a similar ordinance, and a state bill was introduced in California to create a similar state law). However, some catering trucks have ignored this ordinance, while enforcement is often dependent on the principal of a school to call the police.

In summary, the school food environment can exert substantial competition over the school meal program and can drain important resources from the program. These competitive food sales often create a culture that further stigmatizes school lunch, making it more difficult for the program to make changes necessary to support regional agricultural producers if it means more time or money.

Cost of Milk

Since milk is a required component of all school meals, the impact of milk pricing on school meals is significant. The prices school food authorities pay for milk depend on a range of factors. Dairy pricing in the United States are a result of both public policy and market based pricing (Shields, 2009). Some of policies that affect pricing are “milk price supports, Federal milk marketing orders, import restrictions, export subsidies, domestic and international food aid programs, State-level milk marketing programs, and a multi-State milk pricing organization.” Producer cooperatives also influence the pricing of milk (Manchester & Blayney, 2001). Prices range based on market region, product characteristic (fluid, powder, fat content and perishability), and time of year. Low-fat and fluid skim milk, (now the only options in the school meals program since the Child Nutrition Reauthorization final rules) are often priced higher than 2 percent and whole milk. For 2011, the range of price per gallon for fluid skim milk averaged over the year was \$2.18 - \$4.51 with the market having the lowest prices being Albany/Buffalo, New York, and the

highest being New Orleans, Louisiana/Mobile, Alabama (California Department of Food and Agriculture, 2012). The price volatility of milk has increased as federal dairy policy has reduced price supports. However, as dairy policy is being reconsidered for the 2012 Farm Bill, the impact of new policies on the school meal program must be considered as changes proposed could significantly impact the finances of school meal programs, further challenging their ability to support regional agriculture.

Privatization

The term “privatization” has no consistent meaning, but derives its meaning depending on the history and context of a specific situation and “describes a direction of change, but it does not denote a specific origin or destination” (Starr, 1988, p.13). In the United States, privatization became more popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Henig (1989) traces the rise of privatization to the works of economist Milton Friedman as well as the much earlier works of economists in the 1920s and 1930s, but focuses on the way the concept became to be legitimized more recently, through the “intellectual delegitimization of the welfare state” (Henig, 1989, p. 653). Proponents justified privatization as an option by using examples of earlier privatization from local government, and also through revising history by interpreting government as serving the interests of entrenched bureaucrats, and not the public good. One of the examples of local government privatization cited was that the City of San Francisco

“began franchising garbage collection to private companies as early as 1932” (Henig, 1989, p. 657).

Under the Reagan administration, the proponents of privatization found a receptive administration, which pursued public goals through private means. Henig (1989) cites a government report that defined privatization as an option “allowing Government to *provide* services without *producing* them” (p. 662 quoted in Henig from President’s Private Sector Survey, 1983). According to Henig, this is different from liberalization, which generally seeks to reduce government. Through privatization, government responsibility is maintained, but accountability and control may be diminished.

Starr (1988) emphasizes that shifting the production of services to the private sector does not necessarily mean that government spending is reduced, and spending may also increase with this shift. Further, privatization may result in less government control and accountability. Instances of privatization occur across a spectrum, ranging from partial to total privatization. According to Starr “in the private sector I include not only commercial firms but also informal and domestic activities, voluntary associations, cooperatives, and private nonprofit corporations” (Starr, 1988, p. 14). Starr outlines several types of privatization, including “privatization by attrition” “when a government lets public services run down” (Starr, 1988, p. 16). A second form of privatization occurs when government shifts ownership of public

assets to private interests. A third is when government purchases services formerly produced by itself through contracting (Starr, 1988, p. 17).

In school foodservice, privatization can be found in multiple places, from the food purchased, the services contracted, and in some cases, management and labor. Most school food operations source at least some processed food for their program, from precut fresh or frozen vegetables, precooked meat, premade sauces, and even commodities provided through the USDA are most often sent to processors to prepare meals. In some cases, food from fast food restaurants is purchased by the school meal program or a food service management company for NSLP reimbursable meals.

A history of the program reveals that the opening for the privatization of the food came when the program was transformed into a mandatory program for poor children during the Nixon administration. This program transformation unintentionally resulted in an exodus of children who could afford to pay for lunches, creating a budget shortfall for local school meals programs. This financial pressure forced school food service directors to reach out to private food businesses to provide premade food or to food service management companies to manage the program. Concurrently, changes made by the USDA to the nutrition requirements facilitated the entry of the food industry into school meals (Levine, 2008, p. 151-152), and in 1970, the USDA issued regulations that allowed school districts to contract with private food service companies to manage their program (Poppendieck, 2010, p. 62). This was a radical shift from the former distrust of private food businesses by school

nutrition professionals concerned that the focus of the program would shift to a profit driven enterprise (Levine, 2008, p. 159).

Operational functions such as transportation, equipment maintenance, and even distribution are often contracted to private businesses, even the food service equipment in kitchens may be owned by a private company as part of their overall contract. During the Reagan administration, further assaults on the program including the end of a grant program for school food service equipment (Poppendieck, 2010, p. 73), which supported the continued transfer of local school food production to outsourcing the provision of premade food by private companies. The decline of local capacity to prepare school food is a national problem (Kids Safe and Healthful Food Project, 2011).

The issue of privatization is important for several reasons including it may lead to the weakening of local ownership over the program and a loss of local control. Often, in contracts with food service management companies, there is a lack of transparency of costs; and contracts may contain hidden expenses, while audits by the USDA Office of the Inspector General has found that the accounting of commodity entitlements (USDA Food) and purchase discounts and rebates gained by the private company have not been passed on to school districts, which costs school food authorities millions in assets (USDA, Office of Inspector General (USDA-OIG], 2005; USDA-OIG, 2002).

Additionally, investments in local programs may be neglected, with increased reliance on private companies to provide services critical to the program. Finally, the result on school meal program is uncertain, though research indicates that most school food authorities utilize private food service companies with the intent of lowering food service costs (General Accounting Office, 1996). Some districts experience improved program finances and higher food quality through contracts with private companies, while other districts may experience a negative result in both areas, as well as dissatisfaction among students and staff (Schmieder, McCann & Townley, 1996; Adefeso, 2002). Interestingly, one study utilized data from schools in Michigan to understand whether private food service is associated with student performance. To do this, Zullo (2008) explored national data available through the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to examine the difference between the food offered and the operations in private and public school food service programs. Data suggested that privately managed school food service programs offer students more food choices, the food served in these programs was higher in fat and sugar (Zullo, 2008). Zullo cross referenced the CDC data with test scores from individual schools and found that private food service operations were associated with lower reading and math scores as measured through the state assessment tests (Zullo, 2008).

National food service companies

The opportunity for private firms seems to arise out of a number of factors. Some directly parallel the industrialization and concentration of food manufacturing in general, and of food preparation in particular. Economies of scale and scope make national food companies increasingly able to offer food that meets federal standards at under the cost of local provisioning, especially in districts where progressive municipal hiring and labor policies make it difficult to compete with firms able to pay lower wages at distant locations. Both budget constraints in most school districts, and a continuing dependence on meeting food needs entirely, or primarily, from the federal funds distributed to them, exacerbate this problem. This decision has been the result of increasing labor and benefits costs, declining kitchen equipment and a shrinking management staff, and has recently been exacerbated by the rises in food and transportation costs.

The majority of the players in food service are now large and international, led by Aramark (US), the Compass Group (UK), Sodexo (France). Of the top 50 management companies in 2011, 21 counted the K-12 school food service as a major segment for their sales. The Compass Group (led by their subsidiary, Chartwell) services 550 K-12 accounts that encompass 6,000 schools (Food Management, 2011a). Although I have not found sales data specifically for the school lunch component, a study of the broader food management industry reports a high level of market concentration for the industry as a whole. In 2011 the top 50 food

management companies in the U.S. increased their sales by \$1.5 billion, and the top three realized the majority of these increases in sales (additional sales for Compass - \$800 million, Aramark \$211 million, and Sodexo \$300 million). Twenty-three of the top forty firms had revenues over \$100 million in 2011. The bottom 47 companies realized \$165 million in additional sales (Food Management, 2011b).

Scale and local circumstances probably explain the current differences in how school districts meet the food needs of their students. But even if districts have not yet outsourced the operation of their food service to a management company, most districts purchase a large amount of their food already premade and frozen from large food service distributors. This industry is parallel to but distinct from the branded fast food firms whose entry into school food has been publically challenged as commercialization of schools and children's lives. But behind the scenes school food (and other public provisioning) has become an important and growing corporate market.

Other models of school and food privatization

Revolution Foods is a business started in 2006 in Alameda California to bring better foods to school students initially focusing on purchasing from local sustainable farms, and has quickly grown to serve a national market including production centers in Northern and Southern California, Colorado, Texas, the Mid-Atlantic and New

Jersey/New York (Revolution Food, 2012a), and the company is currently expanding operations to Chicago (Revolution Food, 2012b).

Revolution Foods has a commitment to high food standards including never using certain preservatives, and not purchasing meat that has been treated with non-therapeutic antibiotics. They also have a commitment to advance public benefits demonstrated by becoming certified as a B Corp by B Labs in 2011. A “B Corp” is a corporation with a public benefit mission. At this time, a few states have adopted legislation to recognize B Corporations legally. There is also a third party certifier B Labs, that certifies companies to be “Certified B Corp”. B Labs certifies corporations that meet specific overall social and environmental performance standards.

According to B Labs

Benefit Corporations are required to:

1. Purpose: have a corporate purpose to create a material positive impact on society and the environment;
2. Accountability: expand fiduciary duty to require consideration of the interests of workers, community and the environment; and
3. Transparency: publically report annually on overall social and environmental performance against a comprehensive, credible independent and third party standard (B Labs, 2012).

In order for a company to be certified, they have to change the governing documents for the company, obtain Board approval to the changes as well as shareholder approval, and then file amended articles with the state in which they are incorporated.

Revolution Foods began as a part of the NewSchools Venture Fund, which focuses on the management of charter schools. “NewSchools Venture Fund is a

venture philanthropy firm working to transform public education by supporting education entrepreneurs and connecting their work to system change” (New School Venture Fund, 2012) In the Revolution Foods model, meals are often ordered by the parents through the Revolution Foods website. Revolution Foods partners with Whole Foods to source products. Venture Capital funds of \$6,500,100 from two investors (Bay Area News Group, 2008) funded the company’s expansion in 2008 to a larger Oakland facility. The company grew by 1,219 percent between 2007 and 2010, with 742 employees and \$22.9 million in revenues in 2010 up from \$1.7 million in 2007 (Inc., 2012). The business model also includes a line of lunchbox items for parents that wish to send their child to school with food from home. Their product line is in 1,500 retail locations (Psychic Ventures, 2012). According to the company website, 3 percent of the net revenue from these lunchbox items goes back into the school food program (Revolution Food, 2012a). Revolution Foods primarily relies on school site staff (as opposed to cafeteria staff) to serve foods, which lends itself better to charter school model for labor arrangements, than a regular public schools which employ cafeteria staff.

Charter schools are free from local and state regulations – especially labor contracts. A UCLA report found that “private funding is usually necessary for the survival of charter schools” (Scott, 1998, p. 5). California was the second state to pass legislation allowing charter schools, and has the second largest number of charter schools and the most students enrolled in charter schools. So it makes sense that a farm to school program would emerge to serve the charter and private school

system. As Revolution Foods was poised to expand to Colorado, it encountered legislative barrier from the State Board of Education that allowed only school districts to be designated as a school food authority which meant that it could not collect federal reimbursements for meals served (Colorado Department of Education, 2009). However, state level policy changes were enacted allowing Revolution Foods, and similar companies, access to the Colorado charter school market.

The significance of a company like Revolution Foods is that they are a private business with a commitment to higher quality food, high nutrition standards and also public benefits. In some ways, they have started to change the playing field of privatized food because of their internal standards. Also, since charter schools are publicly funded schools without the same labor obligations as non-charter public schools, they provide another option for food service in the charter arenas that previously often relied on the unified school district in which they existed to provide food service. They may also further privatize schools through expansion of support services for publically funded but privately operated schools.

Nonprofit privatization

There are also nonprofit organizations forming to service the school food market that focus on purchasing from local farms. A small project in Redding California, the Healthy Lunch and Lifestyle Program (HELP), has emerged to serve school food in public schools, building on their initial accounts servicing charter

schools (Healthy Lunch and Lifestyle Project, 2012), and in the last chapter, the Washington DC case also provides another example of a nonprofit, DC Central Kitchen, operating kitchens in DC Public Schools.

Parent volunteers

Orinda Unified School District is an affluent district located east of San Francisco comprised of 6 schools with a total of 2,400 students and only 39 qualified for free and reduced meals. They are not required to participate in the National School Lunch Program, but due to California's mandate that all public school districts must make available at least one free or reduced priced meal to qualifying children (Meals for Needy Pupils, 1976), they must provide nutritionally adequate meals for low-income children. Each school in the district operates its own school food program utilizing either school meal catering companies or parent volunteers that coordinate with restaurants. Orinda Intermediate School's lunch program, called the Bulldog Kennel is coordinated entirely by parent volunteers, and parents must prepay for the students' meals (Orinda School District, 2012a). During the 2010-11, only 1.6 percent of the student population qualified for free and reduced meals, only 16 students (Education Data Partnership, 2012). It is not clear how these students are fed. Other schools in the district also utilize parent volunteers who use the school meal program to fundraise for other enrichment programs at the school (Orinda Public School, 2012b). According to the menus at Glorietta Elementary Schools in the Orinda School District, they serve food from Trader Joes, Subway as well as local

restaurants (Orinda Public School, 2012c). Two schools in Orinda Unified School District utilizing catering companies in which orders must be placed through the company's website in advance.

Poverty – Family Incomes

Family incomes play a significant role in operating the National School Lunch program. For example, in some districts, there is a high percentage of students qualified for free and reduced lunches. In these instances, the school can serve universal free breakfast and free lunch. Paperwork associated with determining eligibility of students is greatly reduced through a program called Provision 2. Also, collecting cash is not a significant issue when all students are qualified to eat for free.

In the U.S., 32 million students eat lunch through the NSLP each day. However, many more students may be hungry and may not have access to food due to policies at the local level. For example, reimbursement through the NSLP requires that families fill out an application. In San Francisco, there are a significant number of families that do not fill out forms. If a student from one of these families eats lunch at school, it is expected that the student will pay the full price for the lunch. However, due to a local policy that prohibits Student Nutrition Services from denying students a lunch for any reason, all students in San Francisco are guaranteed a lunch. However, in many places, students without approved meal applications or money are not given a lunch.

Improving Qualities of School Food through Regional Foods

Farm-to-school initiatives focus on institutional food procurement for K-12 schools. They can be considered as a type of alternative food initiatives since they often occur outside of the existing networks and relations of an institution's food procurement channels; and the focus is on primarily purchasing products with specific qualities directly from farmers that can supply the desired quality food. Farm to school purchases imply that the food products purchased through these initiatives has specific qualities that differentiates them from other foods normally purchased by the institution.

What are the qualities of food? Below are some of the goals of of farm to school programs.

- Promote local small and medium sized farmers;
- Develop regional economies and advance sustainable development;
- Conserve natural resources through shorter transport of food;
- Support sustainable agricultural production practices;
- Ensure fresher and more diverse variety of food for local communities;
- Promote public health.

Depending on the values of the purchaser, the resources of the institution, the region in which the purchaser is located and the agricultural production cycle as well as the types of food available, and the infrastructure to get the desired type of food, changes to food procurement practices considered under “farm to school” headings have had uneven success in transforming food systems.

Qualities of food – what matters to whom and where?

According to the School Nutrition Association's most recent survey of their members, 32 percent of respondents were currently involved in a farm to school initiative, 13 percent were planning to implement one, and 28 percent were interested (School Nutrition Association, 2011). Gordon et al. (2007) surveyed a representative sample of 129 school food authorities across the country during the 2004-05 school year and found that 10 percent were involved in farm to school. Thirteen percent said that they had state guidelines on purchasing locally grown food and 8.5 percent said that they had local guidelines; however the majority 78.5 percent said that they did not have any guidelines for purchasing locally grown food. Interestingly, 62 percent purchased food through school food purchasing cooperatives in order to lower their costs (Gordon et al., 2007, p. 44).

Farm to school initiatives have increasingly become a subject of research, with key stakeholders like food service directors, farmers and distributors being especially critical to the growth and the success of these programs. Vogt and Kaiser (2007) review nineteen studies that provided information from surveys of food service directors (primarily from schools but also restaurants), farmers and distributors on perceived benefits of purchasing regionally grown food and the

barriers⁶ (Vogt and Kaiser, 2007). According to their review, a lack of infrastructure as well as necessary finances to support processing and distribution appeared consistently as a barrier mentioned by farmers as well as food service directors (Vogt et al., 2007, p. 241). “Farm-to-institution was designed to restore profitability to small farms” (Vogt et al., 2007, p. 242) and “survey response rates indicate that farmers may be more enthusiastic of farm-to-institution than FSDs [food service directors]” (Vogt et al., 2007, p. 246). They find, however, that a food service director’s attitude towards regional food purchases was influenced by the type of food service operation as well as the demand for the different food and the experience of the director with the this type of program. The authors comment that “greater investigation in this area would be beneficial to our understanding of how the food service environment impacts decision-making” (Vogt et al., 2007, p. 246)

A consistent theme in the survey results was that buyers want ease of purchasing, one stop shopping and direct delivery; while farmers consistently want higher prices. The authors attempt to summarize the themes in the survey results by categorizing the primary benefits seen by food service directors or primary motivations for food service directors to participate in purchasing regional food. The most common was: “aid to local economy and farmers/community pride” “fresher food/more nutritious,” the next most common was “higher quality/safer food/better taste”. The primary barriers summarized by the authors were “untrained staff/lacking

⁶ Food Service Directors from the following states were included in the 19 articles: Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Minneapolis, Michigan, Oklahoma, Colorado, California, Maine, Washington, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Ohio, West Virginia, Massachusetts, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina.

adequate labor to wash and chop local produce”, “cost/competitive pricing/low prices of commodity food”, while the next most common barriers were “seasonality/knowledge of local product availability” and “adequate planning/reliable supply/on-time delivery”, with “limited storage and processing kitchen facilities” (Vogt et al., 2007, p. 248).

Although they acknowledge the challenges with the farm to institution model, they see these programs as holding economic promise for regional farmers

farm-to- institution is a potentially viable support for farmers...though institutions may not be ideal customers...building long-lasting institutional marketing relationships may be significant support mechanisms for regional farms and is part of a comprehensive support system for food growers of all sizes (Vogt et al., 2007, p. 251).

The authors call on the public sector to promote more linkages between regional farmers and schools saying “one way to prioritize buying regionally is to create school policies that support doing so....As a nation, it is worth considering why support of farms in our communities is not the current mission of the public school system” (Vogt et al., 2007, p. 251).

Supporting farms is often the focus of farm to school discussions, and not on building the capacity of school food service operations to prepare fresh food. A more successful strategy might be to focus on serving fresher food, increasing in participation in the meal programs, building local capacity to control the school food program, by targeting structural issues, like funding, student feedback, infrastructure,

culinary training, etc. Further, labor practices from farm to fork are also eclipsed by the focus on procurement from local farmers. Programs focusing on natural resource conservation generally do not consider social issues. Research has revealed that organic farms do not necessarily engage in more equitable labor practices (Guthman, 2004), nor do they want to include labor standards as a part of organic certification (Shreck, Getz & Feenstra, 2006).

Through their difficulties with implementing farm to school in Madison Metropolitan School District, Kloppenberg, Wubben and Grunes (2008) say that “it may be advantageous for FTS [farm to school] programs to be initiated in smaller rather than larger school districts and/or in districts whose production facilities and protocols are not so extensively industrialized” (Kloppenber, et al. 2008). Some states have stepped in to provide legal authority, technical expertise, training, and at times, extra reimbursements to help support farm to school. The National Farm to School Network maintains a list of state farm to school legislation classifying the support from states into the following categories project implementation, task force/council, pilot program implementation, allocation, additional reimbursement, local preference, promotional event or program, database or directory, wellness or food security policy, working group, resolutions, and other support (National Farm to School Network, 2010).

In addition to state level support, many local communities are implementing programs with support from the food service director and staff, community and

nonprofit partners, grants and fundraisers, and a variety of other ways. One of the most advanced engagements with transforming a large school district's meal program and connecting to regional agriculture has been in Washington, DC. This case will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 4: The Case of School Food in San Francisco

For a city that thinks of itself as cutting edge when it comes to environmental concerns, it was surprising to learn that all the food comes pre-packaged from outside the city, supplied by a private vendor. Staffs at the various schools simply heat the individual packets, much like you find on an airline (Bauer, 2009).

Let them eat mass produced frozen food

In 2011-12, in the San Francisco Unified School District, the majority of the food in school meals is purchased pre-made from a national company with production factories in Chicago and the east coast. The meals come unitized, in individual trays, covered in plastic, frozen, and then shipped across the country to the same vendor's rented distribution center in Brisbane, California, a few miles south of San Francisco. Each morning, a team of delivery drivers with a fleet of white panel vans load the racks of frozen (but partially thawed) meals into the vans, and deliver them to the schools in San Francisco. The drivers are employed by a different company contracted by SFUSD to deliver food. Once the delivery drivers arrive at the school, they load the meals into rethermalization ovens, and push the start button to begin the warming process.

About a third of SFUSD's 113 schools have salad bars. The produce on the salad bar is purchased from a regional produce distributor headquartered in Turlock, California located about 100 miles east of San Francisco already prewashed and

precut, in five pound bags. The variety of produce on the salad bars is not extensive, but it is fresh. The produce distributor is contracted by the national food service vendor, and not directly by SFUSD, so the cost of the produce is not available to SFUSD Student Nutrition Services management.

At the school sites, the contract delivery drivers unload the premade meals and produce into the kitchen areas. They load the meals for breakfast and lunch into the rethermalization ovens and turn on the ovens to start the heating process. The rethermalization ovens are all around 17 years old, and there is currently no plan (or funds) to replace them. The meals are loaded into the ovens between 6:00 am – 7:30 am. Lunches generally begin after 10:45 am, so the lunches are in the oven for 3-4 hours prior to being served to the children.

Why is the school food program in San Francisco purchasing frozen? How did it get this way?

A local school meal program in any community is a result of choices made over many decades – some of them intentional, and many of them not. Because the school meal program is a public program, the choices are always community choices, but often decision makers overseeing public schools are faced with extremely limited options, and community members may not be aware of the decisions being made, how and when these decisions get made, and how to go about influencing those decisions.

From the previous discussion about the many ways school meal programs are influenced by local and state level policies and funding, perhaps it has become clearer why there has never been a “uniform school lunch program” as Allen et al. (2006) suggest, and also why improvements in one district may be unattainable in another, at least in the immediate term. So often, school lunch advocates oversimplify solutions into inspirational, but often nonreplicable models of school lunch innovation.

An examination of the history and current conditions of school meals in San Francisco including attempts to implement farm to school reveals how bureaucracies, institutions, and organizational structures and functions, engage with diverse social actors to address food systems challenges and issues in society in order to provide safe, sustainable and affordable food for poor communities. Specifically, this work provides an in-depth, detailed contextual analysis of food systems activities and relationships in the City and County of San Francisco. Many of the challenges encountered in the San Francisco case have been repeatedly documented in the agrofood and farm to school literature, including the lack of infrastructure for cooking, and the privatization and industrialization of many critical food service functions. The San Francisco case also illustrates how a more complex constellation of current and historical factors have come together to make it exceedingly challenging for the public school food program to provide quality food from local sources for its children.

The alternative food movement and the proponents of the belief that sustainable development can be achieved through expanding market share for small

and medium sized regional farmers have focused on downstream solutions for achieving their goal, including expanding public procurement of locally and regionally produced food. Generally, research on farm to school programs has documented the motivations of the actors in farm to school programs including food service buyers, farmers, and distributors, or has critiqued the projects for advancing the neoliberal project, but has neglected detailed examinations and understandings of the reality of how public food service operations exist. The literature does not reflect the constraints created through history and structure, nor the behavior of organizations to create barriers or opportunities to implement sustainable procurement and geographically oriented procurement practices to support regional agricultural producers.

Laws are ever evolving – rules and regulations imposed; people in organizations are constrained or freed by them. This case study speaks to why organizations are constrained to implement procurement policies desired by food system activists. Persistent and passionate activists cannot relate to the public bureaucracy partially because the issues around public procurement challenges have been framed too simply. The San Francisco case provides an account of the complex factors that must be addressed and overcome in order for the school meal program to advance sustainable regional development.

School Food in San Francisco

San Francisco is illustrative of a wealthy, progressive city that is challenged to ensure that all of its citizens have food access, and the public sector struggles to provide quality food to all its citizens through the public programs it operates or it funds. Given its progressive culture including environmental, social justice and food system awareness, as well as the year round growing season in the surrounding agricultural regions, efforts to support sustainable and local food systems through the school lunch program should find fertile soil in which to flourish. However, through an examination of the challenges facing the school meal program as well as the efforts to incorporate local, sustainable food into public provisioning through the National School Lunch Program, the examination reveals the possibilities and the limitations of local level efforts to contribute to building regional sustainable food systems and to offer foods with desired environmental and social qualities.

San Francisco - orientation to place

A local school meal program in public schools is usually the largest public food service program in any city, town, or county unless the area is home to a large amount of prisons. Therefore, the public institutions that procure food do so for their economically disadvantaged clients. Because school meals serve a large number of a community's children, the school meal program is in reality, a program that serves the community and should not be solely the responsibility of the school district.

The political geography in San Francisco is somewhat unique. It is the only consolidated city-county in California, making the Mayor the chief executive over the city as well as the county, and the Board of Supervisors the same as a City Council, streamlining business considerably. There are eleven elected Board of Supervisors representing a specific geographic district. Further simplifying the political geography is that there is a single unified school district, San Francisco Unified, with one Superintendent and a seven member elected Board of Education. By contrast, Portland, Oregon is served by six school districts, each with their own Superintendent and Board of Education.

Cultural factors

San Francisco is known around the world for its progressive culture: the highest minimum wage rate in the country, mandates for affordable housing in new developments, leadership on gay rights and domestic partner benefits, city sponsored health care, mandatory paid sick leave and strong unions. This progressivism attracts people from all over the world, and especially young people. San Francisco has a consistent influx of new, young talent. However, the high cost of living often prohibits many young adults from settling down in San Francisco, buying a house, and starting a family. San Francisco has seen a decline in the number of children aged 0-17 for decades (San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and their Families [DCYF], 2011).

Environmental activism and food system awareness

The Bay Area has a long history of strong environmental activism (Walker, 2007) San Francisco was recently named the greenest North American city based on thirty one indicators (Siemens Global, 2011). Since 1997, San Francisco has had an official Sustainability Plan with an entire chapter devoted to food and agriculture (City and County of San Francisco, 1997). Throughout the past decade, San Francisco has advanced city wide food system planning through policies and programs including a comprehensive food system assessment, a Food Security Task Force, an Urban Rural Roundtable, and most recently, a Mayor Executive Directive on Healthy and Sustainable Food (Newsom, 2009; Morgan & Sonnino, 2010).

San Francisco has a strong and progressive restaurant culture with over 4,000 restaurants, and only 350 are considered as chain restaurants (meaning that they have over 20 locations). The vast majority of restaurants in San Francisco are small, independently owned, and many feature food from local farms. San Francisco hosted the only U.S. gathering of Slow Food in 2008, Slow Food Nation. It also hosts over 20 farmers markets throughout the city and is also the home to the oldest farmers market in the state. San Francisco was the first city to mandate that all farmers markets accept food stamps, and San Francisco also revised the planning code to allow for urban agriculture in all neighborhoods, and has rewritten city codes to allow more trendy food carts.

Economic factors

San Francisco has a very high cost of living in comparison to the 132 top major metropolitan areas, with only New York (Manhattan and Brooklyn), and Honolulu having a higher cost of living index (US Census Bureau, 2010). This high cost of living impacts families' economic self sufficiency. The federal poverty rate does not take into account regional differences in cost of living. Since federal reimbursements for nutrition programs are allocated based on federal poverty standards, San Francisco families and children that may need assistance, may not meet the federal income requirements for assistance. As was discussed in the last chapter, for the 2011-12 school year, students whose family income (for a family of four) was 130 percent of poverty – (\$29,055 or less) were qualified for free meals if their family income was between 131 and 185 percent of poverty (\$29,056 - \$41,348) were qualified for reduced priced meals, and if their family income was over 185 percent of poverty (greater than \$41,349) were required to pay full price for meals (Child Nutrition Programs – Income Eligibility Guidelines, 2011). This federal standard does not accurately reflect need across the country. In response to the lack of local relevance of this federal poverty measure, alternative measures of poverty and self-sufficiency are being explored by the federal government (US Census Bureau, 2011a).

Private non profits are also developing alternative measures including the California Self-Sufficiency Index developed by the INSIGHT Center for Community and Economic Development based in Oakland, California. This index takes into account the costs for child care, food, housing, transportation, healthcare, taxes and miscellaneous expenses depending on the family size and the composition of the family. The 2011 INSIGHT Self-Sufficiency Standard for San Francisco County shows that a family of four consisting of two adults and two elementary school aged children needs an annual income of \$60,900 to meet their minimum economic needs, and the food budget is \$981 (Insight Center for Community and Economic Development [INSIGHT], 2011). This minimum sufficiency level is over 270 percent more than the federal poverty guidelines which determined that a family of four was at the poverty level if their household income in 2011 was \$22,350 (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Each adult would need to earn a minimum of \$14.65 an hour working a 40 hour per week job to be economically self-sufficient according to the INSIGHT index.

Although San Francisco recently raised the minimum wage to \$10.24 per hour (the highest in the country), the annual earnings of a couple making minimum wage in San Francisco would be \$42,598, which is \$1,249 too much for their children to qualify for reduced priced meals in SFUSD, but \$18,302 lower than the INSIGHT Self-Sufficiency Level. Therefore, the family would have to pay \$3 per meal per child or \$122 per month to purchase lunch in the school. This represents 13 percent of the budget for food as estimated by the INSIGHT Self-Sufficiency Index

(INSIGHT, 2011). This begins to explain the struggle that families may have in meeting their food needs.

This difference between the local cost of living and the federal poverty guidelines directly affects the families that qualify for nutrition subsidies through the National School Lunch Program, and it also affects the finances of the local school meal program. Families who are not qualified for free or reduced lunches, in one year may not apply again even if their income changes because they have previously been denied. In San Francisco in 2009-10, 6,028 students whose families applied for free or reduced priced lunch were denied, and 12,749 students did not even apply (San Francisco Unified School District [SFUSD], 2010c). The cost for feeding children who were not qualified for free or reduced meals and who did not pay⁷ was over \$550,000 in 2010-11. Charges from students that were later enrolled in the NSLP comprised the largest amount of the total charges at \$176,000 (Woldow, 2011, June 23).

The meal charges were possible due to a local policy called “Feeding Every Hungry Child in the SFUSD” adopted by the SFUSD Board of Education on March 24, 2009 which mandated that no child will be denied a meal regardless of their ability to pay. This policy officially allowed the Student Nutrition Services department to serve meals to all students who may not have an application on file, or may not have the funds to pay for the meal (Wynns and Norton, 2009). Unlike many

⁷ SFUSD has a policy of not denying a child a meal regardless of whether they have money to pay. This policy was formalized by the Board of Education in 2009 “Feeding Every Hungry Child” resolution.

school districts across the country with strict charge policies that do not allow students to accrue charges over a specified amount, SFUSD's official policy does the opposite. In addition, SFUSD does not charge students qualified for reduced priced meals the reduced price (\$.40). According to a national study, 40 percent of districts surveyed had a formal charge policy, 43 percent had an informal policy, 14 percent had no policy, and 46 percent had a different meal charge policy for different grade levels. Over 50 percent of districts surveyed said the meal charges were either somewhat or extremely problematic to the school nutrition program (School Nutrition Association, 2008).

Community need for school meals

As of 2010, there were an estimated 787,450 residents in San Francisco, and 109,483 children ages 0-17; the majority of children were located in the southern sector of San Francisco. There were 199 food pantries, 41,743 individuals on food stamps including 15,805 children (0-17 years old) (San Francisco Food Security Task Force, 2010). The US Census estimates that approximately 30 percent of all children in San Francisco under the age of 18 are living at 200 percent of poverty or below – 12 percent are at the poverty line or below (US Census Bureau, 2009). Latino and African American children were over represented among the San Francisco's poorest children age five and under (First 5 San Francisco Children and Families Commission, 2010). There is also a growing number of children receiving food

stamp benefits. As of December 2011, there were 19,996 children under the age of 18 participating in the food stamp program in San Francisco. (San Francisco Human Service Agency, 2011)

Underscoring the broadness of families' financial struggles in San Francisco, approximately one in five public school principals and a third of service providers surveyed for a Community Needs Assessment in 2011 by the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and their Families indicated that the families they serve often request basic needs such as food, clothing, and other necessities (DCYF, 2011).

There is an unusually large private school enrollment in San Francisco, with San Francisco County having the highest percentage of children attending private schools of all counties in the state (Knight, 2006). In 2010 there were almost 75,000 children living in San Francisco between the ages of 6 and 17 years attending either public, charter or private schools (San Francisco Food Security Task Force, 2010). During the 2009-10 school years, 55,992 children attended K – 12th grade in 104 SFUSD school sites (SFUSD, 2009b). Of this, 3.51 percent attended charter schools, and the rest attended non charter public schools. During the same school years, almost 22,000 children attended private schools in San Francisco. While some of these students may not be residents of San Francisco, a large number of them live in San Francisco. The amount of children attending private schools in San Francisco

deviates significantly from the California average of 8.3 percent enrollment in private schools in the state (California Department of Education [CDE], 2011c).

There were 104 public school sites in SFUSD in San Francisco in 2008-09, 11 charter schools and 99 private schools. During this time there were 14 sponsors of the National School Lunch Program, and a total of 128 sites – 11 were residential child care institutions (CDE, 2009a) leaving only 3 schools that were sponsors of NSLP. These were most likely charter or religious schools.

During this time only one private school with only one location enrolled as a sponsor of the National School Lunch Program. For an additional charge to the parents, private schools usually provide lunch through a variety of local caterers, many sourced from local, sustainable sources.⁸ Since San Francisco has such a high percentage of children attending private schools, the problem of school lunch impacts a smaller subgroup of the total San Francisco population than in most communities. Civic engagement with school food from a diverse group of stakeholders in San Francisco is lacking in general although there has been participation by a few individuals for many years.

According to a survey conducted by the San Francisco Office of the Controller in 2009, out of 2,603 respondents, the parents of younger children (6 – 13 years old) were more likely to choose public schools for their children, then were parents of older children. Also, 80 percent of parents whose household incomes were

⁸ Some of the caterers are: School Foodies; Acre Gourmet; Kidchow; Chefables; Choice Lunch, The Lunch Master (Nob Hill Catering)

more than \$100,000 chose private schools for their children. Additionally, Latinos were the most likely ethnic group to choose public schools for their children, and Whites were half as likely to send their children to public schools as Asians and Pacific Islanders (City and County of San Francisco Office of the Controller, 2009). This situation affects the composition of the stakeholder group that participates in public school advocacy as well as school food advocacy.

Language barriers add to the complication of engaging parents in participating in and advocating for school based changes. In a 2009 survey conducted by immigrant advocacy groups in San Francisco, 74 percent of respondents cited language barriers when communicating with their children's schools (Chinese for Affirmative Action San Francisco, 2009). Further, about 60 percent of public school principals serving families with children in kindergarten to 8th grade reported that families they serve often or sometimes request support with translation to access services (DCYF, 2011). Language barriers potentially impact the participation of non speaking English parents in major issues impacting services for their children, including school meals. It also complicates bringing advocates together to work for common goals.

In recent years, there has been a growing effort to expand parental involvement in San Francisco public schools, through district initiatives as well as non citizen voting initiatives. San Francisco's November 2004 ballot included Proposition F which was a charter amendment to allow all residents with children in

SFUSD to vote in school board elections. The measure failed with only 48.55 percent of voters voting in favor of the Proposition (Smart Voter, 2004). Again in November 2010, Proposition D would have authorized an amendment to the City Charter making it legal for non citizen parents to vote in school board elections. According to proponents of Proposition D, an estimated 1 in 3 children in San Francisco public schools has an immigrant parent (Smart Voter, 2010). They also noted that cities and towns in Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland and New York have similar measures. The measure failed with only 45 percent of the required 50 percent majority vote needed to pass.

SFUSD: Student population and parental involvement

Since the early 1960s, San Francisco Unified School District has been experiencing a decline in enrollment. In the 1960s the enrollment in SFUSD was around 91,000 students, and by the 1969-70 school year the enrollment declined to 88,839. Throughout the 1970s the enrollment continued to decline; and by the 1980-81 school year, the enrollment had fallen to 55,981 (SFUSD, n.d.). In the 2010-11 school years, there were 55,500 students with 24.1 percent of students Latino, 10.8 percent African American, 39.67 percent Chinese, 5.44 percent Filipino, 9.5 percent other non white, and 11.32 percent white. Twenty-nine percent were English language learners, and almost 62 percent of students attending SFUSD were qualified for free and reduced meals (SFUSD, 2011). Table 4-1 shows the number of

socioeconomically disadvantaged students from each ethnic group for the 2010-11 school years, with over 64 percent of Hispanic, African American, and Asian youth falling into this category, qualifying them for free and reduced meals. Providing culturally appropriate and appealing food for each of these groups may require multiple menu items at each school site each day.

Table 4-1: San Francisco students socioeconomically disadvantaged

2010-2011 SFUSD Students – Percent Socioeconomically Disadvantaged							
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race	American Indian or Alaska Native, Not Hispanic	Asian, Not Hispanic	Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	Filipino Not Hispanic	African American, Not Hispanic	White, not Hispanic	Two or More Races, Not Hispanic
77.73%	60.30%	64.79%	75.43%	50.07%	72.11%	24.67%	39.55%

(Dataquest 2010-2011)

Current state of SFUSD finance

The budget for SFUSD 2009-10 was \$596,851,111 with salaries and benefits constituting approximately 77 percent, with books and supplies 2 percent, contracts and services 7.5 percent, contribution to debt service routine maintenance and county operated programs including student nutrition services 13.5 percent (SFUSD, 2009c)

Several years ago, with state budget cuts and a projected \$113 million deficit over the next two years, students and their families from San Francisco Unified School District joined students and families from nine other school districts (total of

60 students) with the California School Boards Association (CSBA), California State PTA, and the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) to file a suit (Robles-Wong, et al. v. State of California) with the Superior Court of California asking the court to compel the State to align its school finance system with the educational program the state has put into place (California School Finance, 2010). There is a complementary lawsuit (CQE et al. v. State of California) brought forth by 22 students and parents, and 5 organizations representing 500,000 Californians. This lawsuit also focuses on declaring the current state public education funding structure unconstitutional, and developing a new funding structure that aligns the costs with the needs to educate students (Fair Schools Now, 2011).

Current State of SFUSD School Meals - A Perfect Storm

The following excerpt was taken from a public listserv posting on August 22, 2011 by the former chair of the SFUSD Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee

Some of you may be aware that the first days of school were a total disaster in terms of the school meal program. Delivery of meals to many elementary schools, and virtually all of the 46 childcare sites, did not happen until as late as 1-2 pm on the first day of school, and the meals which were then delivered still needed to be heated. Long story short, many kids skipped lunch that day, or ate an improvised meal of cereal or whatever the school could throw together on no notice (Woldow, 2011, August 22).

The problem was also covered in the local paper, stating that many in the community are questioning “whether whether the district should continue to rely on the company to stock its cafeterias” (Crawford, 2011).

Background on SFUSD school meals

The SFUSD school meal program is the largest public food service program in San Francisco serving the city's neediest families; and it has the potential to serve many more needy children. Each day 5,355 breakfasts, 22,162 lunches, and 5,388 afterschool snacks are served through this program. In 2010-11 SNS served 3,942,433 lunches, 942,433 breakfasts, and 948,305 snacks (SFUSD Student Nutrition Services, 2012b).

According to the California Food Policy Advocates, out of 58 counties in California, San Francisco ranks last for participation in the school lunch program by students qualified for free and reduced price lunch. In 2010, out of 30,648 students qualified for free or reduced priced lunch, only 16,821 ate lunch. 45 percent of students qualified for free and reduced meals did not participate in the program. The loss of federal funds for this non participation in lunch was \$6,167,505. Similarly, San Francisco ranked 56th out of 58 counties for poor participation in breakfast. The loss in federal funds for breakfast was estimated at \$2,845,702 (California Food Policy Advocates [CFPA], 2010). SFUSD has held this last place since 2005, and has been challenged for many years - the ranking for 2003 was 56th for lunch and 26th for breakfast participation out of all California counties (CFPA, 2003).

In the spring of 2011, Youth Vote, a city sponsored initiative to engage high school and middle school students in public affairs, asked the following question of 11,790 middle and high school students on their spring survey “On school days, do you regularly eat lunch?” The survey results revealed that overall 20 percent of the students surveyed do not eat lunch, 33 percent bring lunch from home, 26 percent buy lunch from school, and approximately 18 percent buy it from off campus. The results also showed that African American and Latino students were more likely to not eat while Chinese students were more likely to eat lunch at school (San Francisco Youth Empowerment Fund, 2011).

Additional research at 2 middle and 2 high schools showed that among 348 middle school students, the most common barrier to eating lunch was long lines, with 39 percent citing this issue; 32 percent did not like what was being offered; 29 percent were not hungry; and 24 percent were busy doing something else. Among 350 high school students 46 percent said that the biggest barrier to eating lunch was that they were busy doing something else; 35 percent said that they were not hungry; 21 percent didn't have money; and 16 percent cited long lines (San Francisco Food Systems, 2011). In SFUSD, most middle and high schools have one meal period, except for four middle schools that have two lunch periods. However, nationally, only 11 percent of elementary schools, 9.5 percent of middle schools, and 13.8 percent of high schools, have only one meal period, or more, 39 percent of middle schools have three or more (SNA, 2011, p. 49).

In 2010, the overall budget for Student Nutrition Services was over \$18 million dollars with 36 percent for to labor including benefits, 51 percent for food and supplies, 8.7 percent for contracts for garbage, pest control and delivery, and 3.6 percent for indirect. The projected deficit was \$2.68 million over federal and state reimbursements (or about 15 percent of the budget) (San Francisco Unified School District, 2009a), but the final deficit was \$3.5 million. The deficit was covered by the district general funds. This level of local funds supporting the school meals program is considerably higher than the national average of 6.4 percent (Bartlett, 2008, p. 6-6). San Francisco also spends a lower percentage of its budget on labor than the national average. When the full costs of production (as opposed to the costs reported by school food authorities) are taken into account, the national average school food authority is spending 35.6 percent of their budget on food, 47.6 percent on labor, and 16.7 percent on supplies, contract services and indirect charges (Bartlett, 2008, p. 4-14).

For 2011-12, the total SFUSD budget is approximately \$619 million, with a projected deficit of almost \$19 million. SFUSD receives a relative large portion of their budget from local sources – in 2009-10 59.3 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b). In 2011-12, the Student Nutrition Services' budget is \$18,949,270 which includes a projected \$2.7 million deficit (or 14 percent of the budget (San Francisco Unified School District, 2012b).

Infrastructure critical to operating a school meal program in San Francisco has almost completely declined, or was never built. Kitchen maintenance and equipment upgrades were defunded in the 1980s when the Reagan administration cut grants for the maintenance of school cafeterias and equipment. Archival research indicates that SFUSD has not been cooking at the majority of elementary schools since before 1970, and possibly earlier. Many elementary schools were receiving pre-plated or bulk shipped meals in 1969. Out of 121 schools, 48 were considered “cooking” schools, and 73 were considered “non cooking” (Cwick, 1972, p. 48). Since this time, food preparation and assembly in middle and high school cafeterias in San Francisco has steadily been phased out over many years; and since 2006, pre-plated meals purchased from a national vendor have become the primary source of food in all schools.

SFUSD initiated a bond program with the passing of Proposition A in 2003 which authorized \$295 million in bonds focusing on modernizing 30 schools for handicap accessibility and fire and safety upgrades, and also included the building of school gardens. Again in 2006, Proposition A was passed authorizing \$450 million and modernizing 59 additional school sites including green school yards. The final Proposition A was passed in November 2011 which authorized \$531 million for modernizing the remaining schools (San Francisco Unified School District, 2012a). Although school gardens were included in these bonds, cafeterias and kitchen upgrades were not included in this comprehensive facility modernization program. However, in the past few years, the Director of Student Nutrition Services has been

able to work with the facilities and bond staff to achieve some upgrades to the food service area at some of the schools covered by the bonds.

In the entire capital plan for SFUSD for 2010-2019 there is no mention of food service or kitchen upgrades (San Francisco Unified School District, 2010a), an omission that indicates the lack of priority of the school meal program. However, because of significant community advocacy and the Superintendent's priority to improve the technological environment of the schools, SFUSD invested in a computerized point of service (POS) system for the cafeterias. The POS system which is an enterprise software for the Student Nutrition Department, was funded through local funds including one of the more recent parcel taxes - the Quality Teacher and Education Act of 2008 (Prop A). This equipment was seen as a cost saving measure that allows the Student Nutrition Service Department to properly collect funds for student meals, as well as manage the rest of their operations including inventory, prepayment, forecasting, etc. According to a national study, 95 percent of districts utilize POS systems, especially large districts. (SNA, 2011).

State of kitchens

At this point, almost no cooking is done in SFUSD cafeterias, and almost all meal preparation has been outsourced to a national meal service provider, based in the Chicago area. Meals are prepared in one of the vendor's production centers in Chicago, Irvine, and/or several locations on the east coast including Pennsylvania and

New York. Through the contract with the vendor, SFUSD purchases all food (including the entrée, bread, produce) and meal service supplies (paper trays, sporks, napkins, condiments) for one per meal cost. All commodity credits SFUSD receives for USDA Foods are turned over to the vendor to utilize in the SFUSD meals, which lowers the price of those meals containing commodities. The per meal cost also includes the vendor's account representative as well as other staff that assist with operational issues in SFUSD schools. The per meal cost for K-8 lunches for the 2009-10 school year was \$1.45, and for grades 9-12, a lunch with the salad bar cost SFUSD \$1.59 (San Francisco Unified School District, 2009). Unionized cafeteria workers are employed by the district to set up the service lines and the salad bars, serve the food, ensure all USDA rules are followed including that students take the right meal components for a reimbursable meal, and maintain proper counting and claiming procedures for meal counts.

As explained before, SFUSD's labor costs are among the highest rates in the country although the current educational requirement for cafeteria workers in San Francisco schools is an eighth grade education. Given the complete lack of cooking skills required by cafeteria workers, the job requirements could focus more on computer and record keeping skills than on cooking. High labor costs and lack of skills are a barrier to increasing the amount of food cooked on site in SFUSD schools since food preparation requires more labor hours compared to serving pre-plated unitized meals.

From 2006-2011, the Student Nutrition Services department has operated with only a Director and Assistant Director, and no district level area management staff to oversee field operations in the 113 schools. This is drastically below normal for large school districts as reported by Nettles et al. (2008), when they surveyed large districts with virtually all (99.8 percent) districts reporting that they had district level management staff overseeing sites: 35.5 percent oversaw 16-20 sites, 29 percent oversaw 11-15 sites, and 25.8 percent oversaw more than 21 sites (Nettles et al., 2008, table 2). Given these averages, SFUSD would need between 6 and 7 area supervisors to meet industry norms. These positions would allow the Director and Assistant Director to focus on financial management, strategic planning, and developing partnerships. Area supervisors are critical to implementing the program at sites.

All states are required to supplement funding for the National School Lunch Program with state match – which is 30 percent of the base reimbursement for section 4 funds ⁹ based on the amount received by the state on all lunch meals beginning with the July 1, 1980, school year (Child Nutrition Programs, 2009). California began allocating state funds for school meals in 1974; and in the early 1980s former state legislator and later, the Mayor of San Francisco, George Moscone, led the initiative to increase this funding by \$.05 (called the “Moscone Nickle”). Each year on July 1, the state of California announces the new state contribution rate with a mandate that the rate should reflect the changes in the cost of providing school lunches and breakfasts

⁹ Fund 4 are basic grants, while Fund 11 is funding for especially needy children. Fund 11 funds do not require state match.

(California Food Policy Advocates, 2005). For the 2011-12 school years, the state reimbursement in California was \$.2195 for every free or reduced priced breakfast or lunch served, which is the same rate as in 2010-11. However the state increased the total allocation of \$155,232,000 to provide for an increased number of meals eligible for reimbursement. This is up from \$151,532,000 in 2010 (California Department of Education, 2011a).

California's funding of school meals is unusually high. According to the California Bureau of State Audits, in 1999 California contributed three times the required federal amount (California Bureau of State Audits, 1999). According to the report, the requirement for state match is pegged to the 1980 level of school meals.

The Code of Federal Regulations, Title 7, Section 210.17(a), states that for each school year, the amount of qualified state revenues appropriated or used specifically by the State for program purposes shall not be less than 30 percent of the funds received by the State under Section 4 of the National School Lunch Act during the school year beginning July 1980 (California Bureau of State Audits, 1999).

This requirement by the federal government seems somewhat arbitrary, leaving state governments off the hook for contributing substantially to the school meal program in their state.

Local funding for school meals in San Francisco

SFUSD has not had dedicated local funding for school meals for decades except for deficit funding to offset the Student Nutrition Service's budget shortfall. In general, funding from the National School Lunch Program is not adequate to prepare and serve school lunches in the average district in the United States. In districts with high labor costs or without infrastructure, costs are even higher and federal reimbursements are even more inadequate.

Realistically, reimbursements from the federal government will probably never cover the costs of San Francisco's labor agreements and environmental and social goals, nor cover the costs for improving infrastructure, and for hiring an adequate number of senior management staff necessary for operating a complex program. Improving the program will require additional financial support from the local and state level.

Sustainable food in SFUSD

My work on bringing sustainable, local food into San Francisco's largest food service operation began in 2002 inspired by the farm to school programs in Santa Monica, CA, Davis, CA, Florida and elsewhere in the country, and the burgeoning movement to improve farm incomes while providing school children with the highest quality local and sustainable food. Through the nonprofit San Francisco Food

Systems, my staff and I obtained funds from a variety of federal, state and local sources to implement farm to school salad bars in SFUSD. We began by meeting with the Food Service Director, and members of the school board. We also became members of the newly formed SFUSD Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee.

Farm to School feasibility study

We conducted a survey of the School Food Environment as part of the *SFUSD Farm to School Feasibility Study* to understand the state of the infrastructure, as well as the supporting and/or competing programs happening at each school site. Recommendations from this assessment included improving administrative capacity of the Student Nutrition Services Department, increasing community based participation in the school meals program, and investing in the infrastructure and ability to prepare and serve food. Challenges included a lack of resources, competitive food sales, lack of departmental integration within SFUSD, little involvement of and communication with the wider community, and a federal poverty level that was not adjusted for the local cost of living in San Francisco (Rimkus, Jones & Ona, 2004).

Despite the considerable constraints facing SFUSD including lack of infrastructure to cook, and the lack of administrative staff, the popular wisdom of the farm to school movement indicated that it was critical to start a project in order to gain support. Guided by this advice, staff from San Francisco Food Systems with the

support from the management of Student Nutrition Services, initiated a farm-to-school salad bar at one elementary school in 2004.

The farm-to-school salad bar was started at the Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy (Knight, 2004), a K-5 school located in the Castro district, and during the 2004-2005 school years, had an enrollment of 234 students, 52.6 percent of which were qualified for free or reduced priced meals. The site was chosen partially because of the supportive partnerships and staffing in place at the school site, including a nutrition educator from the School Health Programs department, supportive principal, school garden, and active parent community that were already volunteering to operate a free morning snack program for all students. The pilot salad bar also was fulfilling goals identified in the newly passed local nutrition policy – the SFUSD Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy passed by the Board of Education in January 2004. The salad bar was a mechanism to accomplish goals outlined in the policy "increase the incorporation of fresh foods (fruits and vegetables), minimize processed foods, select California grown produce, and explore the feasibility of salad bars" (San Francisco Unified School District, 2012c). Produce was procured through the regular produce distributor, but we also procured through two local produce companies that specialize in local and organic products. One of the produce companies was located in San Francisco, and the other was a nonprofit located in Salinas that trains farm workers to become farm owners.

Products purchased for the farm to school salad bar required washing, chopping, etc. This preparation was done at a nearby high school cooking kitchen, Mission High School. During the pilot, SFUSD still had cooking kitchens in many middle and high schools, often with staff and equipment for food preparation and assembly. For the pilot, all food items for the salad bar were prepared by staff at Mission High School the morning prior to or morning of each salad bar day. The salad bar items were shipped to the pilot school by the contracted delivery service. Dirty serving pans, lids and utensils were returned to Mission High School for washing and sanitizing because the kitchen at the pilot school did not have the staff or equipment to wash and sanitize the dirty pans and utensils (Rimkus, 2005).

Staff and volunteers

The pilot relied on 4-5 volunteer parents who rotated the responsibility of assisting with the salad bar operations. Staff had to be trained to identify a reimbursable meal, meaning that they had to understand the required portion sizes and the variety of combinations that would make up a reimbursable meal. This was a significant change since meals had previously been pre-plated and already met nutrition requirements. The pilot also connected the school meal program to the Site Nutrition Coordinator that taught nutrition classes utilizing the school garden. Students were served a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, many of which were local and sustainable (Rimkus, 2005).

Financial feasibility of the program

The goals of the pilot were to shift institutional procurement towards local, sustainable farms, to increase the amount of fresh produce available to SFUSD students, and to test the operational and financial feasibility of the salad bar model. Additionally, one of the goals of the project was to increase revenue to SNS. However, it was clear from the results of the feasibility study that investments needed to be made in the infrastructure as well as the labor of SNS in order to have a long term solution to the barriers impeding the improvement of the school meals program.

The salad bar at Harvey Milk was offered twice a week as a reimbursable meal, and on the other three days, students received a hot lunch. The fiscal analysis revealed that the lunch on the salad bar days was more costly than the hot meal, and the increases in participation did not offset the additional costs. The food costs were higher, as was the labor for food preparation, and the extra delivery charges (Rimkus, 2005). At the same time, the SNS budget deficit was growing, making the cost of the additional cost of the pilot an additional financial stress on the budget.

Next attempt at farm to school

After the farm to school salad bar, it was clear that school site infrastructure, transportation charges, food costs, and additional labor needed for food preparation

were significant barriers to incorporating locally grown sustainable produce into the SFUSD school meal system, through a farm to school salad bar model which required significant preparation as well as transportation. The project team consisting of SFUSD, San Francisco Food Systems and San Francisco Department of Public Health decided that whole fruit would be the best way to incorporate local, sustainably produced produce into the meals program. The fruit chosen for the pilot was the apple, since the Student Nutrition Services Director was particularly frustrated with always having to serve a red delicious apple because of a lack of varieties available to him through his regular vendor.

With grant funding, and through working with another small local produce company that specialized in sourcing from many local small farms, the owner of which had children in SFUSD, the project team was able to procure enough whole apples for one day's meals (~20,000) from a farm transitioning to organic located in Brentwood, California (approximately 55 miles east of San Francisco). Farmland in this area has been rapidly converted to housing development, and farm to school proponents have asserted that farm to school programs can contribute to sustainable development (Vallianatos et al., 2004). The local produce company identified a farmer with which to work and handled the negotiations. They also handled additional processing of the apples including sorting through the apples by size in order to ensure each apple met the size requirements, culling out the bad fruit, etc. as well as washing and putting the fruit into cases as normally done by a fruit packer. Because neither the farmer nor SNS had the ability to do this, the local produce

company also handled these tasks, in addition to picking up the fruit from the farm and delivery to the school sites. The owner of the company charged a small fee to do this.

The apples were the Pink Lady variety not normally served in SFUSD. The economics of the pilot again made it unfeasible to expand. The price for a Red Delicious apple grown in Washington State procured through SFUSD's regular produce vendor at this time was \$.14 each, while the price for the local, sustainable Pink Lady apples grown in Brentwood was \$.24 each, and required further processing. Further, the farmer selling the apples to SFUSD sold them at a loss since he could have charged more at local farmer markets. Additionally, the produce company also provided critical services at a reduced cost. Finally, spending more on a single piece of fruit did not accomplish the priority for middle and high school students which was getting additional food at lunch since the portion size of entrees was too small to satisfy their appetites (Jones, 2006).

From this grant funded pilot it became clear that the goal of procuring local and sustainable food was too costly, required additional staff, relied on generosity on the part of local organic vendors and farmers, and did not always satisfy the needs of the students which in the case of older students, was a larger portion size or additional food.

Continuing dismantling of the SFUSD school meal system

Concurrent to the attempts to bring local and sustainable food to the students of SFUSD, the ability of the local school meal program to handle and serve fresh food has declined greatly. 2006 was the first year SFUSD began purchasing pre-made meals from the national food service vendor based in the Chicago area. Initially, the frozen meals and meal supplies were procured only for elementary schools, while middle and high schools maintained their cooking kitchens, preparing meals on-site for reimbursement from the National School Lunch Program, and also operating a full competitive a la carte meal program. In 2007 SFUSD piloted a salad bar in Balboa High School using produce procured through the national vendor. This was the first salad bar the company had ever offered for schools. The salad was offered as an addition to the reimbursable meal, since high school students often requested additional food. The produce was procured through a subcontracted produce company, and only produce that could be purchased pre-prepped (washed, chopped, and bagged) was offered on the salad bar, even though there were staff and equipment at the high school that were preparing fresh food for the a la carte meal program available to paying students.

However, then Mayor of San Francisco, Gavin Newsom was supportive of improving food systems, both from an anti-hunger perspective as well as a sustainability perspective. In 2008 he agreed to provide local funds to SFUSD to improve the school meals program by increasing the amount of fresh produce offered to students. This funding of \$234,000 was allocated from the budget of the San

Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). The director of DCYF at the time identified additional one time funding of approximately \$225,000 that was granted to SFUSD to purchase salad bar equipment. Salad bars are now in approximately 37 schools, primarily in middle and high schools. The \$234,000 has been an annual allotment from DCYF to SFUSD for the salad bars; and although this amount is not sufficient to fully fund the salad bars, the city funding has helped to offset the cost of this program and has increased the visibility. However, due to barriers from infrastructure, high labor costs, and inadequate funding, the opportunity to integrate local, sustainable produce into a salad bar program is largely missed because of the requirements for preparation of the produce (Albert & Jones, 2009).

Due to the structural challenges, salad items are brought into the district pre-washed and pre-cut in 5 lb bags. The plastic salad containers in the salad bar are lined with plastic bags to prevent the cafeteria workers from having to wash the containers. This not only saves in labor costs, but also is a solution for food safety regulations that require food service operations to have a triple sink for washing dishes. Many kitchens in SFUSD, especially at the elementary school level, do not have this capacity, and therefore a solution was developed in conjunction with the local Department of Public Health that allows schools to improvise if they have a two compartment sink. However, many of the elementary schools have only a hand washing stations, and do not have proper equipment to adequately sanitize as required by the California Retail Food Code, a set of regulations that govern food establishments. This lack of infrastructure and resulting food safety issues has

increasingly become a problem for SFUSD, especially when attempting to improve the meal quality and freshness of food served. For example, any open containers of food, like a whole grain bun or a salad bar, requires that the kitchen facility have a triple sink (or an improvised double sink) to ensure that the utensils such as the tongs are properly sanitized. Otherwise, all food must be sealed, such as whole grain buns that are individually wrapped, and salads that are prepackaged. These items cost more, create more waste, and put an additional strain on the budget. They also require a level of processing infrastructure that is usually not available to local vendors or for products from local farms.

The origin of the produce is very difficult to obtain. The produce company has provided a list of farms or companies that they source from and the location of the farm. However, many of the companies listed are large companies or consolidators/packers, and the actual location of the crop production is not possible to determine. Many of the companies have "Farm" in the name - but they may be working with many growers in California, but also, other growing regions in Peru, Chile, and Mexico, making it unclear the geographic origin of the produce purchased in SFUSD (HMC Farms, 2012), so the product could be coming from anywhere and then processed at their facilities across the country and Mexico. Other suppliers may grow produce in four different parts of California, depending on the season, and some claim to be the largest grower, packer and shipper of the products they sell (Grimmway Farms).

In the Fall of 2010, the nutrition quality of food serviced in SFUSD meals had improved to the point that they met the Gold standard for meals as part of the US Healthier School Challenge. The meal standards are based on the 2005 Institute of Medicine's Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This standard required the offering of whole grains, dark leafy green and orange vegetables, a variety of fruit, dried beans and peas, as well as other menu improvements. Unfortunately, when SFUSD attempted to offer fresh whole grain bread slices and green leafy salads, at certain schools they were cited by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for food safety violations since according to the California Retail Food Code, the tongs used to pick up the bread must be sanitized in a triple sink, as does the plastic cover used as a sneeze guard for the green leafy vegetables.¹⁰

Distribution infrastructure

Pre-made frozen meals are trucked to San Francisco from one of the vendor's production centers across the country. San Francisco does not have a proper distribution or production facility, but instead, for many years used a middle school at the edge of the city that served as the "distribution and production center." For many years, the distribution function was handled in the parking lot of the middle school where boxes of pre-made frozen food were off loaded onto the asphalt. Several

¹⁰ Many elementary schools have been cited for the following violation to the California Retail Food Code: 029 (CFR) No Hot Water/Water; 044 (CFR) Unapproved/disrepair equipment/utensils; 019 (CFR) Inadequate/inaccessible handwashing facilities & supplies; 043 (CFR) Inadequate warewashing facilities/equipment; 029 (CFR) No hot water/water. Health inspection reports are available through www.sfdph.org.

mobile refrigerators were added to the parking lot to provide extra cold storage space, and the boxes were offloaded and placed into the freezers on the parking lot. The boxes remained in the refrigerators for one day, and the following day they were moved to the kitchen in the middle school that served as the “production center.” Boxes were opened and the pre-made meals were “racked” or placed in racks that were later put into warming ovens. These “racked” meals were then loaded into the trucks owned by a contract delivery service. There are approximately 15 trucks and drivers that delivered to all elementary schools. At that time, middle and high schools received their food directly from the food service vendor’s delivery trucks.

At best, this distribution operation posed many problems to SFUSD. Without a loading dock and warehouse, food deliveries required additional work and jeopardized worker safety as well as food safety. Starting fall of 2010, the contracted meal provider, leased a facility to serve as the distribution hub in Brisbane, California, near San Francisco, and all distribution functions were moved to that facility.

History – Reluctant Interest, Steady Decline, Decades of Neglect

An examination of the history of San Francisco Unified School District’s school meal program reveals many insights into the role of this public nutrition program in a local community and the role of specific stakeholders. Throughout the 1900s, the common themes in SFUSD reports generally revolve around budget

pressures. The same issues that appeared in the mid 1900s are still plaguing SFUSD school meals program: high labor costs, inadequate infrastructure, and poor communications between school sites and the school meal program.

Through an examination into the archives of SFUSD, cooking supplies first appears on the budget in 1907 as an \$70 expenditure. (San Francisco Unified School District, 1907). By 1942, the responsibility of providing school lunches to hungry students in San Francisco had become a fiscal burden. A report written in 1942 by the SFUSD Superintendent Joseph Nourse, cites cafeterias and the increasing demand for free lunches, as contributing to the increase cost in schools in San Francisco (Nourse, 1942).

According to a SFUSD report from 1959 on the SFUSD business and clerical operations by a management consulting firm, the school meal program began operating at a significant deficit, although it had previously had a surplus.

the school lunch program operated at a net loss of \$27,000 including cafeterias, summer schools, vending machines, the midmorning lunch program, and the Sunshine Health and Orthopedic School. Up until November 30, 1958, cafeteria operations alone were running at a cumulative net income of over \$5,000 to date for the fiscal year... Losses for last year were due primarily to the reduced availability of surplus foods, low subsidy rate, and increased salaries (Booz, Allen & Hamilton Management Consultants [Booz], 1959, p. 75).

The report cites some of the same issues that challenge SNS today like “lack of space, poor layout and design of the serving line, and inadequate equipment contribute to

excess labor costs and bottleneck conditions during the lunch hour” (Booz, 1959, p.75). There was also a problem with oversight of cooking operations at the school sites and a “lack of standardized procedures, techniques” (Booz, 1959, p.77). Another issue that still causes financial losses is that “cook managers are not always informed of school activities in order to properly plan food preparation in advance. As a result, there is needless loss of preparation time and some food wastage” (Booz, 1959, p. 78). There was also a problem with principals developing site specific rules that impacted the school lunch program and contributed to ineffective operations like “students not being allowed to bus their own trays and students not being permitted to place utensils and milk on their trays” (Booz, 1959, p. 78). Examples of differences in marketing, making menus available in advance, controlling what is served were also cited. Operations have changed since the 1959 report because at that time, students were used as labor in the cafeteria and were also used as cashiers. There were three area supervisors each overseeing 22-23 schools and there were 64 schools with cafeterias (Booz, 1959, p.7 8-80). By 1962 there were fewer cooking schools - 45 complete cafeteria units and 23 branch cafeteria units were serviced from the kitchens of complete units, during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1962 (San Francisco Unified School District, 1962a; San Francisco Unified School District, 1962b).

The Booz, Allen & Hamilton report recommended specific activities to contain costs including reviewing work schedules and equipment, along with standardizing recipes and meal service procedures, and developing a plan to

increasing sales effectively. They also recommended that the specific relationship between principals and the meal program in their site be defined and that the Board of Education formalize policies around the meal program and distribute them to the administrators. To improve the school meal operations, they recommended hiring another district level area supervisor, and also more frequent distribution of new cost control reports (Booz, 1959).

At that time, there was not a mandate for states to participate in the NSLP program, and some states passed laws that forbid local school districts from using taxes to pay for school lunch. The majority of the funding at this time came from student fees. In 1960, none of the large urban areas participated in the federal program, while the program was more utilized by rural white Southern districts; and in 1962 Philadelphia's school district had only 5 percent of schools participating. In Boston only 11 percent of student participated while Chicago, Detroit and San Francisco had 9.9 percent, 16.5 percent and 17 percent respectively. Miami had 61.5 percent of total attendance participating (Levine, 2008, p. 102). San Francisco had 14,802 elementary school students participating in school lunch in 1962 which was 17.1 percent of the total number of students. Levine says that "school lunches depended on the will of local politicians to fund the program," (Levine, 2008, p.102) since the program administration was decentralized. It also relied on students to pay full price for the meals. In San Francisco in 1961, 14 percent of the expenses for food service were supported by the local general fund, and free meals appeared on the budget as a separate line item (San Francisco Unified School District, 1961).

During the 1960s, hunger in America was rediscovered, and advocates pushed for more low-income children to be served by the National School Lunch Program. The 1966 Child Nutrition Act authorized funding directly for free meals and also created a school breakfast pilot targeted towards low-income children. It required that parameters for free lunches be established (Levine, 2008, p.113, 116). It also established a nonfood assistance fund, and required that at least 25 percent of the price of equipment be funded by either state or local funds (Gunderson, 1971).

The 1970s – A key decade in San Francisco’s school lunch program

If they need more classrooms let them close all cafeterias and convert them into classrooms. Give the children some education instead of free hotdogs. Schools must function as educational institutions and nothing else. They have money for busing the children to various locations, not for the sake of education, but for pleasing political pressure groups.” (Jeffrey J. Drapel, 1970, p. 19) Argument against proposition “B” 1970 that would have funded new school building in Bayview Hunters Point.

As the national advocacy, debates, and rules (Guidelines for School Lunch Plan, 1970) over school lunch were happening, there was much action in state wide and local school meal programs. From state laws, to local policies, the decisions made in the 1970 still impact the SFUSD school meal program today. In 1970, a suit filed by the California Rural Legal Assistance against the USDA to force California to provide school lunch (Uniform Plan for School Meals Asked, 1970; School Lunch

Suit – Pupils Who Go Hungry, 1970). In the 1970s, the themes of structurally unsafe schools, desegregation and bussing, and demotions of white teachers were prominent in San Francisco school issues. In 1971 there was a new school tax system (Wood, 1971; New Tax Plan to Finance Schools, 1971), principals unionized (and in March/April teachers went on strike), deadlines for integrations of schools were set (Deadline Set for SF School Integration, 1971) while the NAACP sued the San Francisco School Board, and the Mayor of San Francisco (who at that time appointed the school board) appealed the September 1971 deadline. Another dominant theme was school financing with the California Supreme Court handing down a landmark ruling on school financing saying that the method at that time was unfair to poor districts (Pressure For New School Tax System, 1972). This court decision and the repercussions would dominate public school issues throughout the decade.

In San Francisco, unionization of public employees came during the 1970s. This was a period of massive strikes, with the public employees virtually shutting down the city. Now, although city employees are automatically part of unions, they must sign an agreement to not strike. In a study of public sector unionization of San Francisco in the 1970s, Boehm and Heldman (1982) make the point that public sector is relatively insulated from the same economic realities and boundaries as the private sector, and that this calls into question the functioning of local governments (Boehm and Heldman, 1982, p. v). One of the problems cited by them is that national unions do not have the same concern for the local context issues like tax base, infrastructure needs, social services, etc.

It mattered little to a union international president, ensconced in Washington, D.C., that citizens in San Francisco were losing trust in their local government as a result of rising taxes and public employee abuses. Even on the local level, union leaders are accountable only to their members, not to the voting public over whose tax monies they seek to have such influence (Boehn and Heldman, 1982, p. xi).

Having unions in public food service has, in some ways, protected employees by ensuring raises, benefits, etc. However, not all public cafeteria employees enjoy union protection. For example, the school district has a classification for cafeteria employees “as needed”. This class of employees does not receive benefits or job protection. Two thirds of the cafeteria staff in SFUSD are classified “as needed” (San Francisco Unified School District, 2010b).

While unions may have protected a portion of certain cafeteria staff’s benefits, they have failed to protect the food service operations in which these employees work. While certain labor have had a voice during budget negotiations, an increasing amount of tasks performed by these staff has been outsourced to non union workers in food manufacturing plants far away. Today, most food is brought into the system pre-prepped, or even premade, in order to reduce the amount of labor necessary to prepare meals. Further, an entire class of workers without union benefits or protection has emerged in unionized public food service operations, and this class of employee is growing.

In many respects, school nutrition leadership and innovation came from San Francisco programs and its elected state officials. In 1972, a mandatory school meal

program was proposed in Sacramento by San Francisco's State Senator, and future mayor, George Moscone (Mandatory School Meal Proposed, 1972), and Senator Moscone also introduced legislation to increase state funding to the school meals program. Finally, San Francisco planned for the most state of the art cooking facility for school meals west of the Mississippi.

The story of the failed school nutrition complex

With the federal changes to school meals and the anticipated need to expand local production of school meals, in the early 1970s, a Masters student from San Francisco State College¹¹ studied the SFUSD food services operations for his master's thesis (Cwick, 1972). "Most members of the community and educators alike agree that food service is a necessity rather than a convenience and that it should be part of the curriculum" (Cwick, 1972, p. 1). However significant barriers existed at that time with SFUSD food service facilities that posed problems to expanding local production of school meals including:

1. Condemnation of certain school facilities under the Field Act
2. Changes in enrollment at certain schools resulting from the district's integration plan of transferring and busing school children
3. Future city-core population shifts
4. Inflexibility of some existing food production facilities for expansion

¹¹ Later named San Francisco State University

5. Lack of available funds for adding physical facilities and food service equipment, and
6. Questionable economic feasibility of capital investment for possible short-range operations (Cwick, 1972, p. 2)

The goal of the study was to modernize the food service in SFUSD by moving away from a decentralized operation to a centralized food service preparation and distribution system. The purpose of the study was to understand the feasibility of a centralized food production facility in order to gain efficiencies and to control costs. When Cwick (1972) studied the issue, San Francisco had a population of 704,370 and SFUSD operated kindergarten through junior college (Cwick, 1972, p. 26) and the actual enrollment of elementary through senior high school was 88,407 in October 1970. The enrollment was projected to decline by 2 percent or more. (Cwick, 1972, p. 30). The department was managed by the Supervisor of Food Services who reported to the Associate Superintendent of Business (Cwick, 1972, p. 34). Challenges facing the department were “high operating costs, restricted tax revenues, and narrow limitations on cutting corners have prevented schools from aggressive participation in the modernization or expansion of existing kitchen facilities” (Cwick, 1972, p. 25)

Budget pressures have long been a barrier to food quality in SFUSD. The Cafeteria Department’s operational goal was “to provide nutritious meals to all students who are patrons of the cafeteria of the San Francisco Unified School District

at a reasonable cost commensurate with quality” (Cwick, 1972, p. 37). However the objective statement of the Cafeteria program reveals more about the budget pressures:

1. To effect, through price increases and operating improvements, a reduction of the District support of Cafeteria Supervision costs by 50 percent.
2. To institute an in-training system designed to maximize the capabilities of all food service employees.
3. To plan for a management information data system which can provide up-to-date information on costs.
4. To work with community, students, and faculty to increase understanding of the program and how to make the service adaptable to the needs of different areas of the San Francisco Unified School District.
5. To study and recommend how to eliminate the brown bag lunch and replace it with a hot lunch.
6. To study the possibility of providing a breakfast program and report during the first part of the second semester as to its feasibility (Cwick, 1972, p. 38).

The following positions were in place at that time: Food Service Assistant Supervisor, School Lunchroom Area Supervisor, Cook-Manager, Secondary School, Cook-manager, Elementary School, School Lunchroom Cook, School Lunchroom Helper, Female, School Lunchroom Helper, Male. The Employee in Charge classification referred to “elementary schools where no kitchen facility is available” (Cwick, 1972, p. 40). It is interesting that there was no direct vertical promotion path for the School Lunchroom Helper, Male, who was responsible for cleaning and only serving food when required, while the School Lunch Helper, Female had more cooking, record-keeping, cash handling, report preparation responsibilities and was promotable to School Lunchroom Cook (Cwick, 1972, p. 41).

The education required for the following field positions was 8th grade: Cook-manager, Secondary; Cook-Manager Elementary, School Lunchroom Cook, School Lunchroom Helper, Female and School Lunchroom Helper, Male. A high school education was required for the Clerks. The management positions including Food Service Supervisor, Assistant Food Service Supervisor, and School Lunchroom Area Supervisor were required to have a college degree (Cwick, 1972, p. 43). It is interesting that the 8th grade education requirement is still in place for most of the cafeteria positions.

The staffing patterns at the time were almost double of today's staffing, with 766 employees the majority of which were field staff "School Lunchroom Helpers" (555 female and 93 male) and 143 were "permanent" employees while 412 were "exempt" from a civil service examination. The department had district wide managerial staff including a Supervisor, Assistant Supervisor, and 5 Area Supervisors. There were also 36 Cook Managers in the elementary schools, 30 Cook Managers in the secondary schools, and 30 School Lunchroom Cooks. There were 15 other staff in the central office (Cwick, 1972, p. 43).

The report shows that the cost for Cafeteria Supervision (Table 4.2) was increasing at a sharp rate, at least 9.3 percent annually, and during the 1968-1969 year, the increase was 16.24 percent, due to the increased number of schools serving meals, the need for more supervisory personnel, and fringe benefits accounted for an

additional 16 percent of the total costs for wages. Student wages were 3.7 percent of the total 1969-70 labor costs (Cwick, 1972, p. 44-45).

Cwick (1972) analyzed the facilities for cooking at school sites, and found that, approximately one-tenth of the total school building was used for the food services, and that

Prior to 1948, most schools had no kitchen facilities, or the existing kitchens were small. After 1948, school construction resumed, and larger food production space for meal cooking was incorporated...floor space allocations for kitchen facilities measured from 200 to 2,135 square feet. The average elementary school kitchen was designed for approximately 1,000 to 1,200 square feet to serve one-third of the estimated annual enrollment of 600 to 650 students (Cwick, 1972, p. 47).

During the 1969-70 school years, there were a total of 121 schools, and the table below shows that around 40 percent of schools cooked at that time, and 60 percent were receiving food already premade (Cwick, 1972, p. 48).

Table 4-2: Cooking and non cooking schools in SFUSD in 1969-1970

# of schools	Grade level	# of students	# of cooking schools	# of non cooking schools
96	Elementary	47,401	25	71
16	Jr high	20,056	15	1
9	Sr. high	19,225	8	1
121 total		86,672	48	73

(Table taken from Table 4.4, Cwick, 1972, p. 48)

In 1969-70 48 percent of total meals served were free “Type A” meals (complete meals); while 52 percent were to paying students. The total number of meals served during this time was 5,933,732 (Cwick, 1972, p. 48). Throughout the 1969-70 school year, the percentage of free meals increased from only 28 percent in September 1969, to 56 percent in May 1970 (Cwick, 1972, p. 49). This coincides with the new federal laws that required local school districts to provide meals to needy students. During this time, the free meals were subsidized by the federal government at a rate of \$.25 in cash assistance per meal. Local school districts had to subsidize the difference between the federal subsidy and local costs. The regular price for an elementary school meal at this time was \$.35 while middle and high school’s charged \$.40 (Cwick, 1972, p. 50). The federal government required that the reduced price be 20 cents or less, and the district lost 10-15 cents for every elementary school meal (Cwick, 1972, p. 51). At the same time, there was increasing need in San Francisco for nutrition assistance with 110,917 people receiving welfare in June 1972 from the SF Department of Social Services. Also, there were 20,838 people receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children – and a total of 15.5 percent of families receiving some form of welfare (San Francisco Unified School District, 1973a).

Budget pressures were partially a result of the California State Free Meals Act – SB1393 that allowed the district to provide meals at a free or reduced rate to needy students (Cwick, 1972, p. 47). Table 4-3 below shows the dramatic changes that were happening in the program between 1960 and 1971, with a significant financial

increase in the cost of subsidizing free meals. The costs for providing free meals was increasing rapidly during the 1960s, with the percentage of free meals comprising almost 14 percent of the budget in 1960, and by 1969, the amount had increased to 52 percent.

Table 4-3: Selected data from SFUSD school meals program 1960-1971

Operating Expenses Cafeteria	June 30 1960	June 30 1961	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
Cafeteria Supervision	\$84,804	\$94,027	\$115,554	\$126,371	\$146,900	\$161,199	\$195,763
Cafeteria Maintenance	\$51,403	\$45,959	\$54,845	\$62,328	\$69,505	\$52,3139	\$79,937
Free Meals	\$25,072	\$26,935	\$48,149	\$76,756	\$116,790	\$353,3819	\$159,354
Other expenses	\$17,822	\$22,601	\$52,959	\$114,366	\$125,342	\$103,4249	\$111,394
TOTAL	\$179,101	\$189,522	\$271,504	\$379,822	\$458,539	\$670,318	\$546,450
% change in free meal cost		6%	43%	40%	21%	46%	-18%
% of budget for free meals	13.9%	14.2%	17.7%	20.2%	25.5%	52.7%	29.1%

(Table adapted from SFUSD Report and Financial Statement, FY 1960-1961; Report and Financial Statement, 1961-1962; Financial and Statistical Data 1970-71)

It is interesting to note that even at this time, San Francisco Unified School District rented refrigerated warehouse and distribution of food was outsourced to private contractors, with food delivery drivers collecting hourly wages of \$8.87 (Cwick, 1972, p. 67) which was a high wage for the time. During the 1972-73 school years, the contract delivery costs were \$72,165 about 1.7 percent of the total budget of \$4,107,58 (Flambert and Flambert, 1973b).

The challenge of school meal facilities were highlighted in his study saying

it is important to note here that during 1970 about half of the city's elementary schools were censured as unsafe structures according to current earthquake safety standards. These schools were closed, or rebuilt, perhaps having an adverse effect on the efficiency of the cafeteria system (Cwick, 1972, p. 68).

In the 1969-70 school years, there were 91,757 students in SFUSD, and the food services served almost 6 million (5,933,732) type A lunches (50 percent to free or reduced students) (Cwick, 1972, p. 49, 58, 101). A la carte food was also available for sale at this time with items such as "ice creams, peanuts, potato and corn chips, milk, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and others" offered to students who could afford to pay (Cwick, 1972, p. 57).

Ensuring the participation of California school districts in the National School Lunch Program was a problem in the early 1970s. According to the California Department of Education, the problem was an "unwillingness of some school districts to help pay for meals and the 'philosophy' of some school trustees and officials who

believe that it is not the function of schools to provide meals” (California Problem, 1972). They proposed more funding especially for equipment. Some school districts in the Bay Area at this time reportedly used school lunch as a way to maintain segregation by only offering free hot lunch in specific schools, and not in all schools (School Lunches Used to Encourage Segregation, 1972).

After the study by Cwick (1972), local food service system consultants, Flambert and Flambert, Inc. were retained by San Francisco Unified School District to conduct a formal food service study. Flambert and Flambert, Inc. conducted a review of the operations focusing on developing a plan for modernizing the food service operations. The problem areas they encountered were:

- a. Purchasing procedures;
- b. Accounting procedures;
- c. Lack of adequate storage facilities;
- d. Insufficient central control;
- e. Strain on cooking schools to supply lunches to students dislocated by the Field Act;
- f. Lack of food service facilities in seventy-four schools (year 1972);
- g. Unpredictability and decrease in the availability of surplus commodities;
- h. Inability to predict the amount of Federal and State school lunch subsidy and reimbursement;
- i. Insufficient receipt testing to ensure compliance with purchasing specifications;
- j. Insufficient recipe resting to ensure compliance with purchasing specifications;
- k. High percentage (80 percent of “A” lunches served) of students eligible for free meals;
- l. Rising food and labor costs. (Flambert and Flambert, Inc. 1973b, p. 2)

Table 4-4 below utilizes data from Flambert and Flambert, Inc. (1973b) revealing the dramatic increase in in Type A lunches served for free between 1968-1972

Table 4-4: Percent of free lunches in SFUSD 1968-1973

Year	% of Free Lunches
1968-1969	19%
1969-1970	54%
1970-1971	70%
1971-1972	80%
1972-1973	79.9%

(data from Flambert and Flambert, Inc., 1973b)

The issues identified are strikingly similar to today’s issues, many of which impede SFUSD’s ability to procure, prepare, and serve food directly in their own facilities.

It is interesting that the a la carte sales were almost 20 percent of the total meal equivalent sales during the 1971-72 school years indicating the long standing practice in SFUSD of having a separate a la carte program (Flambert and Flambert, Inc., 1973b, p. 2). The issue of inadequate facilities is highlighted “many school kitchens are strained to capacity and are obsolete or inadequately equipped” (Flambert & Flambert Inc., 1973a, p. 4). In their recommendations for possible future direction for the program, Flambert and Flambert Inc. documented that one of the disadvantages of bulk food delivered to school sites is that this form of food services requires “minimal equipment – serving counters and ware-washing – is needed in satellites,” but that “many schools do not have this minimal space available” (Flaubert & Flaubert Inc., 1973a, p. 7).

In 1971-72, the food services expenses were: 43.7 percent for food; 39.7 percent for labor, 4.3 percent for operating and 12.3 percent for administration and overhead. The revenue was comprised of 47.5 percent federal and state reimbursements, 27.6 percent for cash sales, 9.2 percent for federal subsidy (commodities), and 17.5 percent SFUSD funds or \$682,489 (Flambert and Flambert, Inc., 1973b, p.2-3). Again, it is interesting that for over 40 years, SFUSD general funds has been subsidizing meals for students, but has not formally acknowledged that this long stand practice is necessary to operate the mandated school food service program in San Francisco. Each year, the Director of Student Nutrition Services struggles to cut costs in order to reduce the district's general fund contribution.

Flambert and Flambert, Inc.'s (1973b) recommendations focused primarily on centralizing production and warehouse functions. Their Plan 1 was "total centralization" with a facility that would accommodate 40,000 meal capacity and the three functions – warehouse for food and supplies, centralize all food processing, and host the department's headquarters (Flambert and Flambert Inc., 1973a, p.7). Plan 2 basically was the initial phase of Plan 1, taking into account that many of the schools were impacted by the construction and relocation mandated for earthquake modernization. According to the "Food Service Master Plan" report which quotes the text from the Board of Education Resolution adopted on December 11, 1973

Based upon the Interim Reports I and II as presented by Flambert and Flambert, Inc., the Board of Education has taken action to expedite the

adoption of the Recommendation, Alternative Plan 2 because of the imminent Field Act dislocations.

RESOLVED: That Plan 2 of Interim Report No. II, "Food Services Study" for the San Francisco Unified School District, November, 1973, as submitted by Flambert and Flambert, Inc., is hereby approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That recommendation for locating a central cafeteria plant on the Double Rock site, bounded by Donner and Egbert Avenues, and Ingalls Street, Lot 27, Block 4909, is hereby approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Superintendent and/or Associate Superintendent, Administration of Services, are hereby authorized to negotiate an extension to the agreement with Flambert and Flambert, Inc., to continue its consultant services with the San Francisco Unified School District for the design, construction and implementation of Plan 2; and that the results of such negotiations shall be submitted to the Board of Education for final approval;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the time line for this project shall be geared so that total completion shall be July 1, 1975 and that a tentative budget for the construction of the first increment of the central plant is approved in the sum of \$1,844,000 of which \$200,000 will be required for the balance of the fiscal year 1973074 to provide for consultant fees, architectural fees, project facilitator and staff, and miscellaneous tests and fees; and \$1,644,000 should be budgeted during the 1974-75 fiscal year to complete the project" (Flambert and Flambert, Inc., 1973a, p. 20-21).

The project implementation schedule shows that the construction was to happen from September 1974 to July 1975 after the bid and award during August 1974. The schedule shows that during March and April 1974 the division of cafeteria was to apply to the state for assistance. However, the

schedule does not show any other fundraising plans (Flambert and Flambert, Inc., 1973a, p. 22). The first mention of the central cooking facility in the press was in late December 1973 (San Francisco Schools Central Kitchen; 1972; \$4 million School Kitchen, 1972). However, during the contentious and difficult budget process, in mid-May, 1974, the Superintendent of schools reportedly pulled the funding for the central kitchen out of the district's budget (\$11 million in School Cuts, 1974).

Bond measure: Proposition N

In order to fund the central kitchen, in the election on November 5, 1974 a Proposition went to the voters (Proposition N) to fund a School Food Complex at a site owned by the City in Bayview Hunters Point in San Francisco. Figure 1 shows a part of the proposition description:

Figure 1: Voter information for Proposition N, November 5, 1974

SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT TAX ELECTION

Shall the governing board of the San Francisco Unified School District prepare plans and specifications and lease a building to be constructed for use by the school district as a "Centralized Nutrition Complex for Food Processing and Student Training" on the Double Rock site located on assessed Lot 27, Block 4909, City and County of San Francisco, and for such purposes, shall the maximum tax rate of the district be increased by not to exceed 5 cents, such increase to be in effect in the San Francisco Unified School District for the year 1975 to 1995, be authorized and the amount of such increase used solely and exclusively for such purpose?

YES

NO

ARGUMENT FOR PROPOSITION "N"

Thousands of our children in San Francisco go to school hungry every day.

And it isn't their fault.

Studies have repeatedly shown that nutritious meals help children learn better—and reduce absenteeism and health and behavior problems.

The San Francisco School District wants to take fullest advan-

tage of the Federal and State Programs which help to pay for nutritious meals for school children.

After an extensive study, the San Francisco Unified School District has found that our present system of food preparation and service is inefficient and inadequate.

In order to serve the children of San Francisco better, a modern nutrition center is needed, where meals can be prepared for service in the schools.

The facility will also include the much-needed warehouse space which will allow the District to make larger, more timely and more economical purchases of food.

The center will also house classrooms for teaching nutrition and for training students in the careers of food preparation and service.

Present plans call for a \$7.8 million nutrition center to be built by a nonprofit corporation, on District-owned property, at Egbert Avenue and Ingalls Street. The debt will be financed by a tax rate increase that will not exceed five cents, payable over a period of twenty years.

The school food program is supported by Federal and State funds in the interest of providing better nutrition and educational opportunities for all of San Francisco's children. The small investment that we make will provide benefits to our children far in excess of our contribution.

The Proposition N argument was endorsed by every leader in San Francisco including the Mayor, Congressional and Assembly leaders, six members of the Board of Education, teachers unions, labor council, buildings and trades council, painters union, warehouse union, churches, judges, police officials, redevelopment agency, nonprofits (San Francisco City and County Voters Pamphlet, 1974). The measure passed with 175,709 residents voting and 60.9 percent voting “Yes”, while 39.1 percent voted “No”.

School Building Corporation was set up to manage the project, and the first advertisement for bid on the construction of the central kitchen was published September 7, 1976 and bid opening was set for October 12, 1976 (Jones & MacMillen, 1976), and the BOE was to approve the low bidder at their October 26, 1976 meeting (Jones & MacMillen, 1976, p. 6.). The report by Jones and MacMillen (1976) reports that

In discussions with the District’s legal adviser and the bond attorneys for the non-profit corporation, it has been determined that it will be possible to conditionally award the Contract to the low bidder by Letter of Intent. This will allow issuance of a Notice to Proceed for a construction start of November 1, 1976 and completion at the end of April 1978...MBM’s projected bid amount based on 90% complete Contract Documents is \$8,594,500 (Jones & MacMillen, 1976, p. 3).

SFUSD affirmative action contracting policy halts school kitchen project

By November, however, with the awarding of the bid to the lowest bidder, another major problem surfaced – the Board of Education was sued by one of the bidding firms because the lowest bidder did not meet the district’s policy that required contractors to have 25 percent minority employees (Moskowitz, 1976).

The SFUSD policy, adopted by the Board of Education during the spring of 1975, required all contractors to have at least 25 percent minority employees and the first of this type of policy in the state of California. The Oakland School District followed with a similar affirmative action policy. The impact of the law suit was significant, affecting all public contracting in the state of California.

The Board of Education voted to indefinitely hold up the plans for the central kitchen on the advice of the board attorney saying a lawsuit was pending in the US District Court. The lawsuit would cloud the sale of \$9.5 million in bonds that the citizens of San Francisco voted for in the previous year, making it impossible to sell the bonds. The suit was filed in U.S. District Court on October 8, 1976 by the Associated General Contractors of California. “It seeks to force the school district to abandon its year-old policy of accepting bids on goods and construction only from firms that can prove at least 25 per cent of their work force are members of minority groups” (Moskowitz , 1976). The low bidder was a contractor that proposed to construct the kitchen for \$8.6 million, but the contractor did not qualify under the regulations for 25% minority work force.

Neither would the second-lowest bidder... which bid \$9.2 million but has only 17 per cent minority employees. To qualify for board policy, the third-lowest bidder, Robert G. Fisher Co. would have to be chosen. Thirty per cent of its employees are from minority backgrounds. But its bid is \$9.5 million. \$900,000 more than the low bid (Markowitz, 1976).

The delay could jeopardize the entire project. Superintendent of Schools Robert Alioto said 'As costs escalate we may not be able to complete the project within the \$9.5 million bond ceiling' (Maloney, 1976, November 12).

Attorneys said that the case might have to be decided at the Supreme Court. Plaintiffs charged reverse discrimination. District officials said that they tried everything to avoid the lawsuit short of scrapping their affirmative action policy, which they said would likely draw other suits from those wanting SFUSD to proceed with their affirmative action policy. The outcome of the suit had further implications including affecting a city sewer project that was planned, and well as school projects in Oakland that had been planned. "Commissioner Eugene Hopp agreed it was most unfortunate a 'worthy project' such as the central kitchen is being held up. The project means work for a lot of people as well as improved nutrition for youngsters from underprivileged families (Maloney, 1976, November 12).

The centralized kitchen, the largest facility of its kind west of Philadelphia was designed to turn out 42,000 meals a day. It would provide food for schools and other non-profit organizations caring for the elderly and others. Associate superintendent Milten Reiterman said the project could be delayed until next summer without jeopardizing the funding. However, various attorneys

involved in the case have indicated it could be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, a prospect which would take years to complete (Dooley, 1976).

This lawsuit came after a decade of discrimination law suits filed against SFUSD in the 1971s to desegregate the district.¹² After the landmark ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) in which the Supreme Court declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white children to be unconstitutional, school districts were required to develop a plan to desegregate their districts. SFUSD was the defendant in multiple lawsuits seeking to require the district to desegregate. The lawsuit ultimately called into question whether the Board of Education has the legal authority to establish an affirmative action policy. The suit ultimately held up the project, effectively ending the district and city's plan to build a central kitchen for SFUSD; and in 2012 SFUSD still does not have a central kitchen or warehouse/distribution center (\$29 million School Construction Frozen, 1977).

Breakfast innovation

During the early 1970s, community groups in San Francisco were was also innovating in school breakfast. The Mission Rebels, a community based

¹²*Johnson v. San Francisco Unified School District* (1971); *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 US 563 (1974)

organization, developed a free breakfast program for 4,500 students in 14 schools in the Mission District. In the early 1970s, it was the largest breakfast program in the country at that time (Rebels Plan School Program, 1974).

However, by 1974, San Francisco was behind national trends (Half of Those Eligible, 1974). Senator Milton Marks reportedly said “San Francisco is the largest city in the entire nation without a school breakfast program” with a plan being developed by San Francisco elected officials Senator Marks and Assemblyman Willie Brown (Brown, 1974; We know San Francisco has hungry children, 1974). “Legislation pending before the California Legislature, (Moscone, SB 2020) would provide state funds in the amount of an additional five cents per meal served by a district” (San Francisco Unified School District Superintendent of Schools, 1974).

The Mission Rebels, were interested in expanding their privately operated breakfast program in the schools with funding and federal revenue sharing by City Hall and sponsorship by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (Rebels Ready to Cook Breakfast, 1974; Free Breakfast Project Reality, 1974). Although the San Francisco Board of Education was perceived to be unsupportive of expanding the district’s food service program to include breakfast, they later voted to require it. (School Breakfasts, 1974; San Francisco Called breakfast holdout; 1974; Mission Rebels Now Invite, 1974). The City Attorney later ruled that all food service in district schools must be by district employees (Mission Rebels’ Role in Breakfast, 1974). A Feasibility Study showed that by adding school breakfast to the district’s

food service operations, an extra \$310,261 for free students (10,160 per day) and \$19,392 for reduced price students (635 per day) would be required from the district's fund for free meals, which at that time was part of the property tax override (San Francisco Unified School District Superintendent of Schools, 1974).

Meals for Needy Students and Proposition 13 – a long lasting impact

In the early 1970s California's school financing was based on local property taxes. However, as a result of the landmark lawsuit *Serrano v. Priest*, the California school finance system that was based on local property taxes directly supporting local school districts was ruled illegal because it did not ensure equal protection under the law; and by 1980, wealth based inequities in education funding were to be equalized. The case was decided by the Supreme Court, citing that the state had a responsibility to provide equality to all residents, and that the school finance system created unequal resources for education. There was less involvement of the state in school financing prior to the *Serrano v. Priest* decision. After the court decision, property taxes which had previously been managed at a local level were transferred to the state of California for redistribution to local school districts based on a complex formula (Ed Source, 2012).

Proposition 13 which was approved by the voters of California in 1978, also had a significant impact on school financing because of the restrictions it placed on

property tax rates (Institute of Governmental Studies, 2003). It also prohibited the passage of new state or local taxes without two thirds majority votes.

Prior to this, the free meal funding required of local school districts was financed through property taxes. This was called “Meals for Needy Students” and was a significant source of funds to provide school meals to low-income children. However, post Proposition 13, this funding was no longer allowed unless a district had enacted a property tax levy to support this prior to Proposition 13. In 2004-05 in California, \$126,000,000 of funding for Meals for Needy Pupils went to 372 school districts (Tinmar, 2006). In 2002-2003 the average district that received Meals for Needy funding received \$22.25 per student with the high being \$616.17 per student (California Legislative Analyst’s Office, 2005).

Since Proposition 13, this funding has been a significant source of additional funding for some districts. For example, Alameda County has 18 separate school districts, 12 of which receive Meals for the Needy Funding in 2009-10. Below are the funding amounts during this time. Clearly, for some districts, the Meals for the Needy funds provide a significant amount of money. However, districts are allowed to utilize the funds for the general fund and are not required to give the funds to the school meals program. While some districts allocate these funds for the school meals programs, others do not, so the specific amounts funding school meals is not clear.

Table 4-5: 2009-10 Meals for the Needing Funds - Alameda County Districts

District	Amount per meal from Meals for the Needy	Total funding 2009-10
Alameda City Unified	\$.5095	\$209,135
Albany City Unified	0	0
Berkeley Unified	\$1.4085	\$1,079,663
Castro Valley Unified	\$.9630	\$248,830
Dublin Unified	\$5.1538	\$533,320
Emery Unified	\$2.8184	\$288,880
Fremont Unified	0	0
Hayward Unified	\$.2941	\$736,266
Livermore Joint Valley Unified	0	0
Mountain House Elementary	\$4.7775	\$20,725
New Haven Unified	\$.3878	\$325,086
Newark Unified	\$.0424	\$26,890
Oakland Unified	.1601	\$683,912
Piedmont City Unified	0	0
Pleasanton Unified	1.3975	\$224,520
San Leandro Unified	0	0
San Lorenzo Unified	.8229	\$1,020,333
Sunol Glen Unified	0	0

(Data from: California Department of Education: School Fiscal Services 2010)

Prior to Proposition 13, San Francisco Unified School District included Meals for the Needy in the budget. However in 1973-74, the budget for the Cafeteria Fund was \$5,040,285 of which \$2,545,114 was from sales, \$1,540,100 from federal “subvention” and \$955,071 from District Support (San Francisco Unified School District, 1973b). The 1976-77 recommended budget contains both Meals for the Needy as well as Central Nutrition Complex. The Cafeteria Fund increased from \$7 million in 1976 to \$8.3 million in the 1977 recommended budget. In the summary of school tax rates per \$100 assessed valuation, the 1976 tax rate for Meals for Needy Students was .04 and the estimated rate for 1977 was .05 – a 25 percent increase. The rate for the Central Nutrition Complex was .05 for both 1976 and 1977. Part of the justification for the increase in Meals for Needy Students Tax Override was the expanded breakfast program as well as meeting the needs of the lunch program. The budget reflects an increase of \$1,566,560 from the General Fund provided by the .05 override. The Meals for the Needy Funding actual tax rate for 1976 was .04. However the increase in the budget between 1976 and 1977 was also due to budgeting items previously under the General Fund and to the increasing labor and supplies cost with the expansion of the food program. In 1976 there were 348 FTEs and in 1977 385 (San Francisco Unified School District, 1976). The line item for this funding on the budget states “Transfer from General Fund Tax Override for Meals for Needy Students,” and this item was a condition for receiving Meals for Needy Students today.

Unfortunately, by the final budget during a very contentious budget season, the Meals for the Needy line item was eliminated (School coverage – Bayview group blasts white press, 1976) with the Superintendent saying that there was a balance in the Cafeteria fund which would be used to cover the loss of funding from the property tax override (Fight Brews Over New School Budget Cuts, 1976). Unfortunately, this decision was short sighted, starving the school meal program of much needed funds even until today. Basically, San Francisco had this funding in place until the exact budget period they need it to qualify for the Meals for Needy Students funding from the state for the past 35 plus years. Again, although it was clear that there was a requirement for SFUSD to provide a meal to low-income children, that the number of low-income children eating school meals was growing, and that providing meals for children required additional local funds, a critical opportunity to build a strong resilient school meals program in San Francisco was lost to the immediate budget shortfalls and local pressure to reduce public investment in education.

The People’s Food System Movement

Goodman et al., 2012 trace the current localist focus in the alternative food movement to the early sustainable agriculture practitioners and their urban supporters (Goodman et al., 2012, p. 133) but also document a “retreat from a national agenda” (Goodman et al., 2012, p.135). As I contemplated this, I wondered if the food movements thirty years or more ago were perhaps oppositional and radically alternative, or, did they engage in the large national policy agendas? Did they seek to

create a separate space of opposition or did they engage in transforming existing institutions? To understand this better for the San Francisco case, I review the newsletters of the alternative food movement in San Francisco in the mid 1970s, the “People’s Food System Movement”, to reveal the types of issues that were being contemplated or worked on by these social actors, and how the participants viewed social change. I review the series of monthly newsletters published over a period of four to five years.

The following is a quote from a newsletter from 1975

Who we are: This publication is put out by the Newsletter Collective of the People’s Food System. The system is made up of about ten stores in San Francisco and Berkeley which supply low cost, good quality natural foods to our communities. Also part of the system are collectives which supply milk, cheese, dry goods, produce, bread, herbs, mechanical aid, and daycare. In the very near future there will be a yogurt and a mill collective. All are controlled by the workers and profits are put back into the community (From Storefront Extension, September 8, 1975 No. 5. P. 15).

The Storefront Extension is published around the middle of each month, and is a communication/education tool for the cooperative food system in San Francisco (Storefront Extension, April 14, 1975).

The newsletter series began in October 1974 under the name of *Storefront Extension* which was published monthly or bi-monthly until December, 1975. The series then changed names to *Turnover: A Magazine of Food Issues* and was published from January 1976 until September 1978. Each edition of the newsletter

is around 30 pages, and provides updates on current activities of the members, as well as a broad range of food system issues includes the following article titles: *Special Issue on Sugar, local collectives, storing produce, cooking vegetables, Westlands Water Scandal, Hidden Cost of Food Chemicals, PVC, Eggs, Canned Products, Nuclear reactors/workers where rice grows, Politics of Food, Food Behind Bars, Cooking Seaweed, Looking at America: A Class Society, Water in California, Food in Cuba, Fiber, End of Forced Sterilization, Machines Don't Strike, Junk Food in Elementary Schools, Apartheid, Welfare Reform, U.S. Imperialism and Puerto Rico, Protein Diet and Fat Liberation, Salt, Nitrates, Zimbabwe Freedom Fighter, Gay Oppression: A Socialist Perspective.*

We believe in education as part of the revolution; in trying to change consciousness at the same time that we try to change the economic relationships in this society”
(Response to letter from reader (in *Turnover*), 1976).

The range of topics is extensive, and deals with everything from nutrition to international issues in food, as well as issues involving class, gender and sexual orientation. The October 1976 edition has a range of articles including *Formula for Malnutrition (Nestle in the Third World); Feeding Babies: A History, School Lunches, and Sugared Cereal.* The article on school lunches is entitled *put Food Back on the Lunch Tray.* The article provides a glimpse into the view and activities of the alternative food movement in San Francisco towards school meals since this is the only article from the series that that focuses on school food. The article discusses

the issue of food waste, and the problem with pre-packaged lunches that “usually consist of a cold pack and a hot pack....The hot pack is frozen in a plate like a TV dinner and must be heated in special ovens installed for the purpose.” They go on to write “Once these ovens replace a conventional kitchen, the school is stuck with pre-packages lunches”. They also write that the “USDA seems to focus more on economy than quality, and that the USDA “encourage the installation of the ovens, which they think will save money” (Put Food Back on the Lunch Tray, 1976, p. 24-27). They also discuss the competitive food in the school (mainly from vending machines), as well as the issue that the meals may have more fat and sugar that recommended.

They also write that when they asked a USDA representative why the USDA didn't encourage whole grains and low fat milk, the USDA responded that those decisions were made at the local level and that they did not want to “prejudice them one way or another” even though the USDA “does send out a list of “alternate” food manufacturers listing the names and addresses of the companies, and 56 products with their color, flavor, and use.” They say that “[s]ince the USDA claims decisions are made at a local level, local action can improve the quality of school lunches (Put Food Back on the Lunch Tray, 1976, p. 24-27).

The article goes on to quote from the September 1976 Nutrition Action publication from Center for Science in the Public Interest in which they provide school food activists with guidance including the recommendation to form a local

committee to understand local needs with the school lunch program, potentially including farmers, local food distributors as well as health and social worker professionals. Finally, they mention that there is a San Francisco group working to improve local school lunches, and they refer readers to the nonprofit organization “Children’s Rights Group” that has been working and has achieved the passing of a bond to build a central kitchen, implement a federally funded breakfast program, and that wants to increase participation in the meals program (Put food back on the lunch tray, 1976, p.24-27).

However, the involvement of these food system activists in the San Francisco school food battle of 1976 was minimal, since a major source of funding for school meals had been removed from the budget during the intensely contentious budget season in which the Board of Education approved a budget at 4:00 am during one meeting, only to have it declared illegal due to conflicts of interest on the part of one of the board members. During the budget preparations leading up to the 1976-1977 budget approval, the Superintendent, Joseph Alioto had prepared a budget that was contingent on a tax increase of 7 cents which included a tax override for “Meals for the Needy”. However, during one budget meeting the Board of Education demanded that the Superintendent balance the budget without new revenue which meant slashing \$7 million in programs. The Superintendent’s revised budget eliminated 6 cents from meals for the needy. This all occurred during July and August 1976 (Maloney, 1976, June 25; Maloney, 1976, July 7; Maloney, 1976, August 6), and had long lasting implications for the SFUSD meal program today.

Also, although the San Francisco community had passed a Bond to build critical infrastructure, the plan was rapidly imploding with little awareness of this by the alternative food movement in San Francisco.

Summary

This critical time period in the history of the San Francisco school food program provides some of the answers to the question of why the local food program is like it is today. Despite doing basically everything right to have a state of the art, local school food program in the 1970s including thorough analysis of the problem, galvanizing the entire community of San Francisco to support the modernization of the school food program, the community of San Francisco was incapable of putting in place a school food program that had the necessary infrastructure and funding to allow local control, and fresher food. Over three decades later, the program is still using the same inadequate outdated facilities that were scheduled to be replaced in 1976.

Further, school food activists in San Francisco are completely unaware of the history of the program saying “twenty years ago, there was scratch cooking done in nearly every school...elementary schools have not done onsite cooking since 1988” (Woldow, 2008, p. 5). In reality, archival records reveal that even in 1969 out of 121 schools, only 48 were cooking, and 73 were already receiving pre-plated packaged meals, 72 of which were elementary schools. By believing that SFUSD’s history

included “scratch cooking in nearly every school” the problem with declining or lack of infrastructure and cooking spaces was obscured. In the past decade in San Francisco, due to the public funding of facilities improvements through three bonds, school food activists had an opportunity to advocate for including kitchen facilities and equipment upgrades into bond construction had they completely understood the role of facilities and infrastructure in improving school food through increasing the local preparation. However, by narrowly focusing on both nutrition and micronutrient content of food and procurement of local farm products, the opportunity to strengthen SFUSD’s infrastructure for food preparation through these bonds has been lost.

Chapter 5: Where Do We Go From Here?

SFUSD school food: current rumblings and continued challenges

Today, the interest in San Francisco school food is growing. From the school district level, the interest in structural solutions is apparent by the district's willingness to engage in a study of the school meals program with the San Francisco Food Bank and the San Francisco Department of Public Health as partners. The San Francisco Food Bank took the lead on fundraising to hire consultants, and conduct outreach into the community through focus groups, surveys, and in-depth interviews. The outreach into the community began in the spring of 2011, yet a final report has not yet been publically released. The goals of the study, as it appeared in the request for proposals for a consultant were:

San Francisco Food Bank (SFFB) seeks an experienced research & consulting firm to conduct an independent assessment and performance review of the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) school meal program and develop a comprehensive plan to improve the quality of meals served, increase participation, maximize federal funds, and identify mechanisms to achieve financial stability of the program (Request for Proposal, 2010).

The Request for Proposal was fairly broad, and requests that the review include the following issues: access, participation, quality, infrastructure/operations, labor, community support, and mechanisms for sustained improvement (Request for Proposal, 2010). The process has generated much interest in the community (Woldow, 2011, September 8), and along with significant challenges with the current

vendor, there has been a new call for San Francisco to build a central production kitchen (Woldow, August 23).

The current SFUSD Wellness Policy was initially written in 2003, years before there was a federal requirement, with revisions approved in 2007. The existing Wellness Policy provides nutrition guidelines for the entire school food environment including competitive food, vending machines, celebrations, fundraising, etc. It also provides more restrictive nutrition guidelines for the National School Lunch program than federally required. Some of the important areas include adding more fresh fruits and vegetables, choosing California grown and certified organic if possible (San Francisco Unified School District, 2007). The SFUSD Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee will be rewriting the Wellness Policy during 2012, providing an opportunity to comprehensively address the school food system, build community support, and obtain the support of the administration and elected school board to embrace a systemic plan to improve the program.

The City and County of San Francisco has been supportive of improving the school meals program, most recently through Mayor Newson's Executive Directive on Healthy and Sustainable Food in which he calls for

The Department of Children, Youth and their Families and the Department of Public Health will collaborate with the Food Policy Council and the Food Security Task Force to host a hearing to explore ways to increase funding to the school meals program and prepare a report on alternative mechanisms to increase funding to the program (Newson, 2009).

This followed recommendations from the Mayor's Urban Rural Roundtable in 2009 in which the Mayor invited 50 stakeholders to develop an "integrated set of recommendations for programs, incentives, strategies and practical actions" that San Francisco could implement "to support the regional agricultural economy and increase the amount of high quality, California grown food for all of our residents" (Roots of Change, 2009; Peyton, 2012). One of the final recommendations called for by Mayor Newsom was to "Reinvest in San Francisco's School Meals Program" by partnering with the Superintendent of SFUSD to launch a community wide initiative and develop a plan that provides long term strategy to improve the meal program.

The plan must include 1) advocacy for increases in federal and state reimbursement rates and federal funding (including possibly stimulus money) for kitchen equipment and other capital investments; 2) determination of additional costs of programs that will provide locally sourced and prepared food, i.e. a central kitchen or regional vendors with capacity to supply the district; and 3) determine the means to acquire permanent supplemental funds to maintain high quality school food for both capital improvements and on-going operations through local, state and federal policy changes (Roots of Change, 2009, p.11).

Despite this considerable support, a unified plan has been difficult to develop, and individualized programs acting in their own silos have continued. Some view a different vendor as the solution, others view farm to school program as the panacea to the school food question in San Francisco. Poppendieck (2010) finds that fixing procurement is often viewed as fixing the school meal program, while issues such as low participation, inadequate portion sizes, long lines, declining or nonexistent

cooking skills and a lack of modern infrastructure are real barriers that impede or prevent the procurement of sustainably produced, regionally sourced food.

Additionally in San Francisco, like elsewhere, nutritionism has dominated school food activism over systems thinking. The term, was originally used by an Australian social scientist Gyorgy Scrinis, and was made recently popular by Michael Pollan. As Pollan writes “in the case of nutritionism, the widely shared but unexamined assumption is that the key to understanding food is indeed the nutrient” (Pollan, 2007). Nutritionism in school food activism in the early 2000s in San Francisco led to the development of local school food policy which focused on the development of nutrition regulations for all food in the school food environment rather than systemic analysis and interventions.

In order for the considerable challenges in San Francisco’s school food program to be met and overcome, there must be the involvement of a broad range of community stakeholders across all ethnic groups, especially the communities which attend the public schools, and whose children eat lunch at schools. The involvement of youth and youth serving organizations could provide visibility and experience to mobilize public attention. A comprehensive plan must be developed to rebuild and replace school site infrastructure as well as build necessary infrastructure for a complex food service operation like the school meal program. This infrastructure could minimally include a central warehouse to receive and store shipments, but could also include a central food production facility. This would ensure that the school meal program is locally controlled, flexible, and capable of adjusting to the

changing circumstances. The integration of local culinary expertise, as well as staff training will also be necessary, as well as the addition of area supervisors to develop relationships at school sites and provide oversight of school site operations and future pilots. Schools scheduled to be modernized through future bonds could possibly have their school kitchen/preparation space modernized.

Currently, among important community organizations, there is still a culture of silos including a separate but very successful green schoolyard/school garden network, nutrition education program operated by SFUSD School Health Programs, and a new organization connecting local chefs to fundraising for the building of “green solar powered kitchens” in SFUSD schools (From Garden to Table, 2012), which has nothing to do with the kitchen operated by Student Nutrition Services.

Morning Snack Program: Charitable programs claiming public space

Programs that were created largely to compensate for the shortfalls of public entitlements are being used to further undermine them (Poppendieck, 1998).

In SFUSD, there is an entire “Morning Snack Program” at over 30 high poverty SFUSD schools developed and operated by a private nonprofit organization entirely outside of the Student Nutrition Services Department and without the approval of the senior leadership in SFUSD. Arrangements for the program were negotiated with parent liaisons, teachers, and principals. The following quotes explain the program and the way it is marketed to donors and the community:

For students who haven't had enough breakfast or who may not get a breakfast at home, healthy snacks are a game changer — they remove the distraction of hunger, which has no place in the classroom (San Francisco Food Bank, 2012b).

Healthy Snacks for Kids: from the trucks to the classroom
Our Morning Snack Program gets healthy foods to students mid-morning, just when they need a boost of nutrition.
Here's how we do it!

- Trucks arrive with donations of handheld fruits, nuts, seeds and other healthy snacks
- Volunteers sort and pack fruit, trail mix, and box the other snacks
- Our warehouse staff assembles orders with 5 days of snacks for each of the schools
- School parents and volunteers receive and prepare the food to hand out at classrooms each morning
- 10,000 children get healthy snacks through this program, helping them stay engaged in their classroom activities! (San Francisco Food Bank, 2012a).

The program is an example of privatization of public responsibilities which seems at first glance to have a positive effect. But because of its negative financial impact on the school meals program, it could lead to a rolling back of public responsibilities and a dismantling of a publically funded local nutrition program by a well funded and widely respected local nonprofit organization.

Although SFUSD has a long history of low participation in the federally sponsored breakfast and lunch program, there are opportunities to implement alternative models of breakfast including Breakfast in the Classroom, Second Chance Breakfast (prior to recess), and Grab and Go Breakfast. These models are widely accepted across the country, and California Department of Education offers two

rounds of Breakfast Expansion Grants each year for school districts to implement new models of breakfast to increase participation. In 2010-2011 SNS applied for and was awarded over \$180,000 in grants to implement Grab and Go stations at 9 middle and 9 high schools to purchase mobile Points of Service, food carts, and marketing and outreach materials. Grab and Go stations were rolled out at 9 high schools during 2011-12 and breakfast participation at these schools increased by 35 percent (SFUSD-SNS, 2012b).

The privately operated Morning Snack Program operates at school sites under the regulatory radar, and does not have to meet any federal, state, SFUSD Wellness or Board of Education regulations, policies or resolutions. Some of the food served contains nuts which are prohibited at SFUSD because of food allergies, and food safety requirements are not applied to this program. An analysis of the impact of this program on participation in the School Breakfast program at the school sites with the Morning Snack Program has shown that there has been a 26 percent decrease in participation in the School Breakfast Program from the inception of the Morning Snack Program in 2009 to 2011 (SFUSD-SNS, 2012a).

Despite the drop in participation in breakfast at these schools, there is still a commitment from SNS and expectation from senior district leadership to operate a federally subsidized School Breakfast Program requiring paid cafeteria staff to manage the operations and adhere to all federal, state and local regulations, as well as school site staff to oversee the students in the cafeteria. However, this may change.

The existence of the Morning Snack Program creates a significant barrier to implementing an alternative model of breakfast service at elementary schools in which the vast majority of students qualify for free or reduced breakfast. There are significant operations, staff, menu, process and equipment changes necessary to implement a highly regulated program in a different location (classrooms) or at a different time (before recess). The goal of piloting a new model of breakfast service would be to increase the number of students eating breakfast, and increase revenues to the overall SNS budget. Both of these goals would be easier to obtain at the schools with the highest percentage of students qualified for free and reduced meals since most students could be fed and federal and state reimbursements would be maximized. However, both of these goals will be difficult to achieve since the Morning Snack Program intentionally rolled out in the elementary schools with the highest percentage of students qualified for free and reduced meals.

While it is difficult to implement changes within a public bureaucracy like SFUSD, changes within the structure of this program have systemic impacts on the entire school meal program. For example, the Grab and Go breakfast stations and mobile POS equipment purchased through the grants from California Department of Education can be also utilized to open another point of service for lunch at crowded middle and high schools in which long lunch lines are a deterrent for students to eat school lunch. Additionally, any positive revenue gained by the SNS department through the Grab and Go success will be reinvested into the overall program.

Federal changes: New nutrition guidelines and impact

The final rules to implement the nutrition changes in the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act were issued on January 26, 2012 (Nutrition Standards, 2012). The nutrition guidelines were developed to implement the recommendations issued by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy in 2009. Prior to this change, the nutrition standards for the school meal program's nutrition requirements had been based on the 1995 Dietary Guidelines and the 1989 Recommended Dietary Allowances.

According to the USDA, the new guidelines will increase the local costs for school meals by over \$3 billion between 2012 and 2016

This final rule will increase the amount of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains offered to participants in the NSLP and SBP. The final rule will also limit certain fats and reduce calories and sodium in school meals. Because some foods that meet these requirements are more expensive than foods served in the school meal programs today, the food cost component of preparing and serving school meals will increase.... Compliance with this rule is also likely to increase labor costs. Serving food acceptable to students may require more on-site preparation, and less reliance on prepared foods (Nutrition Standards, 2012, p. 4107).

Other costs will likely be for staff training, both for enforcing the new requirements, as well as for food safety and other culinary training. Additional investments will be required with the requirements of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act to serve free water in the cafeteria. Although this mandate can be satisfied by many methods, including water pitchers, coolers, or water fountains; however, water pitchers and coolers require cups (an extra expense), and also a way to properly sanitize the pitchers and coolers. In San Francisco, since many cafeterias do not have existing

water fountains, permanent water bottle refilling stations will be installed as schools are modernized through bond work, and through investments from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

The Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act also funded a farm to school grant program which was originally authorized by the 2004 reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, but not funded through that process. The new grant program, which will be funded at a level of \$5 million per year, will support grants up to \$100,000 per implementation project, or \$20,000 - \$45,000 to support planning projects with the goal of increasing the use of foods from small and midsized farms and school gardens. Projects may support planning efforts to implement farm to school programs, or they may support implementation projects (USDA, 2012).

Promising Examples of School Meal Innovation to Support Regional Agriculture

Federal Level: USDA “Fresh product pilot program” in Michigan and Florida

In order to build on the farm to school movements in Michigan and Florida, and in order to expand the amount of fresh locally grown produce available to school distributed through their commodity entitlements, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and Food and Nutrition Service are conducting a pilot in Michigan and Florida. According to the USDA, the “program is relevant to the needs expressed by schools and other stakeholders to allow for greater use of locally-grown foods in

school meal programs using entitlement funds” (USDA, 2011a). The pilot is intended to test a way to fund increased purchases of locally grown produce for school meal programs. An RFP was issued in November 2011 for potential suppliers including distributors wishing to be a part of the pilot. Initial items included in the pilot are lettuce, apples, grapes, oranges carrots and blueberries since these items are purchased most frequently by school nutrition departments (USDA, 2011a). By utilizing commodity entitlement for the purchase of local produce, school districts could significantly increase the amount of fruits and vegetables they are financially able to purchase; and by allowing local farmers and their intermediaries to participate in the pilot, the potential for increasing their markets is significant.

State level: School meals administered by state Departments of Agriculture

School meal programs have historically been administered by state Departments of Education which deal with administering reimbursements, issuing guidance around program regulations and new rules, monitoring and auditing, etc. However, during the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of state legislatures passing legislation to increase the involvement of other state agencies through farm to school pilot programs, geographic preferences, funding, interagency task forces, etc. Often it has been the state Department of Agriculture that has formed positions to advance the interests of the state agriculture community through farm to school programs or positions (National Farm to School Network, 2010).

Federal regulations implementing the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (7 C.F.R. § 210.3(b)) provide for child nutrition programs to be administered by a state's educational agency. However, a few states (New Jersey, Texas and Florida) have significantly restructured the organization of the school meal program in their state by transferring the administration of program from the state's Department of Education to the state's Department of Agriculture. In 2011, Florida became the third state to transfer the administration of the school nutrition program to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACCS) through the "Healthy Schools for Healthy Lives Act" (Healthy Schools for Healthy Lives Act, 2011). This request was approved by the state legislature as well as the USDA. According to state legislative records

The Commissioner of Agriculture feels that DACCS is the most experienced and best positioned to manage Florida's school food and nutrition programs. It is the Commissioner's position that the transfer will foster increased coordination between Florida farmers and the school programs that provide food for Florida's children.... DACCS can connect schools with nearby farms, enabling the schools to tap into the abundance of nutritious and wholesome foods that Florida has to offer and serve locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables at school meals. The Commissioner of Agriculture also believes that DACCS can apply its expertise and capabilities to help instill a value and appreciation for fresh and nutritious foods in students, leading to a lifetime of healthy eating habits (Florida Senate, 2011).

This significant state level institutional change may lead to more procurement of food produced in the state, but it is unclear whether small and medium sized farms will be the beneficiaries of this organizational shift.

Local level innovation

Rethinking School Lunch is an initiative of the Center for Ecoliteracy based in Berkeley California. The Center was a core partner in the school food work in Berkeley, and has recently been working with Oakland Unified School District to improve their school food system. The Center's initiative, Rethinking School Lunch, is a comprehensive and holistic framework for school food work integrates the following components: food and health, wellness policy, teaching, dining, procurement, facilities, finances, waste management, professional development, and marketing and communications. Their vision includes:

One essential feature of Rethinking School Lunch is the farm-to-school approach to improving the nutritional value and qualities of school food, connecting students to food sources through meals and field trips, and helping local farmers remain economically viable. A second central element is the integration of students' experiences in the lunchroom, activities such as gardening and cooking, and classroom teaching and learning—all with a focus on understanding the connections between food, personal and community health, and the natural world (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2012).

The approach proposed in the Rethinking School Lunch guide was developed in the Berkeley Unified School District, and has been further advanced through the recent assessment in the Oakland Unified School District which will both be discussed in this chapter.

Berkeley Unified School District – School lunch initiative

Over the past two decades, the school food program in Berkeley California has been transformed through public investment in cooking infrastructure and ongoing operations (Meals for the Needy funding and General Funds), private investment in strategic planning, and implementation of new initiatives. The School Lunch Initiative came about through a partnership between the Center for Ecoliteracy, the Chez Panisse Foundation and BUSD. BUSD now has a state of the art Central Kitchen, and model dining commons at one middle school, and kitchens at each school site that are capable of receiving and storing freshly prepared food from the central kitchen, including fresh produce for salad bars, and serving food in a buffet style manner rather than unitized prepackaged meals (Chez Panisse Foundation, 2008). In addition, the Berkeley Wellness Policy includes a provision that states “that a full service kitchen will be installed at school sites where public bond money is expended to repair or remodel a school” (Berkeley Unified School District, 1999).

Oakland Unified School District – feasibility study

Oakland’s original plans for a central kitchen were also stopped over 35 years ago because of the minority contracting requirements the Oakland School District passed after San Francisco Unified School District’s Board of Education adopted the first affirmative action policy governing contracting. Oakland is now ready to attempt a school meal overhaul again.

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has a student enrollment of 46,584 and 70 percent of students are qualified for free and reduced meals (Educational Data Partnership, 2012). There are 89 schools and two charter schools that are serviced by the Nutrition Services department which serves approximately 7,000 breakfasts, 21,000 lunches, and 8,400 snacks per day (Oakland Unified School District, 2012). During the 2010-2011, OUSD partnered with the Center for Ecoliteracy to conduct an assessment and feasibility study for the Nutrition Services Department. The Center for Ecoliteracy hired expert consultants to conduct the review. In January 2012, the Executive Summary of the Oakland Unified School District Feasibility Study was presented to the Oakland Unified School District Board of Education. According to the report, the review was intended to provide strategic plan for comprehensive reform of the school meal program with a focus on facilities “since inadequate facilities was presented as a primary obstacle to realizing the District’s vision for school food in Oakland” (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2012b, p. 2).

The study proposed the following:

- Central Commissary (new)
- Cooking Kitchens (17) (need new equipment)
- School-Community Kitchens (14) (renovate existing space, need new equipment)
- Finishing Kitchens (58) (renovate all elementary school sites to meet health and safety code)

The estimated cost for this work over 2012-2016 is - \$26-27 million over 5 years.

The study outlined the current conditions including that in 25 of the 89 schools, food preparation is happening, and that 3 of the 25 cooking schools are also function as

central kitchens in which food is prepared and packaged for shipment to 64 school sites in which cooking is not happening at all. The report assesses that “most of the equipment in the Cooking Kitchens needs to be removed and replaced” and that due to the lack of serving equipment, counters and proper equipment, it is not possible to cook at 35 sites. It also says that currently “there are few to no menu items made from scratch” (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2012b, p.15). One of the central kitchens, Prescott, was designed to cook 8,000 meals, and is now cooking 20,000.

This straight forward assessment prioritizes the rebuilding of facilities. The report also recommends that the district identify an existing building that can be converted to a central commissary in which food production, storage, receiving, distribution, and central administration can take place. The report also recommends the development of a 1.5 acre farm/garden for education. Existing district policy promotes schools as community centers, and the report recommends that 14 renovated school kitchens be available to the community for cooking classes, community events, emergency preparedness and as rental to small scale food producers needing a certified kitchen in which to prepare food for sale. (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2012b, p. 6)

The report also outlines a plan for food waste, cafeteria seating, procurement, professional development and marketing and communications. This comprehensive plan begins with the basic infrastructure needs, and integrates the plan with existing initiatives including the facilities master plan, and the district’s strategic plan.

Washington DC – Systemic approach

DC Public Schools is a large urban district with 123 schools and 46,000 students, 70 percent of which are qualified for free or reduced meals. There is also a large charter school presence in Washington DC with over 28,000 students attending 57 schools over 99 campuses (DC Public Schools, 2010). The community of Washington DC has made significant progress in developing policy, funding programs and partnerships to improve all schools food served through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs.

Washington DC's governance structure is unique in that it is a federal city, with congressional oversight. In 2007, authority over the DC Public Schools was transferred from the Board of Education to the Mayor of Washington DC through the District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007. The DC State Board of Education was also established through this legislation (District of Columbia State Office of the Superintendent, n.d.). The State Board of Education provides oversight for all USDA funded nutrition programs.

This change in governance brought significant changes to the district and the school food program. In May 2008 DC Public Schools signed a contract with Compass Group USA, Thompson Hospitality Services LLC, the parent company for Chartwells and also the parent of Burger King, and Starbucks. Nearly two thirds of students in DC Public Schools are qualified for free or reduced priced meals (DC Action for Children, 2011). Chartwells also assumed control of the labor for the

district and the food preparation. However, this shift required substantial restructuring of labor and finances in the food service program.

Table 5-1 below shows the dramatic changes that occurred in the DC Public Schools Food Service operation between 2007 and 2011. According to DC Public Schools budgets, in 2007 there were 205 FTEs (full time equivalent employees) working in the DC Public school food service department, and 265 were budgeted in the 2008 approved budget (Government of the District of Columbia, 2008). The food service budget in 2007 was \$22.8 million and increased to \$26,340 in 2008. The major changes to the program occurred in the 2009 budget period with 265 proposed positions all being eliminated except for 1.8 positions. The food service staff that served food in DC Public Schools were no longer employees of DC Public Schools, and the oversight and employment of the food service staff became the responsibility of the vendor, Chartwells-Thompson School Dining Services.

Table 5 -1: DC Public Schools food service budgets and staffing (2007 – 2011) (dollars in thousands)

	Actual 2007	Approved 2008	Proposed FY 2009	Actual FY 2009	Change from FY 2008 to 2009	Approved FY 2010	Proposed FY 2011	Change from FY 2010-11
Budget	\$22,861	\$26,340	\$19,238	\$15,261	-11,079	\$17,173	\$28,505	\$11,332
FTE Staff	204.6	265	265	1.8	-263.2	5	3	-2

(Data: Government of the District of Columbia (2008), p. D10; Government of the District of Columbia (2010), p. D10.)

The contract between DC Public Schools and Chartwells covers food services (breakfast and lunch) to 38 secondary schools and 110 elementary schools including pre-plated breakfasts and lunches to the secondary schools, and aftercare and Head Start, as well as Saturday programs. The contract “guaranteed that the bottom line of the operational financial report for the base year shall reflect a loss no greater than \$6,699,974” (DC Public Schools, 2008, p. 7). Additionally, Chartwells was to invest \$4,300,000 in site investments including medium and large scale renovations at the Junior and High schools, and “scalable renovations for fresh cooking” and service lines and “small wares” at the elementary school (DC Public Schools, 2008, p. 10). The City Council of Washington DC approved the contract. In addition to Chartwells, among the DC Public Charter schools, Revolution Foods provides prepared food for approximately 40 percent of the charter schools, while Preferred Meal Systems provides approximately 9 percent of meals for DC Public Charter schools (District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent, 2010).

In 2010-2011 DC Public Schools established a pilot program intended to diversify the production system and the contracted meal service providers in the non charter public schools. The contracts were awarded to DC Central Kitchen, a local non-profit organization, and Revolution Foods, a food company headquarter in Oakland, California. During this school year, each organization provided food for 7 schools each. DC Central Kitchen’s Fresh Start Catering operation employs clients that have been through the DC Central Kitchen job training program for formerly homeless individuals. DC Central Kitchen employees either make meals from scratch

in a district middle school production kitchen, or on site at the schools in the pilot. Revolution Foods was launched operations in 2006 and now provides over 100,000 meals per across the United States. They have a production center nearby in Maryland that prepares food provides pre-plated food for the DC Public schools with limited kitchen facilities. The pilots were extended for the 2011-12 school years, with some changes to the sites chosen as part of the pilot (District of Columbia, 2011a). According to a local activist and blogger, Ed Bruske, DC Public School Food services new restaurateur/chef chief, Jeffrey Miller, is “outlining plans to establish nine satellite production kitchens the school can use to make their own food sometime in the future” (Bruske, 2011).

According to the DC Public Schools Food Services website:

- at minimum, 20% of all produce of food products used in school meals must be grown or processed in the Mid Atlantic region¹³
- Breakfast in the Classroom or Grab and Go is available in 91 of 121 schools
- After school supper is available at 99 of 121 schools.
- Salad bars in 27 schools (DC Public Schools, 2011b)
- Provision 2 – 66 schools (DC Public Schools, 2011a)

¹³ Locally grown includes growers from Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or West Virginia. Locally processed means Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or West Virginia

Innovative policy and local Funding: DC Healthy Schools Act

One of the most innovative pieces of local legislation supporting school food was passed in Washington DC in July of 2010. The legislation was called “The DC Healthy Schools Act” was passed with unanimous support from the City Council and the Mayor (Healthy School Act of 2010, 2010). The Act established not only programs to support healthier school nutrition environments in all public, charter schools operating the National School Lunch Program, it also established a Healthy School Fund to finance the programs established in the Act. In the Budget Support Act of 2010, the City Council extended the city’s sales tax to soft drinks through the Healthy Schools Act Revenue. Beginning on October 1, 2011, \$4,266,000 will be available for the Healthy School Fund (District of Columbia, 2011c, p. 109).

The following additional funding will be available to all DC Public Schools and public charter schools. With an amendment added in 2011, private schools participating in the National School Lunch Program will also be eligible (District of Columbia, 2011b). There are multiple performance based ways schools can increase their funding under the broad categories of: 1. Enhancing Nutrition of School Meals , 2. Expanding Access to School Meals, and 3. Promoting Healthy Eating, and 4. Serving Fresh, Locally-Grown Foods. There is also a requirement for all vendors to provide specific information to the schools about the school meals. Failure to provide the information may result in a penalty of up to \$500 per day paid to the Healthy

Schools Fund (DC Healthy Schools, 2012b). The following funding is available under the Act:

- \$.10 per meal for each breakfast or lunch served
- \$.40 per lunch to students qualified for reduced-priced lunches
- \$7 per student for each school launching an alternative breakfast program such as breakfast in the classroom, second chance breakfast or Grab and Go.
- Charter schools have additional opportunities for expanded funding. They will receive an extra .30 for each breakfast served to students qualified for reduced priced meals.
- Additionally, in “severe-need” charter schools (defined as schools in which 40% or more of the lunches served in the second preceding year were served to students qualified for free or reduced priced lunches (USDA-FNS, 2011c) the schools will receive the difference between the paid and free rates for students who do not qualify for free or reduced priced lunches (Healthy School Act of 2010, 2010).

The Act also requires that the “District of Columbia Public Schools shall establish a central facility in the District” to prepare food as well as other supportive nutrition education and job training programming (Healthy School Act of 2010, 2010).

It is interesting that many of the requirements under the area of “enhancing nutrition of school meals” follow the recommendations from the Institute of Medicine’s recommendations which were used as the guide for updating the nutrition requirements of the National School Lunch Program under the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 (the recent reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act), and were included in the USDA’s final rule (Nutrition Standards, 2012). The costs for improving the nutrition requirements of school meals to be in alignment with the IOM recommendations will likely increase local costs beyond the proposed increases

to the federal reimbursement rates, and local school districts may be required to make up the difference.

In addition to funding improvements to and expansion of school meals, the DC Healthy Schools Act of 2010 also establishes requirements for increasing physical education, health education, improves the school environment through establishment of an Environmental Programs Office, establishment of an environmental literacy plan, and a School Gardens Program, and finally requires the development of a comprehensive wellness policy (Healthy School Act of 2010, 2010).

Partners

The District of Columbia schools benefit from strong community advocates and partners including DC Hunger Solutions and DC Farm to School Network. DC Hunger Solutions is an initiative of Food Research Action Center (FRAC), one of the most influential food policy organizations in the country. DC Farm to School Network is an organization housed in the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture. The network is comprised of stakeholders including “teachers, parents, farmers, food service providers, school administrators, environmental organizations, farmers’ market directors, health advocates, community members, and all sorts of people and organizations that care about the health and well being of the District of

Columbia’s kids, our local environment and our local food economy” (DC Farm to School Network, 2012).

Summary

Investment in the school meals in the District of Columbia focused primarily on increasing the funds available to purchase food, rather than rebuilding the capacity of the DC Public School District to prepare food in-house. The issue of cafeterias is addressed in the 2010 Facilities Modernization Plan for the DC Public School District, but not kitchens. The District of Columbia is also somewhat interesting in that there is a somewhat large number of charter schools and a Public Charter School Board that provides oversight over them. In 2009-10 there were 57 charter schools on 99 campuses with around 28,000 student or approximately 27 percent of public school students (DC Public Schools, 2010a).

DC Public Schools has multiple examples of utilizing or relying on private organizations to support the public school program including the example of KIPP (a large national charter school company) co-locating on the same school site with Montgomery Elementary – and bringing private funds for modernization including modernizing the gym and the cafeteria (DC Public Schools, 2010b). This example is even highlighted in the DC Public School Facilities Master Plan as an example of the benefits of partnerships with charter school operators.

The changes in the DC schools through the pilot programs in DC Public Schools and also the Healthy Schools Act of 2010 support both improved nutrition environments for the students, it also supports the private sector in supporting those solutions – both through the pilot to directly operate school meal programs in some schools, subsidizing meals for private and charter school meal programs, developing a state infrastructure to support USDA programs in all schools (public, charter and private), and in providing additional funding to charter schools to provide breakfasts to all students.

Conclusion: Realizing Public Procurement’s Potential to Support Sustainable Development

Many have joined sustainable development to food through both production practices that reduce environmental impacts and also local food production-consumption linkages. These have been promoted through the concept of sustainable consumption, and as a corollary sustainable procurement. Some argue that there are environmental and sustainability benefits of school food service purchasing food from local and regional farmers, while others focus on the economic reasons for fostering these connections. Diversifying markets for farmers through securing stable large scale contracts with institutional food service is a strategy proposed by some academics and activists to strengthen farm viability and ultimately support local and regional food systems. Connor, King, Kolodinsky, Roche, Koliba, and Trubek (2012)

discuss how farmers who are motivated by market based values focus on business relations with food service with schools, and the implications for supporting these relationships.

In general, the literature promoting sustainable development through public procurement focuses on building the linkages to local farms, and supporting the intermediaries such as distributors and value added processors, that might make sustainable procurement possible. There is a gap in the literature around the organizational behavior of the public food service sector and the organizational infrastructure necessary for institutions to be able to be viable markets for locally or regionally procured farm products. The literature does not reflect the constraints faced by history and structure nor the behavior of organizations to create barriers or opportunities to implement sustainable procurement and geographically oriented procurement practices to support regional agricultural producers. Local, state and federal regulations as well as funding are constantly changing, and local school meal programs and staff that manage them are continually adjusting to the changing environment. This case study speaks to why organizations are constrained to implement procurement policies desired by food system activists. Activists cannot relate to these institutions partially because the issues around public procurement challenges have been framed too simply.

Although the lack of even distribution of sustainable and local food throughout communities and the problem that some have access while others are not able to access quality food is well acknowledged in activist as well as academic

realms, the literature does not provide examples of how organizational structure and behavior of public institution that have responsibility for feeding the poor can affect even distribution of local and sustainable food by and through these organizations.

The alternative food movement and the proponents of public procurement based food system development have focused on downstream solutions to the food system, including public procurement of locally and regionally produced food, but have neglected the reality of how public food service operations exist. The form in which school food programs operate is embedded in organizational history and structure. It is important to understand the form and structure of school food operations due to the constraining or enabling role they play in the institution's ability to be an important actor in a moral economy that can "envelope...and condition...market forces" (Kloppenber et al., 1996, p. 36) by procuring their food from local and regional farmers.

Connor, Abate, Liquori, and Hamm (2010) describe the efforts of School Food FOCUS, whose work is focused on shifting the procurement practices of the 100 largest school districts in the United States through participatory supply chain research. School Food FOCUS emphasizes procurement and policy solutions to achieve food for the whole plate including proteins, and other food groups. It also focuses on large urban school districts. The authors describe the problem of serving more healthful, local, and sustainably grown foods in school as a "wicked problem" because there are multiple definitions of the problem, the issue involves many

stakeholders, it has neither a starting point nor an ending point, and each situation is unique (Connor, Abate, Liquori & Hamm, 2010, p. 419).

Connor et al. (2010) describe how there is not one solution that fits all districts because of the factors unique to each district (labor, facilities, financing, skill, etc.). The authors' experience with previous efforts to achieve closer ties with agriculture (Connor et al., 2010, p. 422) led them to believe that their participatory research approach could lead them closer to solving the “wicked problem” of serving healthier food for children through school meals. Although I agree with the approach of utilizing participatory research, my experience in San Francisco leads me to believe that the nature of the problem and the uniqueness of the individual systems make the strategy of focusing on procurement a bit of a distraction, often premature and not necessarily the highest priority to serve the needs of low-income children.

School meal programs are extremely complex, and each local school meal program rests on a long history that affects most aspects of the program. By focusing only on procurement, other critical issues are obscured like funding, paid sick leave for food service workers, equipment and infrastructure, student participation, and stigma and competitive foods. In a complex food service system, focusing on procurement as a solution to multiple problems can potential limit the range of outcomes. For example, solving childhood obesity, food literacy, farm income, childhood hunger, poor nutrition all through the federally subsidized school meals program and allied programs might be possible, but not without the capacity to

engage in all things at once which requires staff, physical infrastructure, and financial resources. Through an examination of school meal programs with attention to the range of local and state level particularities, it is apparent that school meal programs may be federally funded and regulated, but they are also place-based and dependent on a range of factors that are unique to a particular district.

In the cases examined in Morgan et al. (2008), structural pressures from the globalized food system are especially apparent in the New York City case in which “public authorities operate within a larger political, regulatory, economic and socio-cultural context that is in many ways hostile to the creation of sustainable school food systems” (Morgan et al., 2008, p. 63). They describe the challenging context including budgetary pressures, the lack of cooking facilities, the stigma of school food, and the competition from food that is not nutritionally rich, and the societal norm for unregulated marketing of unhealthy food to children, saying that “a sustainable procurement approach requires changes at multiple levels and scales” (Morgan et al., 2008, p. 63) Understanding this context, they applaud the incremental advances made by the New York City school food program to purchase apples from New York growers, shift menus to include more ethnic dishes, implement other changes to the program to destigmatize the program and serve more children.

Kloppenborg et al. (2008) reflect on their experience in Madison school district by saying “structural condition in which the program existed...are a product of features of social organization operating in the larger political economy and

therefore require solutions outside the specific context of farm or school”

(Kloppenberget al. 2008, p. 446).

With omnipresent and growing budget pressures on public education across the country, and new federal requirements passed in the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, school food activists wishing to support better food for children as well as increased local farm income will need to grasp the complexity and uniqueness of local programs in order to even achieve some of the worthwhile goals most pursue.

School food innovation is appearing all over the country, and the evolution in understanding and the development of structural solutions is apparent in several examples from Berkeley, Oakland, Washington D.C., as well as the novel engagement of state agencies and USDA innovations. These programs serve as examples of structural interventions from the local, state and the federal level to transform school food. Though procurement is a part of these innovations, the changes target organizational structure and systemic solutions that provide strong foundations for school meal programs to better serve children as well as realize their potential to be actors supporting market development for local agricultural producers.

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