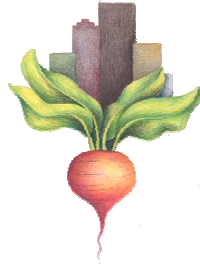


Los Angeles Fresh Food Access and Nutrition Education Project

1998-2002

A Report to the California Nutrition Network
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Center for Food & Justice
Urban and Environmental Policy Institute
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I. Background on the Center for Food and Justice

The mission of the Center for Food and Justice (CFJ, formerly the Community Food Security Project) is to foster a more just, democratic and sustainable food system. CFJ seeks to improve access to fresh and healthy foods in all communities and particularly those where access is most limited. CFJ seeks to make direct connections between those communities and local and regional farmers, through such institutions as schools. Our strategies include developing and evaluating pilot programs; grassroots organizing and coalition building; and conducting research, evaluation, and policy analysis. These strategies factor in environmental, health, community development, social justice, and land use issues to strengthen sustainable family farms, empower local communities, and improve the health of communities and the environment.

The Center for Food and Justice began as a project of the Pollution Prevention Education and Research Center (PPEREC) at UCLA in 1995. PPEREC moved to Occidental College in 1997 and the Community Food Security Project (CFSP) moved with it. A new Urban and Environmental Policy Institute was formed in 1999 that incorporated PPEREC, CFSP, and several other programs and initiatives. CFSP expanded significantly in this period. Its staff increased from 2 in 1995 to 10 in 2002. In 2001, the Community Food Security Project changed its name to the Center for Food and Justice to reflect the recognition of the need for the Center to expand its role in fostering food security research, programs, community participation, and policy campaigns.

CFJ's work is rooted in the Los Angeles region but it works closely with groups in California and throughout the country, through multi-organization projects and participation in and collaboration with the Community Food Security Coalition, the Community Alliance with Family Farms, and a number of other food and justice organizations.

Center programs include the development of a school Farmers' Market Salad Bar program. From a pilot program at one school in Santa Monica in the fall of 1997, this concept has grown into a national farm to school program and major new set of policy initiatives in the area of school food. This includes a USDA funded national farm to school consortium headed by CFJ including several research universities, school districts, and community and farm organizations, and a similar California farm to school partnership headed by CFJ that is funded through the Kellogg Foundation.

The farm to school programs grew out of a pilot program to connect residents of low-income communities to sources of fresh produce through a subscription farming program called the Market Basket Program. Lessons learned from the Market Basket program helped shape the farm to school approach developed in Santa Monica and led to a pilot program to bring farm fresh produce into after school programs.

In 2000, CFJ began to organize parents and other community members to collaborate on advocating for an integrated approach to food and nutrition in Los Angeles schools. These efforts have helped shape and allowed for monitoring of a district process to create a healthy food and nutrition policy.

CFJ has also issued more than a dozen reports on food and nutrition issues and strategies including school gardens, after-school snacks, and gardens and food programs at battered women's shelters. In July 2001, CFJ published a report on the barriers and opportunities for establishing a garden in every school in the Los Angeles school district. In 2002, CFJ produced a report on the barriers and opportunities for expanding healthy snacks in after school programs based on our work with these programs in Los Angeles.

In the summer of 2001, CFJ completed an evaluation of a two-year pilot project to develop gardens and other food programs in domestic violence shelters. Project GROW (Gardens for Respect, Opportunity, and Wellness) was implemented by nine domestic violence shelters across California and funded by the California Department of Health Services. The CFJ helped inspire this pilot program through a feasibility study and then, once the food programs were established, provided training, technical assistance, and evaluation for the nine agency pilot project. In 2002, CFJ produced its own report on Project GROW entitled "Growing Food, Healing Lives" that is available on the CFJ web site.

In the spring of 2000, the Center for Food and Justice co-convened the Food and Nutrition Task Force of the Progressive Los Angeles Network. Between 2000 and 2001, the task force compiled an agenda for city, county, and school district policies to make the Los Angeles food system more just, democratic, and sustainable. On November 3, 2001, CFJ hosted the "A Taste of Justice" conference to bring together residents from the City of Los Angeles to advocate for policies to establish more community gardens and food markets, develop a comprehensive plan for improving food and nutrition, and improve links between farms and public programs. After the conference, the LA Food Network was formed and bi-weekly newsletters with action alerts have helped to establish new collaborations and greater visibility for food and nutrition advocacy in the region.

CFJ is currently one of seven Centers or Programs within the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute (UEPI). Housed at Occidental College, UEPI programs address issues of work and industry, food and nutrition, housing, transportation, regional and community development, land use, watershed and resource policy and the urban environment. In addition to Nutrition Network funding, CFJ has obtained funding from the USDA, California Department of Health Services, City of Los Angeles, and private foundations.

II. Market Basket Program Assessment

1. Background

In 1994, the Southland Farmers' Market Association (SFMA) and the Pollution Prevention Education and Research Center (PPEREC)¹ established a partnership to develop a program that could provide additional income for farmers at the low-income Gardena Farmers' Market while also providing low-income families with a way to access farm fresh produce. The Gardena

¹ The Pollution Prevention Education and Research Center was founded at UCLA in 1991. PPEREC subsequently expanded and became the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute (UEPI) housed at Occidental College. The Market Basket Program developed into a set of programs called the Community Food Security Project and later, the Center for Food and Justice, both of which were part of UEPI.

Farmers' Market was selected because it had been the first farmers' market in Southern California and had been organized to provide fresh food access to low-income families in the area in the early 1980's but sales had dropped in the 1990's. Though initially successful, sales had flattened and even experienced small declines during the 1990s

The goals of the Market Basket Program were to 1) increase access to fresh produce in low-income communities where access is limited, while also providing access to fresh-from-the-farm produce to people of all income levels who might not otherwise shop at the farmers' market; 2) increase revenues for farmers participating in farmers' markets without additional transport or time-related expenses; 3) make more viable one of the few farmers' markets serving low-income shoppers; and 4) to encourage farmers to reduce their pesticide use.

The program utilized some of the principles of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), an arrangement between a group of consumers ("subscribers") and a farm, which allows the farmer to have a secure source of income in exchange for providing consumers a regular share of the produce of the farm. The concept has been adopted by hundreds of farms and communities nationally. In many CSAs, subscribers are asked to contribute \$500 or more at the beginning of the season in exchange for a weekly share of the produce throughout the season. While CSA can be a valuable arrangement for consumers who are able to afford this up front cost and for farmers able to access these types of consumers, the Market Basket program sought to utilize some CSA concepts to benefit more limited resource farmers and consumers, especially low-income consumers.

With initial funding from the University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program and Region IX of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Southland and PPERC began designing the Market Basket program during the spring of 1995. After that, funding was provided from the California Nutrition Network, the California Community Foundation, Food for All, the California Endowment, the California Wellness Foundation, and the City of Los Angeles.

2. Project Summary

a. Program Design

Site coordinators at partnering organizations collected sign ups for the following week's baskets and informed the Market Basket Coordinator as to the number of baskets ordered. Once all site coordinators had called in their basket orders, the total number of baskets would be tallied, and an order would be developed and called in to farmers. Beginning in 1997, subscribers did not have to pay the \$5 subsidized price until they picked up their basket. If a subscriber failed to show up, s/he would be asked to pay in advance for the next order.

The Market Basket Coordinator, a CFJ staff member, provided the liaison between participating organizations (such as Crystal Stairs) and the farmers at the farmers' market. A few days before the farmers' market, the Market Basket coordinator would call participating farmers to find out what they would have available for the baskets that week. By combining the harvests of several farmers from different (though nearby) growing regions, the Market Basket sought to offer a wide variety of regionally grown, seasonal produce to participants.

On the day of the farmers' market, the Market Basket coordinator would pick up and pay for produce from the participating farmers and divide it up to provide the correct amount of produce for each site.

Site coordinators would go to the farmers' market to pick up their allocation and then return to their sites to distribute the baskets. Usually, volunteers were ready to help make the boxes up at each site. Site coordinators would give the baskets out to the pre-paid subscribers and take sign ups for the next cycle.

b. Program Redesign

The pilot program was modified throughout its four years in a continual effort to better meet the needs of low-income subscribers and partnering organizations. In 1997, the Market Basket program underwent many changes. In January, the program was shifted from the farmers' market site in Gardena, which is a mixed-income community, to the Adams and Vermont farmers' market in a predominantly low-income community in Central Los Angeles. Operating on Wednesday allowed for the establishment of drop-off sites at schools and community organizations, which are mostly closed on weekends when the Gardena Farmers' Market was in operation.

Other changes to the program included the following²:

- The price for low-income subscribers was reduced from \$7 to \$5 and advance payment was no longer required.
- The program was shifted from a weekly to bimonthly operation.
- The tiered pricing structure (by ability to pay) was eliminated in favor of one low price.
- Outreach efforts were community rather than media targeted, with an emphasis on developing new sites and/or strengthening existing sites.
- Criteria were established to facilitate the development and continuation of mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Staff developed strategies for better meeting cultural preferences.

c. Partnerships

Since the Gardena Farmers' Market operated on Saturdays, in year one, partnerships tended to work best with community organizations that also operated on Saturdays in the Gardena area. This constrained the involvement of several groups, including the City of Gardena Human Services Department, which had been interested in participating. A partnership was formed with a soup kitchen which picked up leftover produce at the end of the market to have the soup kitchen serve as a Market Basket site. However, many participants were reluctant to return to the soup kitchen site to pick up their basket and most participants at the soup kitchen were unable to pay for the baskets.

² For a more complete discussion of these program revisions, see *Building Community Food Systems for All: Learning from the Market Basket Program*, by Robert Gottlieb and Michelle Mascarenhas, December 1997. Available through the Center for Food and Justice web site www.uepi.oxy.edu/cfj.

In year two, the program sought to establish pick-up sites that could be accessed by parents and child-care providers during the week. With the shift to a Wednesday market, partnerships were formed with preschools, elementary schools, child-care centers, and one large child-care service agency.

Criteria were established for the development and continuation of sites in order to ensure commitment of the partnering organization, reduce Market Basket program staff time to be less dependent on soft money, and to develop transportation capacity that was not directly dependent on the Market Basket program. These criteria were used as guidelines to assure that a site would have sufficient commitment and capacity to participate in the Market Basket Program on an ongoing basis. In cases where the resources of the site organization were limited, Center for Food and Justice staff sought to work with the site coordinators to come up with alternative solutions, such as recruiting community volunteers to transport the produce.

In 1996, PPERC/CFJ and Southland Farmers' Market Association formed a partnership with Crystal Stairs, Inc., a non-profit service provider to child-care providers and families in Los Angeles County. Crystal Stairs was the Market Basket Program's largest and most successful community partner. The organization committed significant institutional support for the program, including staffing, transportation, and outreach. Crystal Stairs saw the program as linked to its mission of improving access to quality child-care and improving child-care provider access to nutritious foods at affordable prices. By applying for joint funding, Crystal Stairs was able to hire staff to coordinate the program, an important factor in the longevity of the site. Funds for this collaboration came through the California Community Foundation and The California Endowment.

Partnerships were also formed with several Head Start Preschool programs to allow families to subscribe to the Market Basket program and pick up their basket of produce at the same location they pick up their children. The Head Start preschool programs tended to be the most stable neighborhood-based Market Basket sites, in part because of their philosophy of serving as community centers and developing leadership. However, because Head Start staff are committed to many other activities and staff members are constantly working with parents on many other programs and issues, the success of the Market Basket program at these sites was limited.

3. Outcomes and Lessons Learned

Number of Baskets Distributed

	Total	Average # per month
May-December 1998	766	96
January-September 1999	1,614	135

The Market Basket program distributed an average of 96 baskets per month in the second half of 1998 and 135 baskets per month in 1999. Many of these baskets were used in family child-care provider homes. Child-care providers tended to purchase multiple baskets and provide fruits and vegetables for children in several families. Informal surveys revealed that each basket was utilized by at least four people. Therefore, the produce and newsletters were estimated to have reached approximately 600 people per month.

In a focus group conducted in October 1999, child-care providers said that the Market Baskets have been a significant benefit in stimulating the interest of the children in their program for experimenting with and eating more fruits and vegetables. Some providers said children in their care were requesting more fruits and vegetables at their own homes as well.

a. Subscriber Needs

Throughout the life of the Market Basket Program, the majority of subscribers participated between one and three times. In surveys and anecdotal reports, subscribers described a need for more choices, both in terms of variety and quantity. While some subscribers might have enjoyed getting cauliflower in their box, others might never have used it or might not have liked it. With household size varying widely, many subscribers had difficulty making the “one size fits all basket” work for their particular household. Thus, as the basket program did not allow subscribers to select from a range of items based on their family size and cultural preferences, many found that it did not work for their household. Ultimately, this finding led to a major program redesign from seeking to serve individual families through child care centers to seeking to serve the same families through snack programs in after school settings.

In 1999, Market Basket coordinators created a survey for site coordinators to distribute to potential subscribers to better gauge the preferences of people at their sites, both in terms of the types and quantities of the produce desired. In order to meet the different preferences of the primarily African-American and Latino households involved in the program, the program began offering different options, such as allowing subscribers to choose spinach or mustard greens and offering two different types of cabbage. For instance, Latino subscribers were more likely to select light green tight heads of cabbage whereas African American subscribers tended to prefer the dark green leafy variety.

While this program modification did increase the options, the types of fruits and vegetables available through the Market Basket Program were limited by seasonal and geographic availability. For instance, items that many households might purchase year round, such as tomatoes, were not available most months. Other items, such as tropical fruits that are not grown in California, were not available at all through the California Certified Farmers’ Markets.

Farm Fresh Choice, a new program coordinated through the Ecology Center in Berkeley and funded by the Nutrition Network, has sought to address many of these issues by setting up mini-markets at child-care centers using a CSA-style of subscription.

b. Institutional Capacity

Another factor contributing to low repeat participation was location and access. As Los Angeles is extremely spread out, CFJ had trouble identifying partners who would both have the institutional capacity to operate the program and be conveniently located. While Crystal Stairs provided institutional support, their site was located in an area that was not highly accessible by bus and was not close to many subscriber households. Thus, the site at Crystal Stairs was not able to address the issue of lack of transportation to the Farmers’ Market.

Meanwhile, the neighborhood-based sites at Head Start preschools and schools were accessible to families but did not have the institutional support to coordinate the program. While staff members were often enthusiastic about the program, they had difficulty scheduling time to promote the program, sign up subscribers, collect payments, and coordinate assembly and distribution of the baskets. Even Crystal Stairs, with its large staff and resources, had difficulty integrating the program into its other services such as the Child Care Food Program. This finding points to the reality of social service providers being stretched beyond capacity.

c. Education

In response to requests from subscribers and Market Basket site coordinators, Occidental staff expanded the educational component of the Market Basket program. The Market Basket newsletter changed from a monthly newsletter to a bi-monthly newsletter, available in Spanish and English. The newsletter included nutrition information, recipes, articles on organic foods, sustainable agriculture, and family farmers' struggles, as well as basket ordering information. Booklets with healthy recipes, children's cookbooks, and nutrition education materials (provided by the Nutrition Network) were also made available at the sites.

Thus, while the program operated, it served as an important vehicle for promoting fruit and vegetable consumption by introducing subscribers to local farmers' markets and new fruits and vegetables and by providing nutrition education.

4. Future Directions

In 1999, the Center for Food and Justice decided to shift the program emphasis from serving individual families through child-care centers to seeking to serve institutions such as after-school programs through healthy snacks. While there were logistical and selection issues that could not be resolved within the original program design, the Market Basket Program did serve as a vehicle for nutrition education and education about family farming. In addition, the lessons from the Market Basket program, including the opportunities and barriers based on an innovative use of the direct marketing "farm-to-consumer" approach, helped influence the design of the "farm-to-school" model introduced in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District in the Fall of 1997.

While the Market Basket eventually ceased operating at community sites, the new partnerships formed with community groups provided opportunities for capacity building and the development of an agenda for community health and food access. The process of opening a site taught the Market Basket staff, as well as the community organizations, about the needs and resources of the community. Opening sites also generated a dialogue about food access, food security, nutrition, and health with these community groups. And it has created opportunities for the development of new strategies to increase fresh food access for communities that currently lack such access. Finally, the partnerships provided important insights into the potential for farm to institution strategies such as farm to school.

III. Farmers' Market Salad Bars and Nutrition Policy Advocacy in LAUSD

1. Introduction

Obesity is a growing epidemic that is influenced by environmental factors leading to sedentary lifestyles and increased consumption of fast food, high fat, high sugar, and or salty snacks, and other unhealthful foods.³ Risk factors for obesity are amplified for children and youth living in low-income communities where access to fresh fruits and vegetables at reasonable prices is limited and where fast food restaurants and snack-filled liquor stores abound.⁴

As obesity rates have increased in both children and adult populations over the past few decades, funding for education has become more limited. Between 1970 and 1995, State and local spending per pupil in California declined in real terms.⁵ During the same period, school districts became more constrained regarding budgetary allocations since a larger portion of their revenues had become tied to state constitutional requirements created through voter approved initiatives.⁶ In this budget context, many districts expected or even required that their food service departments be revenue neutral or even generate additional revenue for other district operating costs.

These school food programs had to compete in an environment filled with fast food, soft drink, and snack food advertising and availability. While the percentage of children who were overweight or obese was increasing, many school districts competed for student participation in meal programs by providing foods that mimicked the fast foods being marketed to children. In some cases, this resulted in contracts with fast food companies while, in others, it meant regularly featuring foods such as pizza, hamburgers, and french fries as part of the school lunch menu.

During the same period, farms have seen their small share of the retail food dollar decline, especially in the fresh fruit and vegetable sectors.⁷ Mergers, buyouts, and consolidations in the processing and retail sectors have further intensified these trends.⁸

While many food service programs have taken the fast food approach to maintain or increase participation, the Center for Food and Justice has been working with school districts and other non-profit organizations to advocate for an alternative path. This path is informed by the hypothesis that children will choose fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods if they

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention research published in the October 27, 1999, issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

⁴ Shaeffer, Amanda and Robert Gottlieb. *The Urban Grocery Gap*. UEPI: Los Angeles, California, 2002.

⁵ Rothstein, Richard. "When States Spend More" in *The American Prospect* (Volume 9, Issue 36).

⁶ Specifically, Propositions 13 and 98. See "California's School Finance System: A Guide". Ed-Data Partnership. www.data.k12.ca.us/Finance/SF_Prime2.asp

⁷ USDA Economic Research Service. *Agricultural Outlook Yearbook 1962-1991* (Table 7c). Washington, D.C., 1998.

⁸ Heffernan, William D., Mary Hendrickson, and Robert Gronski. "Consolidation in the Food and Agriculture System." Columbia, MI, 1999. Hendrickson, Mary, William Heffernan, Philip Howard, and Judith Heffernan. "Consolidation in Food Retailing and Dairy: Implications for Farmers and Consumers in a Global Food System." Columbia, MI, 2001.

are prepared and offered in an appealing way. In California, regional family farms can source school districts with freshly harvested fruits and vegetables throughout the year. By utilizing such locally grown produce and using it to offer students the opportunity to make healthy choices, school meal programs can be turned into nutrition education programs that instill lifelong healthful dietary habits.

2. Background

Between 1997 and 2002, new initiatives were developed by community groups, small farm advocacy organizations, researchers, and school districts to both increase the viability of small and medium-sized family farms and improve the quality of school meals. Conceived as a way to extend the concept of direct marketing, school districts and other institutions would purchase fresh produce and other farm products directly from local farms. Through such farm to school projects, students and staff could enjoy farm fresh food, pursue recycling and composting programs, and develop nutrition education and other tools.

Both children and local family farmers can benefit from participation in farm to school initiatives. Students get fresh, nutritious produce in their school lunches, while family farmers acquire new markets. Whether a farmer visits the school or a class goes on a farm tour, students learn about how the produce is grown and the role fruits and vegetables play in a healthful diet, thereby experiencing first-hand -- in the cafeteria, classroom, garden, or farm -- the value of fresh fruits and vegetables. In California, farm-to-school programs have also helped to foster the development of standards-based curricula that can link classrooms, instructional gardens, school cafeterias and local sustainable farms.

The Occidental College Center for Food and Justice has been a leader in the development of farm to school programs since piloting the first Farmers' Market Salad Bar (FMSB) in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District in 1997.

In the spring of 1997, the Center for Food and Justice approached the school district's Food Service Department, the principal of a local elementary school, and the District Superintendent to develop a pilot program for an alternative school lunch meal – the farmers' market fruit and salad bar. The stage had been set for such a program by a Sustainable Schools Policy, which the District had adopted after successful advocacy by the UEPI Director and other community members. CFJ then proposed a motion that the Board of Education adopted to allow CFJ to work with the district to pilot a Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program at McKinley Elementary School.

The Food Service Director, Rodney Taylor, was initially skeptical about whether students would select the farmers' market salad bar option, but was willing to cooperate in the implementation of the pilot for several reasons. First, the Center for Food and Justice offered to oversee the development of the program during the first year through funding from The California Endowment. Second, both the Superintendent and the principal of the elementary school, McKinley Elementary, where slightly fewer than half the students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals, were supportive of the effort. Third, participation in previously established conventional salad bars (where the produce was not purchased directly from farmers or through farmers' markets) had declined significantly and the Food Service Director had been

contemplating eliminating the option. Fourth, the City of Santa Monica, which operates the four farmers' markets in the City, offered to partner in the program, providing key logistical, storage, and related operational support. With all these elements in place, CFJ staff helped to get a resolution passed by the school board to authorize a one-year pilot program.

A pre-pilot was conducted in the summer of 1997 in the child-care program and a full farmers' market salad bar was offered beginning in the fall of 1997. The program became an immediate hit with the students, teachers, and parents and caught the attention of other parents, teachers, and administrators in the other schools in the District.

The success of the McKinley program had a transformative effect on key District officials and also caught the attention of other school districts, USDA officials, and a number of nutrition, community food security, and healthy food advocates across the country. The Santa Monica Food Service Director, Rodney Taylor, soon became an advocate for use of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar to improve the operating budget of the department by providing healthful meals. As the district had increasingly been led down the path of increased contracts with fast food companies, the Food Service Director saw the program as a positive alternative path and began expanding and institutionalizing the program.

Today, a farmer's market salad bar is located at every school within the Santa Monica district, including its middle schools and high schools. In recognition of this groundbreaking and innovative program, in December 2001 SMMUSD was awarded a Best School Menu in America Award. This award-winning menu utilizes locally grown produce and has increased participation to the degree that the Food and Nutrition Services department has been operating at a profit.⁹

In 2000, CFJ initiated the National Farm to School Program with several collaborators through a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The National Farm to School Program is managed through CFJ at Occidental College and is made up of representatives from Penn State, Rutgers, Cornell, the University of California at Davis, the Community Alliance for Family Farmers, the Community Food Security Coalition, The California Department of Education, and the Davis Joint Unified School District.

Through this program, a network of local groups across the country that are interested in developing farm to school programs has been established. As pilot projects develop, and their progress is evaluated, the lessons learned are shared throughout the network. Armed with this information and experience, the National Farm to School Program has provided technical assistance and training to emerging farm-to-school projects throughout the nation. Partners in this program are designing training sessions for school food service staff, standards-based nutrition and food education curriculum, and recipes that can help school food services incorporate fresh, locally grown foods into their menus. The National Farm to School Program has also conducted program evaluation and policy analysis to identify the opportunities and barriers for establishing farm to school programs. That research and policy analysis provided the basis for educating USDA, the Department of Defense, the California Department of Food and

⁹ Mascarenhas, Michelle and Robert Gottlieb. The Farmers' Market Salad Bar: Assessing the First Three Years of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Program. UEPI, October 2000.

Agriculture, school districts, state and Congressional elected officials and other policymakers on important administrative and legislative tools to further facilitate the farm to school/healthy foods approach.¹⁰

Also beginning in the 2000-2001 academic year, the California Department of Education began funding school districts to participate in “Linking the Garden/Local Agriculture with School Food Service and Classroom Nutrition Education” as part of “Improving Student Performance through Nutrition Education.” Building on the Superintendent of Public Instruction’s commitment to having gardens in every school, this program demonstrated the importance of developing integrated food and nutrition approaches that link to gardens and local farms.

This climate of widespread interest in and support for farm to school approaches contributed to community support for the Farmers’ Market Salad Bar and the approval of the pilot program in LAUSD.

3. Project Summary

In the beginning of CFJ’s project to work on food and nutrition issues in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in 1998, CFJ’s goals had been two-fold:

- 1) To get the school district to purchase direct from local farmers to help ensure the viability of those local farms and connect students to the source of their food and;
- 2) To introduce a “learning-by-doing” approach to good nutrition by providing meals based on tasty seasonal fruit and vegetable options prepared in ways that were appealing to the students.

The approach was to establish pilot farmers’ market salad bars in a few schools to demonstrate the viability of the model to the Food Services Director in the hopes that the administration would expand the program after seeing the success of the pilots.

These goals later expanded into seeking to involve parents, students, and teachers in the decisions affecting food served on their campuses, including vended and a la carte sales such as soda and snack foods. This in turn translated into policy goals, not only in terms of specific changes that these constituents voiced as necessary, but also changes to ensure the long-term involvement of these groups in setting policy.

a. UCLA Survey of Diet and Overweight/Obesity

In the spring of 1999, the UCLA School of Public Health conducted a study of diet and body mass index of children in low-income schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The researchers found that nearly half of the students at such schools were obese or overweight and the problem was particularly acute for African-American and Latino children.

Many of the schools that participated in the study asked the researchers what solutions they could offer to help reduce obesity and the diet related diseases their students were facing. UCLA partnered with the Center for Food and Justice to introduce the Farmers’ Market Salad Bar as

¹⁰ An example of a policy analysis document that described policy mechanisms that could foster farm to school programs is “Healthy Farms, Healthy Communities” by the Community Food Security Coalition.

one “intervention” to improve student nutrition. At first, the district deputy food service director was resistant because a small handful of salad bars had been unsuccessful in the district when implemented in the past. When UCLA and the SMMUSD hosted the director on a tour of the Farmers’ Market Salad Bar and she observed that a significant portion of students were selecting the salad bar over the hot meal and that they were well behaved when participating.

b. Pilot Farmers’ Market Salad Bar Program

In the fall of 1999, CFJ worked with LAUSD to launch the first Farmers’ Market Salad Bar pilot at Castelar Elementary School in Chinatown. In the spring, the second FMSB was launched at 59th Street Elementary School and the third, a salad bar sourced with produce purchased through conventional district channels, was opened at 42nd Street Elementary.

Center for Food and Justice staff organized student assemblies featuring skits developed by a fifth-grade class and farmers’ market produce tastings at parent-teacher events as well as at school during the lunch hour. CFJ staff also worked with cafeteria staff at the pilot schools and coordinated the ordering and pick up of the fruits and vegetables at the farmers’ market. Farm tours were organized to connect students at the pilot schools with the source of their salad bar food.

The salad bars proved to be successful with students and teachers. A UCLA School of Public Health study found that the students at the schools that participated in the pilot salad bar programs increased their overall daily intake of fruits and vegetables by 50%, an increase attributed directly to the salad bar program.¹¹

However, the district food services staff continued to voice concerns about the difficulty of purchasing produce direct from several small farmers. Though the district staff never released a complete memo or report on their assessment of the barriers to purchasing direct from farmers, some of the problems expressed during meetings and phone conversations included inconsistency of quality and availability, price, school site staff who had been trained to utilize fruit packed for shipping rather than tree-ripened fruit, special order delivery problems, and a desire to maintain streamlined purchasing for all schools through its central purchasing system. (Unlike most other school districts, LAUSD employs its own food broker rather than going through a contractor to do the purchasing).

In 2002, CFJ has begun to work in collaboration with other organizations to identify new models of connecting small and sustainable farms to schools in ways that are mutually beneficial. Through a grant led by Occidental College and funded by the Kellogg Foundation, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers will be exploring models of farmer distribution networks in three California regions. And organizations in the National Farm to School Program have established a dialogue with the Department of Defense to bring their fresh food program to California. This program is likely to begin in 2002-2003 and since LAUSD hosts a USDA warehouse, participation would be logistically convenient.

¹¹ Slusser, Wendy, M.D., and Charlotte Neuman, M.D. Report on Findings presented to the Society for Nutrition Education, July 2001.

c. Expansion of District Salad Bar Program

In 2001, the pilot Farmers' Market Salad Bars evolved into the district's salad bar program that operated in coordination with the LAUSD Nutrition Network program run through the Monlux Science Center. While the District expanded the salad bar program, it did not continue the farmers' market purchasing component.

By the end of 2001, the District had established salad bars in 25 schools. While this was a step forward, CFJ recognized that putting salad bars into 25 schools amounted to improving food at about four percent of schools. The Center for Food and Justice then shifted its strategy. We began to work with parents, students, and teachers to identify their concerns about food in the schools in order to advocate for policy that would lead to long-term systemic change.

d. Healthy School Food Coalition and Policy Advocacy

In 2000 and 2001, CFJ staff met with several LAUSD Board of Education members or their staff to facilitate their understanding of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar and to obtain their support for the expansion of a healthy school food program. CFJ and UEPI staff also co-authored three LA Times op-ed pieces about the connections between food access and healthy students.

In March of 2001, school board member Valerie Fields introduced a motion to investigate the food served in LAUSD schools and to develop a Healthy Food Policy. This motion was later revised to incorporate community participation into the process.

In April of 2001, CFJ organized a meeting of concerned parents, teachers, food service staff, students, and staff of allied organizations to discuss the possible formation of a group to advocate for a strong food and nutrition policy in LAUSD. The group began brainstorming for a preliminary wish list of what they would want out of a policy on school food and how they would want the process to work. They discussed how to ensure that parents, teachers, students, cafeteria workers, and other community members had a voice in the school district process called for by the board resolution. The group decided to form the Healthy School Food Committee (later renamed the Healthy School Food Coalition) to advocate for a strong district policy on food and nutrition. The group drafted an alternate resolution to request that community members be involved in the process of identifying issues and policy solutions. The group then circulated a petition at their schools and gathered over 500 signatures in support of this revised resolution.

HSFC members then met with Valerie Fields to present her with the recommended language changes and to discuss the process they encouraged her to adopt. At a hearing on the board's proposed motion a few weeks later, teachers, parents, and students from the HSFC and CFJ staff spoke in favor of a resolution the group had drafted to expand community participation in the process. The board passed a motion asking the superintendent to draft a process that would involve community members.

The revised motion also called for the district to recommend policies that would improve the health value of the food served. The Center for Food and Justice saw the adoption of this motion as an important opportunity to have the concerns of parents, teachers, and students addressed and to promote solutions such as salad bars for all schools.

Though the process itself has been delayed by more than six months, parents, advocates, and a few students have participated in the process to identify policy needs. This group, called the Child Nutrition Advisory Committee (CNAC) met approximately once every 4-6 weeks to discuss and formulate recommendations regarding school food and nutrition issues. Two outside consultants were also hired to assess the quality, location and times of foods sold to on a sample of LAUSD school campuses. The CNAC recommendations will be included with the consultants' report to the School Board in August of 2002.

Parents, teachers, and staff who might be interested in joining the Healthy School Food Coalition were identified through presentations at schools and other non-profit community groups, health fairs and District Nutrition Network events and through word of mouth.

At Healthy School Food Coalition meetings, members of the group discussed the issues they viewed as important at their schools. From the issues identified, the group developed a set of policy recommendations. Understanding that the district was not going to overhaul its entire food program at once, the group also set priorities and strategized on how to influence changes in phases.

From these meetings and from speaking with community members across the district, it became clear that to ensure parent and student participation in decision-making processes around food policy, parents and students need information to feel confident speaking on the issues. Since policy is often seen as something distant from every day concerns, it was also important to work with the group to illustrate how district policy could have an impact at each individual school. In 2002, the CFJ staff coordinator developed a series of workshops for the parents, teachers, and students involved in the Healthy School Food Coalition to increase understanding of nutrition guidelines as well as increase member confidence in their ability to advocate on their own behalf. Speakers presented on topics such as current school nutrition standards, SB19 and SB 1520, and advocacy techniques.

From January to May of 2002, the Healthy School Food Coalition organized around Senate Bill 1520 (Soda Tax Bill). When SB 1520 went before the California Assembly members, HSFC members wrote letters of support, phoned their representatives, and lobbied with other hunger and food advocates in Sacramento.

In the summer of 2002, the HSFC began working on an LAUSD Board of Education resolution to ban unhealthy beverages. In June of 2002, several HSFC members met with school board member Genethia Hayes regarding a proposed resolution to eliminate vended sodas from school campuses in LAUSD. This interaction led to multiple meetings with other school board members and to collaborative work between Healthy School Food Coalition members and board member Marlene Cantor (co-sponsor of the resolution) to strengthen the language of the resolution. Members of the HSFC have met with five of the seven School Board members and/or Chief's of Staff to urge their support of the motion, which is currently slated to come before the board for a vote in late August. CFJ and HSFC are organizing around this motion to develop a coalition of food related organizations which include LAUSD's LEAF grant recipient schools, the California Food Policy Advocates, and the California Center for Public Health Advocacy.

Also in 2002, the HSFC began to organize against the incorporation of foods from 3 major fast food companies into the National School Lunch Program in LAUSD. Through LAUSD's "Triple Header Program," students in 40+ pilot schools can purchase Domino's, Pizza Hut, or LA Pizza Loco pizza as part of the National School Lunch Program. The organizing around LAUSD's "Triple Header Program" has included research into the pilot program, educational outreach to student groups and parent associations, and HSFC members leading a petition drive.

4. Strategies and Lessons Learned

As the Center for Food and Justice expanded its strategy from pilot program to include grassroots organizing and policy advocacy, the key lessons learned in working on school food issues in the LAUSD have been:

- The need to identify and mobilize a parents, teachers, and students to speak out about issues that they have identified in their school communities. In mobilizing such a base, strategies need to take into account geographic dispersal and language differences to ensure that constituents from different communities are united rather than divided.
- The need district-wide policy on food and nutrition to ensure participation, equity, and long-term change. Need to ensure structures for community participation in the development and execution of those policies.
- The need to establish coalitions and partnerships both inside and outside the school district.

a. Need for Community Involvement and Leadership Development

One important lesson learned after the first year was that a base of support from the school community was needed to ensure the continuity, expansion, and institutionalization of progressive changes. In Santa Monica, the school principal, several staff members, and parents at the school site we planned to pilot the Farmers' Market Salad Bar program all voiced their support for the program. The superintendent and school board also agreed to the pilot and the food service director, while initially skeptical, was not opposed to the pilot program.

In LAUSD, CFJ staff began trying to get FMSBs into the district using an "insider" approach. We worked with a group of public health researchers from UCLA through schools they had identified as a) having principals who were conscious of the need to improve nutrition and wanted to host an innovative program at their school and b) having a kitchen and cafeteria set up conducive to a FMSB.¹² The Deputy Food Service Director at LAUSD was skeptical but agreed to tour the FMSB program at Muir-SMASH Elementary School in the Santa Monica district. This tour led to her agreement to allow CFJ to pilot the Farmers' Market Salad Bars in two schools while also working with the district to pilot a non-farmers' market salad bar in a third school. CFJ did not have a requirement of parent, teacher, or student support for the program. This later arose as a major impediment to the sustainability of the program.

¹² CFJ looked for kitchens with enough space to wash, prepare, and store fresh fruits and vegetables. The school also needed to have a cafeteria with a large enough space to house a salad bar with enough space for students to walk by on both sides under the supervision of adult monitors. Many schools in the district do not have one or both of these features since many kitchens and cafeterias have been replaced by classrooms due to increased enrollment and class size reduction.

After a year of piloting the program in three schools, the district decided to stop purchasing produce through the farmers' market channels. The district did utilize the outreach strategies that we had developed and applied them to the creation of a salad bar model using produce procured through traditional wholesale channels. Though these salad bars did not directly benefit local family farms or connect students directly with their food source, nevertheless, the salad bars did provide an important source of fruits and vegetables that students were likely to eat.

Meanwhile, CFJ staff began receiving calls from parents and teachers from schools around the district asking for help in getting salad bars (often, specifically farmers' market salad bars) at their schools. CFJ staff began to go out and meet with these parent and staff groups to give them information about the school district process, make presentations, and work with them to get salad bars at their schools.

By the fall of 2001, LAUSD had instituted the salad bar program in approximately 30 elementary schools. These salad bars—which allow a child to create a meal that is based on fruits and vegetables—whether farm-direct or not, were a positive step towards healthy alternatives in the lunchroom.

While groups from some schools were asking the district to provide a Farmers' Market Salad Bar at their school, the district administrators would not agree to this request. One group of parents from a middle-income school met with district representatives who told them that they could have a salad bar but it would not be stocked with farmers' market produce. The parents agreed to have the salad bar, but requested a follow up meeting in 3-6 months to evaluate the possibility of getting farm-direct produce, as this was an important factor to them. The district administrators would not commit to taking any steps to assist in making this a real possibility and after the initial two pilot schools during the first year, no other school was able to get farmers' market produce into their salad bar.

Meanwhile, we realized that we had not been able to sustain the two pilot Farmers' Market Salad Bars in part because we had not built a base of support at the community level in those schools. In fact, many parents did not know there was a salad bar at their children's school and did not know that it was stocked with farm-direct fruits and vegetables.

Thus, while our goals were much broader than simply improving the food (i.e., we wanted to develop institutional support of local family farms and show youth where their food came from), many people in the low-income communities we were working on had not been exposed to information about the need to support local farms. We recognized that parents, teachers, and students had varying levels of information about nutrition, family farms, farmers' markets, and sustainable agriculture. And we saw that parents, teachers, students, and cafeteria workers had other issues with the school feeding programs that they wanted to see addressed. These issues could provide a first step in building a base of people who would act to improve school food quality and address equity issues. We could then work with people to broaden their analysis to include food justice issues such as access, support of local farms, environmental and workplace issues related to food and agriculture, and teaching students how to grow their own food.

In 2002, the Healthy School Food Coalition has been developing campaigns that will provide immediate results as well as discrete tasks for members to take on to develop their leadership skills. Examples include phone trees where members call other parents, teachers, and students to explain what is going on and how they can get involved. Writing letters, participating in visits to school board members, participating in the district's advisory committee, and testifying at board meetings provide other opportunities for participants to experience their own potential to influence change.

b. Challenge of Geographic Dispersal

One challenge that arose throughout the project was balancing a desire to work with all parents, teachers, and students concerned about the LAUSD food program with limited time and staff resources to drive all around the region and help these geographically dispersed constituents stay connected. The pilot programs provided distinct school communities to work in but the work of the Healthy School Food Coalition on district policy was less geographically tied.

As of the summer of 2002, the group is currently grappling with the issue of whether to choose other pilot school sites to establish policy and program and whether to work to maintain the citywide structure of the HSFC.

c. Challenge of Language Differences

The issue of Spanish translation is an important one for any group working in low-income communities in Los Angeles. The Center for Food and Justice worked to provide translation at Healthy School Food Coalition meetings whenever the staff knew that monolingual Spanish-speaking people would be participating. Simultaneous translation equipment was borrowed from City Council members and other community organizations whenever it was available.

However, translated meetings tend to run at a different pace than meetings conducted solely in one language but many English-speaking participants are not used to changing their speaking pace or otherwise modifying their behavior for a dual-language audience. This is slowly changing over time as the Coalition continues to meet on a more regular basis and are learning how to interact and solidify relationships with one another.

Another challenge is that our monolingual, Spanish-speaking members are often intimidated to speak or participate in front of their English-speaking counterparts. To address this the CFJ staff coordinator is organizing more one-on-one visits with the Spanish-speaking members before each meeting to familiarize them with the topics that will be discussed so that they feel more prepared to participate. The CFJ staff coordinator is also developing workshops for and facilitated by monolingual Spanish-speaking members. These organizing activities are not meant to be exclusive or divisive but will instead give Spanish-speaking members the space to ask questions, to voice their opinions, and to grow more confident in their abilities to participate in the Coalition.

d. Need for District-wide Policy

In 2000, the LAUSD was awarded a large matching grant to develop a Nutrition Network program to provide nutrition education in low-income schools. The Nutrition Network program was housed in what had been the district's school garden program and a similar approach to implementation was used. This voluntary team approach was meant to encourage schools to participate but there were no official policies requiring schools to provide the same opportunities to all students across the district.

In working with parents and teachers at schools that were participating in the LAUSD Nutrition Network program as well as those that weren't, CFJ staff identified some problems with this lack of policy. At some schools, teachers encountered barriers (such as a principal who was unwilling to let the school form a nutrition team, have a salad bar, or start a garden) that they could not overcome because they did not have the institutional support of the district. A school board policy in support of gardens, nutrition education, and salad bars would help ensure that this barrier does not create an inequity.

Another issue that came up was when the teachers at a school were not willing to take on the additional responsibility of putting together a Nutrition Network team. As teachers in the district are under extreme pressure to implement standardized curriculum and to improve standardized test scores, many teachers do not feel willing or able to take on such an endeavor. Yet the students at their school should still be able to access a salad bar, school garden or other nutrition programs.

Thus, while the activities being implemented at the schools selected to participate in the Nutrition Network program may have been improving access to nutrition education and nutritious choices, a policy was needed to ensure the district's commitment to ensuring these improvements for every student.

While the Center for Food and Justice and the Healthy School Food Coalition support the LAUSD Nutrition Network program, district program staff have expressed feeling threatened by parents, teachers, and students organizing for district-wide policy change.

e. Third Party Role

Throughout CFJ's work with school districts, we have contemplated the role of an outside advocacy organization in pushing for changes in school food services. CFJ has played different roles with different districts. In the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, Center staff initially encountered some mistrust, but were allowed to pilot the Farmers' Market Salad Bar program and have full access to school staff and community members. Because Bob Gottlieb, UEPI's Director, was also a former parent at the school chosen for the pilot, CFJ staff could identify leaders in the school and work more effectively to gain community support for the program.

In the LAUSD, however, the district food service administration was more skeptical and staff did not have any relationships with the school community. Therefore, initial outreach and efforts to build community support for the program were not as effective as they had been in Santa Monica.

Though CFJ did not have extensive relationships in LAUSD, over time, the staff developed a reputation amongst parents and teachers in the district for assisting school community members in bringing about positive change. CFJ staff promoted the LAUSD Nutrition Network program and encouraged schools to develop Nutrition Teams and participate in the mini grant program. In some cases, staff worked with the school teams to develop their proposals. Staff also helped parents and teachers understand how the salad bar program worked and identify district officials to contact to request such a program in their schools.

After developing contacts throughout the district, CFJ helped to organize the Healthy School Food Coalition to enable parents, teachers, and students to identify their common concerns and advocate on their own behalf for changes that would address their needs. Thus, CFJ moved from playing a role of program facilitator to playing the role of community organizer. In this role, CFJ organized forums where community members could come together to voice their concerns, identify ways to work together to let the district know what their concerns were, learn more about the issues, become better advocates, and develop their own leadership.

Thus, CFJ moved from working as an insider setting up pilot programs in the district to working with community members to advocate for changes from the bottom up. Both roles were important but could not be played simultaneously. Though in the long term, community participation will help the district become more responsive to community concerns and thus, will foster a base of people who want to ensure the success of the district's food service program, in the short term, the district often saw such community participation as threatening.

CFJ learned that it is critical for any group working for change in a school feeding program to identify the best approach for it to use to make that change. It is also critical for organizations to note that there are other organizations, such as the California Food Policy Advocates, who can play the insider or advocate role even as other organizations are helping to push for policy change from other directions.

5. Outcomes

The outcomes of CFJ's work with the LAUSD and the school communities have so far included:

- As of June 2002, salad bars now operate in 47 schools in the LAUSD
- The school board required parent and community representation in the development of food policy through the creation of the Child Nutrition Advisory Committee. Now parents and teachers from the Healthy School Food Coalition and staff members of the Center for Food and Justice and the California Food Policy Advocates serve on the committee.
- The superintendent's process lays out a timeline and reporting structure that the group can hold the district accountable to.
- The Healthy School Food Coalition now has 35 active members (parents, teachers, students, and other community members) from eleven schools who are identifying their top concerns and formulating strategy for how to work with the district to see those concerns addressed.
- High school students, parents, and teachers recruited by CFJ have testified at school board meetings on behalf of a strong nutrition policy.

- The Healthy School Food Coalition members are currently conducting meetings with individual school board members and staff in support of banning unhealthy beverage sales in LAUSD.
- In 2002, members of the Healthy School Food Coalition organized and lobbied for SB 1520 (Soda Tax Bill) and have begun to organize against the incorporation of foods from 3 major fast food companies into the National School Lunch Program in LAUSD (“Triple Header Program”).
- Through participation in the Child Nutrition Advisory Committee, CFJ staff and Healthy School Food Coalition members have contributed substantially to the formulation of recommendations to be made to the school board regarding improvements in LAUSD school food policy.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the Center for Food and Justice’s work on food issues in the Los Angeles Unified School District has been multi-faceted. This work has included collaborating with public health researchers, working with school district staff to pilot farmers’ market salad bar programs, coordinating the purchase and delivery of farm-direct produce, identifying leaders from school communities, and creating a forum for these community members to organize in support of strong food and nutrition policies. Within a climate of other factors such as SB19 and California Nutrition Network funding of the district, CFJ’s work also influenced change in the district through its pilot program, policy advocacy, and constituent organizing strategies.

Future steps CFJ is taking to improve access to nutritious food in the LAUSD include:

- Identifying student leaders and helping to foster self-confidence so that those students can more fully participate in the district’s process to set policy.
- Working with the National Farm to School Program to facilitate farm to school purchasing through the Department of Defense fresh produce program.
- Strengthening activities to provide education and skills building for Healthy School Food Committee members, with additional activities targeting monolingual Spanish speaking members and youth.
- Continuing to bring in speakers and provide educational workshops.
- Working with the Healthy School Food Coalition to respond to the LAUSD’s draft policy document to be released in August.

The Center for Food and Justice has identified several recommendations for organizations working to improve nutrition in large school districts.

- Identify your strategy and your organizational identity (are you a think tank, advocacy group, community organizer, or some combination, etc).
- Work to link education and program strategies to policy, organizing, and advocacy strategies.
- Recognize that your strategy might change and be ready to shift gears and change strategy if needed
- Especially when working with a large district, coordinate efforts with organizations working with District staff in an “insider” approach as well as with other groups mobilizing community members in an “outsider” approach.

- Build grassroots participation by asking community members to define the most important issues and ensuring that the district has a process for hearing the voices of concerned parents, students, and teachers.
- If you choose to take a community organizing approach, make sure to organize educational forums as well as having fun activities and tasks for people to take on to build their leadership.

While there have been numerous challenges in the four years that the Center for Food and Justice has been working with the Los Angeles Unified School District, the complex of strategies has led to important progress in increasing access to healthy food and increasing community participation in setting food policy in the district.

IV. Healthy Snack Program Feasibility Study

1. Introduction

From 1999 to 2001, the Center for Food and Justice (formerly the Community Food Security Project) at Occidental College conducted an assessment of the barriers and opportunities for utilizing fresh fruits and vegetables from local farms in snacks at after school program sites in Los Angeles. This chapter examines case studies of these healthy snack pilot programs implemented at nine sites.

The nine pilot sites selected provide insight into the issues faced by a diverse array of after school programs operating in Los Angeles. In examining the opportunities for nutrition education, gardening, hands-on cooking and snack preparation, and enrichment tours and activities, we have identified elements of successful programs as well as the barriers and challenges that must be overcome to gain widespread adoption.

Since their inception, after school programs have been identified as an important strategy for promoting youth health, safety, and education, as well as development of a sense of identity and positive role modeling. After school programs provide a range of activities, including sports, art, tutoring, music, cultural activities. These programs also have the opportunity to reinforce healthy eating practices by providing healthy snack choices and nutrition education.

2. Background

a. After School Programs

After-school programs first took hold in the U.S. in the late 1800's when the Industrial Revolution began changing the demographics of the American workforce. As economic activity shifted from family farms to manufacturing, women began entering the paid labor force creating a demand for out-of-home childcare for low- and middle-income families. During the Depression, after-school and other child-care programs were initiated to serve low-income working families. As more women were encouraged to enter the workforce during World War II, federal funds were allocated under the Lanham Act to keep these programs open.

Today, approximately 78% of mothers with children between the ages of 6 and 13 are employed.¹³ The economic need for both parents to work and the high numbers of single-parent families has contributed to the increased demand for after-school care.

Welfare reform policies adopted in the 1990's required many single parents who had been receiving public assistance to enter the paid labor force and placed time limits on welfare. These requirements have in turn increased the need for after-school programs in low-income communities.

¹³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Labor Force Statistics, "Employment status of the civilian non-institutional population by sex, age, presence and age of youngest child, marital status, race, and Hispanic origin", March 1998, Table 3, unpublished data

In California, roughly 25% of 6-9 year-olds and 10% of 10 – 12 year-olds participate in before- or after-school care.¹⁴ Over the last 10 years, the number of licensed child care programs in the US has increased 30%.¹⁵ New funding streams for after-school programs have been growing rapidly. Funding through the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which provides three-year grants to schools, has increased from \$1 million in 1997 to more than \$800 million in 2001.¹⁶ Despite an increase in funding for these programs over the last two decades, two-thirds of voters feel there are not enough after school programs and six out of ten expressed difficulties in finding programs in their communities.¹⁷

b. After School Snacks and Funding Available

Students who attend after school programs into the late afternoon or early evening depend on those programs for food to sustain them. While some programs are able to access federal funding to provide snacks, others rely on sporadically purchased or donated goods.

Funding for after school snacks can be obtained through two separate USDA programs. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) funds school districts to serve snacks to children involved in educational or enrichment activities after school. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) offers reimbursement to non-profit care programs. Full reimbursement (\$0.57 per child per day) is provided to sites whose closest school has been certified as having 50% or more of the students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. When the pilots were conducted between March 2000 and March 2001, reimbursement was \$0.54 and then \$0.55 per child per day.

While most school districts utilize federal reimbursements for snacks, many non-profits that are eligible to receive federal reimbursements for snacks often do not utilize the funding. Between 1999 and 2001 when the Center for Food and Justice was working with after school programs, we found several after school programs that may have been eligible to receive snack funding that did not apply. Reasons included lack of knowledge about the funding available, cumbersome application process, inability to process required paperwork on a regular basis, or lack of staffing to acquire snack ingredients regularly.

For these reasons and others, many after-school programs have no food budget and rely on infrequent food donations for student snacks. While some programs are able to offer healthy, fulfilling, and appealing snacks, other programs offer food that is not appealing or fulfilling enough for students. Vending machines are increasingly available in schools and community centers, and snack foods such as chips, candy, cookies, and soda account for a significant proportion of children's caloric intake contributing to the alarming rates of obesity and food related illness. One community center after-school program in Los Angeles voiced interest in

¹⁴ State Child Care Profile for Children with Employed Mothers: California. Kathleen Snyder, Gina Adams, February 2001.

¹⁵Including DC, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The Children's Foundation, Compiled by Kay Hollestelle, February 2001.

¹⁶ Beyond Class Time: The Promise of After-School Programs, by Beth M. Miller Educational Leadership Volume 58 Number 7. April 2001

¹⁷ After School Alliance Report of Findings from June 2000 Poll of Registered Voters.

finding healthier options to substitute in their vending machines, although they were concerned about sales volume of vending machines going down and reducing revenue.

Today's children obtain almost a quarter of their calories from snacks.¹⁸ This trend contributes to the growing trend of overweight kids. Forty-seven percent of California's nine to eleven year olds report preparing their own snacks.¹⁹ The American Cancer Society found that consumption of fruit and vegetable snacks is remarkably low, accounting for an average of less than one half serving per child per day. Despite this low figure, 90% of kids in the study reported that they wanted fruit for an afternoon snack. The study also indicated an improvement in fruit and vegetable intake as a result of participation in school meal programs and nutrition education lessons. After school snacks therefore provide great potential to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and teach healthy eating habits to youth.

c. Farm to School Approach

The Farm to School model, developed and promoted by the National Farm to School Program based at Occidental College, seeks to improve farm income and child nutrition by encouraging school districts to purchase directly from local family farms. By experiencing fresh, tasty fruits and vegetables, accompanied by lessons and activities, children can connect with the source of their food and to the farms and farmers in their region. These partnerships also assist local farmers in developing an additional source of income, thus helping to preserve family farming in America.

In 1997-1999, the Center for Food and Justice worked with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District to demonstrate the feasibility of institutional purchasing direct from family farmers to improve child nutrition. The Farmers' Market Salad Bar program indicated the potential for increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables through federally funded meal programs. CFJ hoped to apply some of the lessons from the farm to school program and from the Market Basket Program to after school snack programs.

3. After-School Programs in Los Angeles

In Los Angeles County, after-school programs are either run by school districts, city agencies, or by non-profit sponsors. Non-profit sponsors include youth organizations, community groups, churches, and traditional child-care providers. Additionally, there is a growth in programs operated in partnerships between school district, city or county agencies, community groups and the private sector. State, city, and county departments of education, health and social services, youth development, juvenile justice, and parks and recreation are involved in administering funding or overseeing program implementation.

Types of After-School Programs

¹⁸ Snacks make up 24% of calories consumed by 6-11 year olds and 25% for 12-18 year olds, up from 18% and 21% in 1977. "Children are Eating More, Snacking More..." Philadelphia Inquirer, Monday, June 11, 2001

¹⁹ Special Report to the American Cancer Society. 1999 California Children's Eating and Exercise Practices Survey: Fruits and Vegetables, A Long Way to Go.

Site	Sponsor
School Campus	Los Angeles Unified School District
School Campus	Non-Profit Agency or Public-Private Partnership between School District, other Government and Non-Profit Agencies
Parks & Recreation Site	City of Los Angeles Parks & Recreation Department and County of Los Angeles, Recreation and Parks Department
Community Centers or other off-campus sites	Non-Profit Agencies, Churches and Community Groups

In the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), 511,784 students are enrolled in 500 elementary and middle schools. Approximately 125 schools have a structured after-school program.²⁰ There is no official census on how many churches, youth centers, or other organizations run after-school programs or on how many children participate.

The following sections describe four types of after school programs: a) programs run by LAUSD on school campuses; b) those operated on campuses but run by other organizations in partnership with LAUSD; c) programs run by the City of Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department; and d) those operated at non-school sites by non-profit agencies. At the end of each section is a description of the snack opportunities for these types of programs.

a. After School Programs Operated by LAUSD on School Campuses

In October of 2000, LAUSD created the Beyond the Bell Branch to develop a plan to provide quality after school programs at all LAUSD elementary and middle school campuses over the next five years. The Beyond the Bell Branch administers the Youth Services and YS-Cares Programs and participates in oversight of LA's Best and L.A. Bridges, two programs that operate on LAUSD campuses but are not operated by LAUSD.

b. Youth Services

Youth Services, run through the LAUSD Beyond the Bell Branch, provides playground supervision on campuses after school. The school district Food Services Branch had been providing snacks to students participating in the program up until Fall 2001 when Food Services discontinued the snack provision to the playground programs, while continuing to provide snacks for LA's Best and other Beyond the Bell programs. Youth Services staff were told that the snacks were discontinued because the district feared that the state would not provide reimbursement for those snacks.²¹ In addition to funding constraints, the district was concerned that the program may not be meeting the level of enrichment activity required by the California Department of Education and USDA for reimbursement. California Food Policy Advocates verified that under the federal and state guidelines, the playground supervision program was eligible for snack reimbursement. The district Food Services Branch has since agreed to resume snack provision in the fall of 2002.

²⁰ Figure from Beyond the Bell Branch.

²¹ Letter from Lauren Metzger, California Food Policy Advocates to Carol Noelting, LAUSD Food Services Branch.

c. YS-Cares After-School Enrichment Program

Administered by Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), YS-Cares operates at over 120 elementary schools. The program targets the children of CalWORKs families, but is available to others if there is room. Requests made by the community organization that pushed for the creation of the program led to the provision of a “meal supplement” in the early afternoon. Similar programs targeted to CalWORKs families are available through other districts through the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) in partnership with LA County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS).

d. Other Programs On LAUSD School Campuses²²

While some after school programs operating on school campuses are run by the school district, many others are run by non-profits or through joint public/private partnerships. For example, several non-profits such as the YMCA, Hathaway Family and Community Services, and others have permission to organize after school enrichment programs on LAUSD campuses. One public/private partnership, LA’s Best, serves over 13,500 elementary school children at 78 school sites. This partnership includes the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Unified School District, private sector organizations, and over 100 community-based organizations.

Any after-school program operating on a Title I LAUSD (where 50% or more of the children are eligible for free and reduced price lunches) campus can apply to receive snacks through the district food services. While advocates estimate that the majority of these after-school programs apply for and receive snacks through the school district, still others do not, sometimes because of a lack of knowledge or support from district staff, and other times because they do not think the snacks are nutritious, appealing, or substantial enough.

e. Los Angeles Unified School District After-School Snack Programs

The snacks provided through the LAUSD must meet the federal requirement of providing items from at least two food groups. Menus usually consist of two (or sometimes three) items such as cookies and juice, fruit and milk, or muffin and juice. Cheese sticks are common as well. Most of the cookies and muffins the district purchases have been formulated to count as the equivalent of a bread serving under USDA guidelines. The following is an example of a snack menu for a one-week period in 2001.

Sample Snack Menu²³:

Monday: Animal Crackers 1 pkg., Fresh Fruit (no apple), apple juice 4oz.

Tuesday: Low Fat Blueberry Muffin, Milk 1/2 pint

Wednesday: Story Book Cookies 1 pkg., Raisin & Peanuts 1pkg., Orange Juice 4oz.

Thursday: *Pan Dulce* 1, Milk 1/2 pint

Friday: Peanut Butter & Jelly Wafer, Milk 1/2 pint

²² See Attachment 1: Partial Listing of After School Programs Operating on LAUSD Campuses.

²³ From the LAUSD Business Services Division website: http://cafe-la.lausd.k12.ca.us/Fs_afterschool.htm

Reports from after-school programs receiving snacks through LAUSD Food Services indicate that on average, fresh fruit is offered once a week. Based on district menus available and after school program staff reports, there is no indication that any fresh vegetables are being served in the district snacks.

f. City of Los Angeles Programs

The City of Los Angeles administers after-school programs through its Parks and Recreation Department. It also sponsors LA's BEST, the joint public-private partnership described above, and the City's Community Development Department funds several community-based organizations to run after school programs.

In September of 2001, the City Council passed a resolution to apply SB-19 standards to all foods served to children in City-run or sponsored programs. California Senate Bill 19, passed in 2001 will require that all foods and beverages served in elementary schools meet stronger nutrition standards than those currently in place under federal guidelines. The LA Commission for Children, Youth, and their Families along with the Parks and Recreation Department assembled a task force that included representatives of California Food Policy Advocates. The task force has assembled a report on foods currently being served in City-run or sponsored programs as well as child nutrition policy recommendations to present to the City Council in the summer of 2002.²⁴

The recommendations focus on improving foods served in snacks, increasing nutrition education for youth as well as staff development, increasing healthy options available in vending machines, and designing a pilot program to test the fiscal impact of the policy recommendations.

The Parks and Recreation Department has already conducted a training for eighteen sites to instruct staff on conducting a twelve-week nutrition education component based on 5-a-Day.

Though it is eligible, the City does not currently receive federal reimbursements for snacks served in the programs it administers through Parks and Recreation. The City has contracts with soda companies and other vendors that provide \$1.3 million in annual revenue to contribute to programs. Receiving federal reimbursements for thousands of children participating in after-school programs each day could create a revenue stream for healthy snacks that could partially offset the financial loss from reducing sales of sodas and other unhealthful foods.

g. Off Campus, Community Based Programs

There are many after school programs run by non-profits at various locations other than school sites around Los Angeles County. Because there is very little infrastructure for coordination amongst these after school programs, and they mostly obtain snack funding or snacks independent of one another.

²⁴ Information for this section obtained from Eddie Farias from the LA Commission for Children, Youth, and their Families. Phone conversation May 31, 2002.

h. Snacks at Non-Profit After School Programs

Snacks at off-campus after-school program sites vary widely from full dinners to occasional donated cookies or sweetbreads. Few programs receive the snack funding they are eligible for through the Child Care Food Program (CCFP). Most often, the programs do not know about the availability of federal reimbursement for snacks. Some programs find the application process and/or paperwork requirements too burdensome and complex. For example, the All People's Christian Center experienced delays of many months after requesting application materials from the California Department of Education, the agency that administers the program. El Santo Nino found the paperwork requirements too daunting for the busy staff and has deferred applying. A Place Called Home was concerned that they would need to modify procedures to meet roster attendance requirements and so they too put off applying.

4. Center for Food and Justice Healthy After-School Snack Pilot Program

The Center for Food and Justice initiated the Healthy After-School Snack Program to assess the opportunities to improve the health of children and expand educational opportunities. We conducted nine Healthy Snack Pilots from March 2000 to March 2001. The pilots strived to demonstrate whether after-school programs could integrate healthy snacks, nutrition education and gardening activities. Conducting the pilots also helped us identify the barriers to widespread adoption of successful healthy snack programs.

The after-school programs selected to participate in the pilot snack program represent a range of different characteristics, in terms of site, type, community served, access to funding, size of site, and number of after-school sites run by the group. All the after-school programs chosen serve predominantly low-income populations. In addition to looking for a diversity of sites, sites were chosen based on expressed interest in improving children's nutrition through after-school snacks.

The objectives of the pilots were:

- To identify healthy, culturally appropriate items that would appeal to children and youth;
- To identify the feasibility of providing these items while staying within the USDA reimbursement rate (not including labor costs);
- To identify other concerns regarding food and nutrition in after school settings;
- To identify food and nutrition education activities that could be conducted on-site or through field trips;
- To identify whether healthy snack programs could be institutionalized given different organizational and site conditions; and
- To identify policy recommendations for making healthy snack programs feasible and sustainable or addressing other concerns of after school stakeholders (students, staff, parents, and food service officials).

Beginning in March of 2000, the Center for Food and Justice conducted nine pilot healthy snack programs. Pilots were conducted during March 2000 at four sites. Five additional sites

participated in the pilot from October 2000 to March 2001.²⁵ Fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables, generally from certified farmers' markets, were served as part of the snacks. Many students had the opportunity to try foods they had not tried before and to try some of the freshest fruits and vegetables available. Some sites had staff and/or volunteers prepare the snacks. At a few of the sites, the children also participated in preparing the snacks.

For the pilots, the Center for Food and Justice provided the following:

- Worked with each site to select the items to be served;
- Purchased, picked up, and delivered food to each site by Monday of the pilot week;
- Identified and helped resolve issues of storage and preparation;
- Identified nutrition education activities that could be used during the pilot week (including 5-a-Day Power Play) and in the second round, provided a Resource Guide;
- Supplied information on how to apply for federal reimbursements for snacks and funding for gardening and nutrition education activities;
- Held meetings to bring staff from different sites together to provide information and to identify common issues; and
- In some cases, provided gardening tools and supplies and organized family field trips to farms and farmers' markets.

During the second round of pilots, the Center for Food and Justice developed a toolkit to enable the pilot after school sites to easily incorporate nutrition education, physical activity, and gardening with their programs. In 2000-2001, these toolkits were distributed to six after-school programs, some of which have multiple sites. The toolkit contains nutrition education and gardening activities and contact information for funding sources as well as other resources. Sites also received gardening supplies including seeds, soil, tools, and recycled wine barrels--which the students used to plant, grow, harvest and, eventually, eat their own fresh vegetables.

In the spring of 2002, CFJ sent the toolkit to twenty additional after-school programs and developed a survey to determine ways to improve the resource.

a. La Raiz After-School Program

Site: Lafayette Park Community Center

Organization: Building Up Los Angeles/Los Angeles Conservation Corps

Number of Students: 50-100

Demographics: Primarily Latina/o

Date: March 6-10, 2000

Program location/type: Community Center at a City Park

Status of snack funding: They have applied for several grants -- and have already been awarded one -- to continue funding their snack program.

Number of sites operated by this organization: 4

Pilot snack served: whole oranges from the farmers' market, 1-ounce servings of string cheese and small juice boxes.

²⁵ Alicia de Soto-Foley, Program Facilitator for the Center for Food and Justice, conducted the first set of pilots. Lauri Ames, Program Coordinator for CFJ, conducted the second set of pilots with Alicia de Soto Foley. Additional research and analysis was conducted by Ramona Rubin between April and September 2001.

Special activities/notes:

The pilot was initiated by the program coordinator who was especially concerned about the nutrition of youth in the program. Through her leadership, the pilot snacks were a hit with the students and their parents.

The coordinator reported, "The children and their parents really appreciated the snacks and looked forward to the snack serving every day." Enny, age 7, commented, "I loved the orange; I liked the juice, too; I liked everything! I would like more snacks every day!"

b. Hathaway Family Resource Center at Luther Burbank Middle School

Site: Luther Burbank Middle School

Organization: Hathaway Family Resource Center and LA Bridges

Number of Students: 60

Demographics: Predominantly Latina/o

Date: March 13-17, 2000

Program location/type: Non-profit on LAUSD school campus

Status of snack funding: When the Center for Food and Justice first began working with Hathaway's After School Program, the program was not receiving any snacks. They had been utilizing donations, often cookies or other sweet snacks, when available but wanted to offer youth a healthy snack on a daily basis. After the pilot, Hathaway applied to get snacks through the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) with help from Matt Sharp from CFPA. They started receiving snacks within a few weeks.

Number of sites operated by this organization: 1 operated by Hathaway, 26 LA Bridges sites

Snack served: oranges, string cheese and juice

Special activities/notes:

The week before the snacks were served, the students were told that they would be getting "healthy snacks" the following week. According to the coordinators, the students were initially suspicious that "healthy snacks" would not taste good but expressed their satisfaction with the snacks provided the following week.

c. Rosewood Elementary STAR Program

Site: Rosewood Elementary

Organization: STAR Program

Number of Students: 60 children from K-5

School Demographics: 46% Latino, 29% White, 14% Black (rest comprised of Asian, Filipino, and other)

Date: March 20-24, 2000

Program location/type: Non-profit on LAUSD school campus

Status of snack funding: Site is eligible to receive snacks from the school district but because they would not be able to give snacks to all of the children (including the 60 other students who do not participate in the STAR program but are on the playground when snacks are served) they did not receive snacks from the district. Instead, the program relied on food purchased from the regular program budget or from donations.

Number of sites operated by this organization: 29

Snack served: sliced apples, quartered oranges, string cheese, and juice. The STAR program also had milk delivered.

Special activities/notes:

There are also approximately 60 other students who are on the playground after school who do not participate in the STAR program. The STAR director felt that it would be important for all 120 of these children to be served, so the snack program was extended to all of them. The director received an ovation when she announced that all the children on the playground would have snacks.

The children were very cooperative at snack time; they lined up and waited patiently. The snacks were served in combinations -- fruit with milk, fruit with cheese (drink upon request), cheese with juice -- which stretched out their supplies an extra two days. Children could request seconds if they were still hungry. On the day we visited, we observed very little waste. Students said that they liked the crisp and tasty apples.

The program has been gardening in recycled wine barrels. The week before the pilot program the students harvested spinach to eat. During the pilot, they planted summer vegetables.

d. Korean Youth and Community Center

Site: Korean Youth and Community Center

Organization: Korean Youth and Community Center

Number of Students: 20 students (5-11 years old)

Demographics: Korean

Date: March 27-31, 2000

Program location/type: Non-profit Community Center

Status of snack funding: no funding

Number of sites operated by this organization: 1

Snack served: oranges, string cheese, juice

Special activities/notes:

The coordinator reported, "Believe it or not, kids loved the oranges the best!" She noted that the farmers' market oranges were "the best juicy oranges ever!" During the week, students had about 45 minutes of discussion and activity about the food pyramid and what their ideal nutritious snacks would be. One lesson learned is that the string cheese, popular at all the other sites, was not culturally appropriate at this site as many of the children are lactose-intolerant.

e. Los Angeles County 4-H Program: Estrada Courts and Compton Street Elementary Sites

Site: Estrada Courts and Compton Street Elementary

Organization: UC Cooperative Extension Los Angeles County

Number of Students: 20 at Estrada Courts and 61 at Compton Elementary

Demographics: Predominantly Latina/o at Estrada Courts

70% Latina/o and 30% African American at Compton Street Elementary

Date: October 2000

Program location/type: both on and off-campus sites

Status of snack funding: avoided participating in the CCFP due to paperwork requirements. Program funding is used to purchase snacks and comes from the City of LA, Housing Authority of LA, County CDD, major gifts from corporations and foundations (Wells Fargo, Unocal, Gunther Foundation, Leavey Foundation).

Number of sites operated by this organization: 10

Snack served: salad bar including lettuce, broccoli, carrots, oranges, Fuyu persimmons, and Fuji apples

Special activities/notes:

The 4-H sites already provided snacks out of their own program budget, and were eager to introduce salad bars on a weekly, rotating basis. The organization purchased a salad bar to make the pilot feasible, demonstrating their commitment to continuing the program after the pilots. The CFJ staff surveyed the students on their favorite fruits and vegetables, devised a budget, priced the salad bars and ice packs, worked with the after-school site coordinators to arrange logistics, and introduced the Farmers' Market Salad Bar. Salad bar etiquette was discussed. For the Estrada Courts pilot, the actual salad bar had not yet arrived, so the meal was set up on a table. Students and parents assisted staff with washing, sorting, chopping, and serving the fruits and vegetables for the snack. By the start of the Compton Avenue School pilot the salad bar had arrived. Staff and students again assisted in preparation.

To provide the students and their families with the experience of learning where their food is coming from, CFJ organized a field trip to McGrath Family Farm in Camarillo on Saturday, October 14, 2000. Forty children and their families attended from both sites, filling the bus. The children and their parents picked carrots and pumpkins to take home.

Because of the success of the program with the youth, in 2001, 4-H expanded the salad bar. They purchased two salad bar carts and rotated them among the ten sites so that every site had the salad bar for one month out of three. However, by spring of 2002, they had discontinued rotating it to most sites due to lack of site staff ability to carry out the program. They have created a monthly menu with recipes and they deliver all of the food ingredients to each site so that the staff just have to follow the recipes and menus. However, site staff have trouble figuring out how to put the food together with the recipes. They have found it difficult to do nutrition education through the snack program due to lack of staff buy in. They conduct staff development but if staff haven't invested in the goals of health and nutrition, they won't implement the curriculum or snacks effectively.²⁶ The organization has instituted a policy that youth cannot bring junk food inside during the after-school program.

The program received a grant from Queenscare, a nonprofit health foundation, to take students and staff from the sites out to eat at vegetarian restaurants. That funding, along with a grant from Wells Fargo, allowed them to hire a Nutrition & Health Coordinator.

In June, they'll start implementing the Junior Master Gardener Nutrition Component that has been adopted by Cooperative Extension statewide.

f. All People's Christian Center

²⁶ Phone conversation with John Pusey, 4-H Academic Advisor. April 15, 2002.

Site: All People's Christian Center

Organization: All People's Christian Center

Number of Students: 65-70

Demographics: Primarily Latino/a

Date: October 24-27, 2000

Program location/type: Non-profit Community Center

Status of snack funding: APCC relies on donations for their snacks and purchases some food out of their operating budget. Since they do not have a consistent stream of funding or donations of food, students do not always receive a snack and when they do, it was often chips or cookies and juice. When CJF approached them, APCC did not have snack funding and was interested in applying for USDA reimbursement. In July 2001, CFJ staff gave them the number of the State Agency. The Director called to request an application in July and as of September 2001 still had not received one.

Number of sites operated by this organization: 1

Pilot Snack Served: farmers' market peaches and apples, string cheese and assorted 100% juice boxes

Special activities/notes:

The youth coordinators conducted nutrition activities involving games and the food pyramid. Adults had started utilizing one area for gardening and after the after-school snack pilot, the All People's Christian Center decided to start a garden for the after-school program with the help of parent volunteers. CFJ supplied the Center with a resource guide with information on nutrition and gardening, and supplied them with vegetable seeds.

The Education Coordinator of the Center did not know about the Adams Vermont Farmers' Market before the pilot so was pleased to find a local source of inexpensive fresh fruit. As fruit had not previously been served for snacks, plans were made to purchase fruit from the farmers' market on a regular basis. The executive director also created a new policy to ask those who donate food to only provide juice rather than chips or cookies, since they planned to focus on healthier snacks.

g. El Santo Niño

Site: El Santo Niño

Organization: El Santo Niño

Number of Students: 35

Demographics: Latino/a

Date: November 6-10, 2000

Program location/type: Non-profit Community Center

Status of snack funding: The Director of El Santo Niño found the snack funding application process discouraging and has put off applying for some time.

Number of sites operated by this organization: 1

Snack served: farmers' market apples and oranges, string cheese and assorted 100% juice boxes.

Special activities/notes:

Nutrition and farming were discussed in conjunction with the snacks. The staff is concerned about theft and has no plans to start a garden at this time.

h. Crenshaw Family YMCA at 59th Street Elementary

Site: 59th Street Elementary School (also the site of a pilot Farmers' Market Salad Bar)

Organization: Crenshaw Family YMCA

Number of Students: 15-20

Demographics: 95% African-American, 5% Latina/o (in ASP)

Date: March 22-27, 2001

Program location/type: Non-profit organization on LAUSD school campus

Status of snack funding: The YMCA receives snacks through the school district.

Number of sites operated by this organization: 8

Snack served: farmers' market fruit, string cheese and assorted 100% juice boxes

Special activities/notes:

The children voted during the second half of the pilot which fruits to receive (they chose apples and strawberries). A discussion on what it means to be healthy was used to promote eating good food and getting plenty of exercise.

The Site Director found the healthy snack resource guide very useful and used it for activity ideas in planning the nutrition unit in May 2001. She also has shared the resource with the seven other YMCA after school program sites in the Crenshaw area.

During the Spring of 2001, the Center for Food and Justice organized a tour to the Santa Monica Farmers' Market and to McGrath Family Farm for families at 59th Street Elementary School. The tour was very well attended and provided a great learning experience for families. Presentations were given on growing practices, the benefits of shopping in season, supporting family farms and eating healthy foods.

5. Results, Successes and Barriers

The Healthy After School Snack Pilots revealed several issues that need to be addressed to create a sustainable model for a Healthy After School Snack Program. These include developing a mechanism for acquiring farmer's market or farm direct produce, partnerships with other organizations for curriculum and staff development, a policy to permit after-school program use of facilities on LAUSD campuses, health and safety training for ASP staff, and further promotion of the available federal funding.

a. Purchasing Healthy Snack Items through the Farmer's Markets and Other Venues

There are over 50 farmer's markets in Los Angeles County at various locations on different days of the week. At these markets, growers from around the region come into the city to sell their fresh and seasonal produce directly to the consumers. Many of the farmers who sell at farmer's markets are family farmers who rely heavily on direct sales for a substantial portion of their income.²⁷ As part of a food security model, one of the objectives of the healthy snack pilots was to strengthen the viability of regional farmers and of farmers' markets in the city.

²⁷ Kelly Lamkin, report to Southland Farmers' Market Association. 1996

For the pilots, Center for Food & Justice staff purchased and delivered fruits and/or vegetables from the farmers' market to the after-school program sites for use in the healthy snacks. Other items such as juice, milk, and cheese were purchased through retail stores that are widely accessible. Menus included some of the items recommended by the California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit) in their list of suggestions for healthy snack items for after school programs.

While the Center has provided pick up and delivery services to bring farmers' market produce to school districts, in the long-term, the Center is not set up to conduct this service. Ordering and pick-up of farmers' market produce and other snack items is therefore the most challenging impediment to the success of a farm-to-after school program. After school program staff do not have time to pick up snack ingredients and most organizations do not have a vehicle for food transportation. Additionally, the staff is generally low-paid and receive relatively little training or support for their work. Introducing a new responsibility of ordering, purchasing, storing and preparing snacks can be a significant added burden.

Through the National Farm to School Program, various organizations including the Community Alliance with Family Farmers are working to develop distribution networks to link local farmers with schools and other institutions. In some cases, local distributors may be willing to make the transactions at cost or one farmer in a region may be able to make weekly deliveries for several farms in the area. While the options will vary from region to region, over the next few years, CFJ expects that there will be more opportunities for after-school programs and other institutions to purchase from local farms.

Another future option would be for after school programs to coordinate purchasing and distribution of snacks so that individual organizations would not have to dedicate staff time to this function. This function might be conducted by an umbrella organization such as the Partnership on After-School Education, a non-profit organization created to help after-school providers share resources and information.

b. Curriculum and Activities

It is essential to reinforce healthy eating practices with hands-on activities for learning about nutrition, physical activity, how food grows, and about the food system. Examples of activities include posting signs on snack items to provide students with nutrition information and information about where the food comes from. It can also include farm tours or gardening.

c. Nutrition Education

There are several groups that have developed activity kits and offer mini grants that can be utilized to promote nutrition education in an after-school context. The 5-a-Day Power Play Campaign offers Community Based Organizations that work with Youth activity kits and mini grants to conduct nutrition education for 9-11 year olds. Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) has several activities that could be used for middle-school youth. CANFit (California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness) produced a Tools for Success Resource Guide filled with activities that youth programs have developed. The LAUSD Nutrition Network

provides mini grants, training, and resources to schools. They encourage teachers to work with and share nutrition resources with the after school programs.

While there are many resources available, in conducting the pilot programs, the Center for Food and Justice found that only LAUSD and the 4-H programs, run by the University of California Cooperative Extension, were utilizing some of these curricular resources. Most non-profit agencies did not know of their existence or were not using them. When CFJ staff introduced the activities, many after school programs were interested in using them and implemented them in conjunction with the healthy snack pilots. This finding indicates that there is a need for a more coordinated approach to providing resources to after school programs.

d. Gardening

The main barriers to successful gardening programs are lack of facilities, lack of space or access to school gardens, concerns about vandalism, and lack of a knowledgeable staff person to take the lead. Three of the nine sites involved in the pilot snack programs already had gardens. Two of the sites were 4-H programs that are operated through the UC Cooperative Extension Program, which offers resources to gardens around the county. The STAR Program operating at Rosewood Elementary had installed wine barrels to garden in since the school garden was full of classroom plots. While one pilot site (the All People's Christian Center) was inspired to start a garden for the after school program, another site (El Santo Nino) declined to start a garden out of concerns about vandalism and theft.

Cooperative Extension provides materials, seeds, and technical assistance to community centers with gardens. The Gardening Angels program of UC Cooperative Extension has proven a great resource for schools, but to date does not have resources to support after-school programs. Thus, while gardens could be a simple hands-on opportunity to learn for after school programs, more support is needed to ensure that the programs can sustain the gardens.

e. Garden, Farm and Farmer's Market Tours

Community gardens, farmer's market's and local farms provide exciting field trip destinations that can educate young people about where their food comes from and provide them with opportunities to participate in harvesting. The 5-A-Day Campaign has produced an activity packet specifically for farmer's markets, with ideas and activity suggestions easily adaptable to an after-school program's needs.

To provide the students and their families with the experience of learning where their food is coming from, the Center for Food and Justice organized two field trips to McGrath Family Farm in Camarillo for participants in three of the after school snack pilots. The farm tours were held on weekends, providing an opportunity for whole families to attend. Significant outreach was conducted and students were excited about the pilot Farmers' Market Salad Bar in their after school programs, generating high turnout for the farm tours. On the tours, the children and their parents picked carrots and pumpkins to take home, learned about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables, and about growing food organically. One of the tour groups also went to the farmers' market where they discussed the value of eating in season and purchasing direct from farmers.

f. Access to Kitchen Facilities

After-school programs operating on school campuses could utilize the school kitchen to store food, prepare snacks, or conduct cooking classes. However, current LAUSD policy does not allow after-school programs to access kitchen facilities after school hours when LAUSD staff are not present. Several staff members of after school programs said they would like to have access to the kitchen facilities for storage, preparation, and cooking activities. As LAUSD and other districts develop policies to promote nutrition, a policy to open kitchens to after-school programs should be adopted.

Community centers and other non-profits off campus often experience similar barriers including lack of access to refrigerators, cutting boards and knives. Organizations running after school programs could consider sharing kitchen facilities to have snacks made to their specifications prepared and delivered.

g. Health & Safety Issues

As small organizations not set up to be full food service operations, after-school programs need support to ensure safety in the handling of knives and prevention of food-borne illness if they plan to prepare snacks on site. The County Health Departments regulate food served in institutional settings, down to the slicing of an apple in an after school program.

h. Knife and Food Handling Safety

The need for some basic training and instruction on safe food handling methods includes the appropriate handling of knives when preparing snacks, especially if kids or volunteers are involved. This activity can provide youth a positive first-hand experience preparing fruits and vegetables. Some pilot sites did not have the proper equipment and were unable to allow the kids to participate in preparation because the knives were too large for the children to use.

While some foods may have low risk for contamination, others may be more risky in an after school program environment. For instance, foods such as cantaloupe and other melons are at high risk for salmonella bacteria contamination. Staff should be trained in these areas to reduce the risk of food borne illness.

h. County Health Code

Under California Law²⁸ all food preparation facilities must follow health codes covering kitchen design, safety equipment, cooking procedures, as well as a recent requirement that at least one employee be certified in food handling. These laws are interpreted and enforced by the County of Los Angeles Department of Health.

After school programs that prepare and serve food to children fit under the broad definition of “facility” in the health code. Under a 1991 exemption, childcare facilities licensed by the

²⁸ California Uniform Retail Food Facilities Law

Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) are exempt from health code laws. But most after-school programs are not official childcare programs. In 1998, California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) worked with the state to clarify regulations and eliminate the requirement that that after-school programs not providing traditional child care services are exempt from state licensure in order to be eligible for the at-risk snack program.

The Center for Food and Justice identified a need for a short training program to provide after-school staff training in food safety, knife handling, and nutrition.

i. After-School Snack Funding

While there are no official estimates of utilization of federal reimbursements for snacks by eligible agencies, some advocates estimate that only about ten percent of the community-based organizations eligible for after-school snack funding actually receive it. Meanwhile, about 85 percent of after school programs based on school campuses receive snacks through the school district program.²⁹

Only a few of the smaller after school programs CFJ encountered even knew about available state and federal funding for snacks. The Nutrition Services Division, the office of the California Department of Education that oversees distribution of the USDA funds, responds to incoming inquiries by providing applications. Outreach and promotion of the snack funding to eligible programs is limited. Thus, accurate materials and information, as well as outreach and promotion are needed to encourage small non-profit programs to apply for USDA funding.

The application is complex and administrative requirements such as rosters and menu production records are daunting to small programs. The California Food Policy Advocates have several recommendations for cutting the red tape to facilitate usage of snack reimbursements that the State should adopt.³⁰

In sum, the California Department of Education and the US Department of Agriculture can help increase the provision of healthy after school snacks by

- Conducting outreach and promotion to let programs know they are eligible to receive reimbursements;
- Simplifying the application and providing more technical assistance to small agencies;
- Congress should increase the per-snack reimbursement rate from \$0.57 to at least \$0.75 per snack and provide supplemental funding through grants or bonus accounts for fruits and vegetables purchased from local farms.

k. Case Study of Policy Advocacy for Healthy Meals in After School Programs

Fighting for just childcare and welfare reform, the South Central Los Angeles-based grassroots community group Every Mother is a Working Mother Network (EMWMN) spearheaded a successful campaign to expand after-school care for CalWORKs families. The group built a coalition of over 200 community groups and individuals to participate in the campaign. The

²⁹ Matthew Sharp, California Food Policy Advocates, email dated April 17, 2002.

³⁰ Draft Memo to California Department of Education, April 1, 2002 from California Food Policy Advocates.

Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) and Los Angeles Department of Education (LAUSD) responded with a plan to bring after-school enrichment programs to 225 public elementary schools in Los Angeles County. In June of 1999 the LA County Board of Supervisors approved \$74 million for the after-school programs, mostly from unspent surplus TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) funds.

However, the group did not stop with the provision of new after school programs. They also fought for strong enrichment activities as well as healthy meals and health and nutrition education at the sites.³¹ The Center for Food and Justice worked with the California Food Policy Advocates, the LA Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness, and the EMWMN to develop policy recommendations for providing fresh, healthy snacks and meals and nutrition education at the after-school sites. DPSS responded by asking the contractors what they would need to make their snacks into meals and meet some of the other recommendations in the proposed policy. LAUSD asked for more funds and DPSS granted approximately \$6 million in expanded funding for food service.

While EMWMN initially held accountability sessions requesting progress reports from DPSS, LAUSD, and LACOE,³² as time went on, the all-volunteer community group moved on to other issues and campaigns and did not have the resources to continue to watchdog the agencies charged with carrying out the nutrition program. While the Center for Food and Justice had initially advocated the creation of a parent advisory body to ensure that food and nutrition policies were carried out by the districts, the EMWMN was concerned that this would overburden working parents and so the advisory body was not created. In the future, parents and after school program staff who would like to be advocates should be identified to help ensure that policies are implemented at the after school site level.

In the fall of 2000, site visits by Center for Food and Justice staff indicated that the additional funds granted to LAUSD were used to provide a “supplemented snack”, consisting of cold “Lunchables” type pizza or deli sticks in addition to the usual cookies and juice, or fruit and milk.³³ The YS Cares administrator requested that Food Services stop sending the supplement until better quality items, such as sandwiches, could be identified. Although the EMWMN had desired the provision of a hot meal, the district felt that the additional funds were inadequate to provide a hot meal.

No additional site visits have been conducted since that time to determine if Food Services did provide a more substantial and healthy meal using the \$6 million in supplemental county funds. Creation of a parent and community advisory body would help to ensure that progress is made and that the district is held accountable.

³¹ Community Working Group on Nutrition/After School Enrichment Programs correspondence to DPSS, LAUSD & LACOE Re: Proposed Nutrition & Curriculum Recommendations for DPSS-funded After School Enrichment Programs.

³² For instance, on June 22, 2000, the EMWMN held the 4th Community Dialogue where DPSS, LAUSD, and LACOE administrators responded to inquiries about progress.

³³ Memo to EMWMN from Lauri Ames, Center for Food and Justice (September 25, 2000).

6. Lessons and Future Directions for the Center for Food and Justice

Beginning in May and June 2001 the Center for Food and Justice began to rebuild relationships with the sites that ran pilots and the staff that had been identified for advocacy. During this time the LAUSD School Board passed a Healthy Foods Resolution calling for review of the food served in the district. To expand the scope of the review and include snacks, CFJ targeted our organizing work to after-school programs on LAUSD sites or who receive snacks from LAUSD Food Services. The after-school snack advocates are working with the Healthy School Food Committee and the Coalition of LAUSD Nutrition Policy Advocates.

Also in the summer of 2001, CFJ began organizing the Healthy School Food Committee (HSFC), a group of parents, teachers, staff and community members organized around an LAUSD School Board resolution to conduct a review of food served in the school district. The HSFC is committed to improving the food served in the school district, creating a sound nutrition policy and representing the concerns of parents and other nutrition advocates in the process.

The Center for Food and Justice will also continue to work with other organizations to advocate for the recommendations discussed below.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

After School Programs provide important opportunities for reaching children and providing nutritious snacks and nutrition education. As the Farmers' Market Salad Bars have shown, the snack pilots also indicated that kids will eat fruits and vegetables when they are fresh and presented in an exciting and appealing way. But more work is needed to ensure that these healthy foods are available in the after school setting on a day-to-day basis.

After-school programs operating on LAUSD campuses are more likely to receive federally funded snacks but there are still opportunities to improve participation and to improve the nutrition content of the snacks.

Most community-based organizations running after-school programs off campus do not receive federal reimbursements and thus do not serve nutritious snacks. Many rely on sporadic donations that are often sugary or salty foods.

Many staff at after-school programs are concerned about ensuring that youth have enough to eat and are enjoying healthy foods. Staff at most sites CFJ worked with were very interested in obtaining farmers' market fruit or other healthy snack items. Farmers' market salad bars and snack pilots have been successful in getting students to eat fresh fruit and vegetables and thus farmers' market produce should be utilized for snacks where possible.

However, after-school program staff are often stretched thin and run their programs on slim budgets and with limited resources. There has been virtually no investment in a system of providing healthy snacks to after school programs not located on school campuses. Even those programs operating on school grounds do not have access to kitchen or garden space that could be used to provide hands-on lessons about food and nutrition.

Because they are not subject to restrictive curriculum guidelines as K-12 schools in LAUSD and other districts are, after-school enrichment programs can fully utilize the multi-disciplinary learning opportunities that cooking and gardening provide in the subjects of math, language, science, health, and others. While the resource guides developed by CANFit, CFJ, 5-a-Day, and other organizations can be helpful, after-school program staff sometimes may not have an understanding of health issues that would enable them to successfully carry out the activities. Thus, staff development should be conducted to provide staff with training on the problem of child obesity and diet-related diseases and on how to lead nutrition education and healthy snack activities.

Policy changes are needed at the community organization, school district, and city levels to institutionalize healthy snack menus, nutrition education, staff development, and environmental changes such as limiting availability of junk food at after-school program sites. Some of the community organizations that participated in the pilots have developed policies to reduce sugary and salty snacks and beverages and to increase the availability of healthy snacks. The LAUSD has created a task force that is identifying strategies the district can use to improve nutrition. One of the policies that should be adopted is to open school kitchens to after-school programs so they can be utilized for snack preparation and cooking lessons. The City of Los Angeles will be considering the recommendations of the LA Commission on Children, Youth, and their Families to impact menus, education, staff development, and other foods sold at city-sponsored after-school program sites.

The state and federal agencies administering the Child Care Food Program and National School Lunch Program to provide reimbursements for snacks at after-school programs should adopt the recommendations of the California Food Policy Advocates to cut red tape, especially for small sites, and to increase the reimbursement rate.

The healthy snack pilots revealed several issues that need to be addressed to create a sustainable model for a healthy after-school snack program. These include developing a mechanism for acquiring farmer's market or farm direct produce, partnerships with other organizations for curriculum and staff development, a policy to permit after-school program use of facilities on LAUSD campuses, health and safety training for ASP staff, and further promotion of the available federal funding.

a. Recommendations for All After-School Programs

- Establish communication mechanisms between food services staff, after-school program staff, school site administrative and teaching staff, children, and parents to ensure that high-quality, nutritious, appealing and culturally appropriate meals are served and eaten every day. Examples include community advisory committees to watch for problems as well as opportunities in the provision of healthy and appealing snacks.
- Integrate nutrition and environmental education curriculum and activities including student preparation of foods and cooking classes, organic gardening activities, field trips to local farmers' markets and farms, and the involvement of students in the research and planning for the donation of excess food to local groups in need.

- Seek adequate resources including, but not limited to USDA reimbursements to provide healthy snacks.

b. Los Angeles Unified School District

- Allow after school programs to utilize kitchen facilities for snack preparation and cooking activities.
- Ensure all children participating in after-school programs receive a healthy snack every day, regardless of whether the program is LA’s Best or a community-based program operating on an LAUSD playground.

c. City of Los Angeles

- Apply for federal reimbursements for healthy snacks for all eligible sites.
- Increase availability of healthy foods in city-sponsored after school programs, and reduce the availability of unhealthful foods such as sodas, chips, ice cream, candy, and cookies.
- Ensure all City-funded after-school programs, through CDD and other City Departments, provide healthy after-school snacks.
- Adopt recommendations of the Commission on Children, Youth, and their Families for a citywide Child Nutrition Policy.

d. County Health Department

- Establish a short food safety and nutrition course for after-school program staff serving on-site prepared snacks. This would serve two functions:
 1. Ensure safety in basic food handling of the kinds of items likely to be served for snacks; and
 2. Provide staff training about the importance of providing healthy snacks and conducting nutrition education.
 3. Establish clear procedures for after-school facility licensure and exemptions.

e. UC Cooperative Extension 5-A-Day Program, CANFit, and Other Organizations

- Expand staff development opportunities to train after-school program staff to utilize 5-a-Day and other activities to model and promote healthy eating and physical activity.
- Support development of farm-to-institution distribution networks currently being researched by the Community Alliance with Family Farmers through the National Farm to School Program.
- Provide mechanisms for small programs to cooperate to apply for snack reimbursements, procure and prepare snack foods, and share other resources.

f. California Department of Education

- Increase promotion of the After-school Snack component of the Child Care Food Program, especially to non-profits running after-school programs off campus.

- Require that snack funding be spent on fresh nutritious foods including those purchased through farmers' markets.
- Simplify the application forms and procedures, as well as reimbursement process, especially for small non-profits.
- Provide technical assistance to groups and follow-up to ensure that applications are submitted and approved.

g. Congress (Authorizations for USDA)

- Increase reimbursement rate for snacks to at least \$0.75 per snack and provide supplemental funding for purchase of fresh, local produce.
- Institutionalize dinner reimbursement.

8. Partial Listing of After School Programs Operating on LAUSD Campuses

The following is a description of several organizations that run after school programs on LAUSD school campuses. The Center for Food and Justice was in contact with these organizations to learn from their experiences and/or worked with them to improve their snacks. The organizations that participated in pilots are not included here but are described in more detail in the report.

a. LA's Best

LA's Best (Better Educated Students for Tomorrow) was created in September of 1988 to address the alarming rise in street gangs, school dropouts and drug use in communities where children lacked adequate adult supervision during the critical hours between 3-6 p.m. Their mission is to provide a safe and supervised after school education, enrichment and recreation program for children ages 5 to 12 in the city of Los Angeles. The program serves over 13,500 elementary school children at 78 sites. LA's Best is a partnership including the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Unified School District, and private sector groups in collaboration with over 100 community-based organizations to provide diverse and meaningful activities. A study by UCLA shows that participants in LA's BEST demonstrate higher school attendance, and improved performance on standardized tests.³⁴

b. LA Bridges

Begun in July 1997 to address gang violence and juvenile issues by enriching the lives of middle school aged youth (10 - 14 years old), L.A. Bridges seeks to strengthen families and promote community action to empower neighborhoods and divert kids from gang activity. Working in partnership with LAUSD, L.A. Bridges has established 26 school-based sites throughout Los Angeles.

c. STAR

³⁴ A DECADE OF RESULTS: The Impact of the LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program on Subsequent Student Achievement and Performance, UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, June 2000.

Founded in 1986 to provide supplemental educational services to schools, STAR offers educational assemblies, science curriculum, tutorial services, art curriculum and special events for schools in addition to enriched childcare, after-school enrichment classes and parenting programs. They run 29 after school enrichment sites in the Los Angeles area. Their educational programs serve 16 school districts and reach over 250,000 children annually.

d. LACER

Los Angeles Center for Education Research (LACER) is a non-profit organization that operates on four LAUSD middle school campuses in the 13th City Council District. The program offers a wide range of activities including Homework Club, music classes, computers, art, dance, games, sports, field trips and more. They serve over 1500 students a year and collaborate with professional artists in the community to provide quality enrichment activities.

e. Other Sites

The following programs are run by non-profit or other organizations. They have many sites, some on school campuses and some in other facilities including community centers, housing projects.

f. 4-H

Through the Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H operates ten sites in Los Angeles including three on LAUSD campuses. Los Angeles County sites, including Clara Barton Elementary School, Long Beach; Imperial Courts, Nueva Maravilla, and Rose Hill Courts housing developments, Los Angeles; Wilmington Park Elementary School, Wilmington; Broadway Elementary School, Venice; Dolores Mission, Los Angeles; Harbor Hill Community Center, Lomita; and Mar Vista Gardens, Culver City.

g. YMCA of Metropolitan LA

Operates a number of centers around LA that provide numerous family services including after school programs. They have 90 after-school programs in Los Angeles County, mostly on elementary school campus.

h. Building Up LA

Building Up LA is run through the Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC). Building Up LA originated as a collaboration of over 60 community based organizations, colleges and universities, and human service agencies implementing the largest Americorps project in the Los Angeles area. The group established after school programs that provide tutoring and sports/recreational activities in Pico Union and Central City South with a consistent attendance of approximately 200 youth daily.

i. Hathaway Family Resource Center

Hathaway is a multi-purpose community service agency that operates a community center, educational centers for youth on probation, and after school programs on school campuses in Northeast Los Angeles. The organization sponsors a *promotoras comunitarias* program through which community members are trained to conduct outreach on health issues including nutrition.

j. Woodcraft Rangers

Woodcraft Rangers is a non-profit organization established in 1922 to serve youth ages 6-18 throughout Los Angeles County. They sponsor after school athletics, camping programs, individual case management, job preparedness classes, and counseling services with the goal of offering positive environments and experiences that can help youth become productive adults. In 1991 with the help of LAUSD, Woodcraft Rangers designed the model for the Woodcraft Rangers After School Club Program. They currently operate at 27 elementary, middle and high schools throughout the district. They plan to expand the program to serve all 49 Middle Schools by the year 2003.³⁵

³⁵ Restructuring Middle School: After School Programs, Presented to LAUSD By Woodcraft Rangers, June 2000.

V. Local Food and Nutrition Policy

1. Background

While local, regional, state, and federal governmental bodies plan and regulate access to healthful air and water, access to healthy food has been driven largely by the dictates of the food industry. In some cities and counties, however, residents and policymakers have designed policies and programs to better ensure access to healthful food, especially in low-income neighborhoods.³⁶ Local policies can help facilitate the development of community food resources such as gardens and farmers' markets. They can facilitate the development of supermarkets in underserved neighborhoods or add bus lines to provide residents better access to food markets. They can also deter the proliferation of advertising, which is often used to market fast food, candy, soda, and other snack foods.

Staff of the Center for Food and Justice have sought and pursued opportunities for developing broader campaigns to improve access to nutritious food through city policy in Los Angeles. From the development of a Los Angeles Community Food Security Network in 1995 through the establishment and disbanding of a food policy council and towards a community-based process of developing policy campaigns, CFJ has sought out strategies to influence comprehensive local policies on food, nutrition, and agriculture. This work led to the Taste of Justice Conference in 2002 and the establishment of a Taste of Justice Network in 2002.

2. Process

a. Food Policy in Los Angeles

In 1995, working with Andy Fisher of the newly formed Community Food Security Coalition, staff from the Center for Food and Justice launched a Los Angeles Community Food Security Network (LA CFSN). At the first meeting, nearly fifty representatives of service providers and advocacy organizations discussed their vision of an integrated food system in Los Angeles. The LACFSN met regularly over the next two years and was instrumental in advocating for the creation first of a City of Los Angeles Hunger Task Force and subsequently, of a city advisory body, the Los Angeles Food Security and Hunger Partnership.

The Center for Food and Justice played a pivotal role in the creation of the Los Angeles Food Security and Hunger Partnership (LAFSHP), which was established by City Council action and mayoral approval in 1996. The City Council allocated \$240,000 to the Partnership to use for staffing, fundraising, and planning. The Partnership was comprised of eighteen members, most of who were identified as food system stakeholders, ranging from farmers' markets to chain supermarket representatives. Robert Gottlieb, director of the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute where CFJ is housed, was selected to serve as the representative of the academic community.

³⁶ For more information on local food policy councils, see *Getting Food on the Table: An Action Guide to Local Food Policy*. By Dawn Biehler, Andy Fisher, Kai Siedenburg, Mark Winne, Jill Zachary. Community Food Security Coalition and California Sustainable Working Group, 1999.

Despite some important initiatives largely influenced by advocacy groups (for example, allocation of funds to establish farmers' markets, community gardens, and fresh food access programs in low-income Council districts) and promoted by the LAFSHP, the organization was disbanded in 1999. This was due in part to poor leadership, an uncertain mandate, the absence of staff support during much of its tenure, and an inability to clearly define its role. Some of the LAFSHP members saw the organization as connected to an insider City Hall game, while others wanted to help mobilize and create new policies and initiatives around specific issues. By 1999, the Los Angeles Community Food Security Network that the Center for Food and Justice had helped to organize had formally disbanded, since its primary goal had been the creation of a food policy council (which became the LAFSHP). Though efforts were made to establish an informal network of community advocates to monitor and influence LAFSHP proceedings, this effort came too late to effectively stop the erosion of the LAFSHP and the problem of the factional, insider leadership. Thus, there was no organized body to hold the LAFSHP accountable. Despite the implosion of the LAFSHP, CFJ and a number of other community and healthy food advocates saw a need for citywide policies that would foster better food access and support local food systems.

b. Progressive Los Angeles Network

Around the time of the LAFSHP's demise in 1999, the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute (UEPI) launched the Progressive Los Angeles Network (PLAN) to provide a forum for progressives to develop task forces and policy agendas around specific issue areas.³⁷ Issue areas included housing, health, urban environment, transportation, and food and nutrition. Co-chairs were selected to help guide the process and draft an initial set of policy recommendations.³⁸

In February of 2000, a half-day meeting was called by the co-chairs (which included the Director of the Center for Food and Justice) and the facilitator of the PLAN Food and Nutrition Task Force to discuss a draft set of policy ideas. The draft policy document was circulated through email prior to the meeting. The meeting was held at the South Central Community Coalition offices and over 30 representatives from food and nutrition organizations across the city attended. Groups ranged from the union representing supermarket employees to the largest food bank and a small young women's food cooperative.

Through a four-hour session, over one-hundred changes, additions, and deletions to the document were agreed upon by the group. A much richer and more complete agenda for progressive food and nutrition policies needed in city, county, and other local agencies emerged. This document was then circulated to a broader group of food and nutrition advocates and service providers. Few additional recommendations came out of this email process, but it was important to inform a larger group of people about the process and of the document's existence.³⁹

³⁷ Robert Gottlieb and Peter Dreier, of UEPI, facilitated the PLAN process. For more information on the history of PLAN, see <http://www.progressivela.org/history/plan.htm>.

³⁸ Michelle Mascarenhas from the Center for Food and Justice co-chaired the task force along with Matt Sharp from California Food Policy Advocates' LA office, and Frank Tamborello from the LA Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness.

³⁹ See <http://www.progressivela.org>

A second meeting of a smaller group was held in early 2001 to identify the top three or four food and nutrition policy strategies that the city of LA should prioritize.⁴⁰ These priorities, along with those selected by task forces addressing the other issue areas, were compiled and presented to the mayoral candidates at a public forum with over 500 people in attendance. Voters and residents were thus able to hear many of the mayoral candidates speak to critical policy issues framed from a progressive perspective.

c. A Taste of Justice

During the next year, CFJ recognized the need to increase community participation in the process of developing policy campaigns around food issues. The Progressive Los Angeles Network Food and Justice task force meetings had primarily involved activists and staff of organizations. While such a forum might reflect a form of participatory democracy if the organizations represented the views of a broad base of members, there are few organizations working on food and nutrition that have a base of members in low-income communities. Therefore, to increase community member participation, CFJ decided to host a citywide conference to provide education on the issue of food access and forums to discuss food policy issues and campaigns.

Through a funding stream advocated for by the now defunct LAFSHP, the Community Development Department of the City of Los Angeles agreed to fund the conference and the production of a resource guide to food access. Staff were hired to coordinate the conference planning and resource guide compilation. A conference planning committee was formed to assist with decisions about logistics, media strategy, and outreach.

On November 3, 2001, nearly 200 social justice advocates, community gardeners, farmers, farmers' market advocates, teachers, parents, youth, and food activists participated in A Taste of Justice conference. The conference provided both an educational opportunity for residents to find out what resources were available in their communities, as well as a forum for community-based policy advocacy. These city residents gathered to discuss farmers' markets in low-income communities, the need for strong city and school district policies on food and nutrition, and strengthening and increasing access to community gardens. A guide to food, nutrition, gardening, and related resources available was also developed and distributed at the conference.

In the morning, a series of speakers helped to frame the issues of food and nutrition in terms of local policy. The keynote speaker was Debbie Fields, a Toronto food and nutrition activist who has been instrumental in getting the city of Toronto and Ontario province to create food policy councils. Lunch, prepared using locally and organically-grown produce, was served to participants. Breakout sessions followed lunch.

The goal of the breakout sessions was to identify whether a consensus about potential campaigns could be reached in each of the four issue areas and then, if there was consensus, to begin the development of planning to develop these campaigns.

⁴⁰ See <http://www.progressivela.org/resources/papers.htm>

Months before the conference, co-facilitators were selected for each of the breakout sessions. A serious effort was made to identify organizations that would be willing and able to continue staffing the process after the conference. We hoped that the campaign planning taking place at the conference would give these groups the jump they needed to begin their work. Several meetings were held with the facilitators in preparation for the breakout sessions. The facilitators decided how to approach their respective topic area, formulated an agenda, and then discussed their decisions with the entire group of facilitators. The group discussed issues that might come up, such as having participants who are at very different stages of understanding the issue or how to create a safe and democratic space for all to participate in.

3. Lessons Learned

The conference was well attended and received coverage in the Los Angeles Times at a time when stories unrelated to September 11 were receiving limited coverage. The lessons CFJ learned from the event are described below. A more complete description of the discussions and action items from the breakout sessions can be found in the conference proceedings report on the Center for Food and Justice web site.⁴¹

First, the campaigns that did not have the backing of an organization with the capacity to move them forward were not able to make significant progress. Second, some issues were ripe for campaigns or policy development, while others were not. Third, many groups working on food and nutrition have not organized constituents around policy campaigns and thus need support and training to carry out these new activities. These lessons are reflected in part by the outcomes of each breakout session six months after the conference.

a. School Food Policy

The campaign for a food and nutrition policy in LAUSD has made significant progress under the leadership of the Center for Food and Justice, which has a full-time Program Coordinator and a Program Assistant plus part of the Center Director's time. Other organizations including the California Food Policy Advocates also devote a significant amount of staff time to the school food policy work. The Healthy School Food Committee has been expanded, issues have been prioritized, and members have met with several school board members to voice their concerns.

b. Farmers' Markets

It was clear even before the conference that the desire for successful farmers' markets in low-income communities had not yet led to a clear set of policies or strategies to ensure this success. While there is a farmers' market association in southern California, the organization had not prioritized the development of farmers' markets in low-income communities since many of its member farmers were concerned about the adverse impact of the proliferation of farmers' markets on sales. In addition, organizers of farmers' markets in low-income communities across the country have had difficulty sustaining those markets without a middle-income constituent base, direct linkage to a coupon program, or some other defined strategy. Given this complex of issues and the fact that no organization was ready to spearhead a campaign, no consensus on a

⁴¹ See <http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/resources/index.htm#Reports>

policy campaign emerged from this breakout session. The group instead decided that a citywide food policy council was needed to take up the issue and advocate for appropriate policies.

c. Community Gardens

The Los Angeles Community Garden Council (LACGC) is a volunteer-run network of community gardeners in the city. Members of LACGC facilitated the breakout session on community garden policies needed in the city and gardeners conducted outreach at their gardens to encourage participation amongst gardeners in the conference. The group identified action items to follow up with after the conference but due to limited capacity in the mostly volunteer-run organization, these steps have not been taken to date.

d. Food Policy Council

Conference organizers had predicted that the food policy breakout session would be the least popular with conference attendees. Less than ten of the people registered had signed up for the food policy breakout session. Contrary to predictions, the session turned out to be one of the most popular with over 40 people attending. Participants were inspired by the keynote speaker's description of the process of creating and utilizing a Food Policy Council she helped to create in Toronto. The first action item for convening a network of community organizations and advocacy groups has been accomplished through the bi-weekly e-mail newsletter by the continuations committee that was established after the conference. Several continuations committee planning meetings have occurred, leading to a decision to develop a "Los Angeles Food Network," whose first formal meeting will take place in August 2002. The goal of the Network is to bring grassroots community and advocacy groups together and sponsor monthly meetings highlighting various food issue campaigns around Los Angeles. The first formal meeting will take place in August 2002 and will focus on the Healthy School Food Coalition's work with LAUSD and the Strategic Actions for a Just Economy's (SAJE) EBT campaign. The creation of the Los Angeles Food Network is fostering collaboration between community based organizations to lay the groundwork for the creation of a food policy council that is accountable to communities.

4. Outcomes and Conclusions

The outcomes of the 2001 Taste of Justice conference included:

- Nearly 200 Los Angeles residents obtained information and participated in strategizing to expand food and nutrition policy in the city.
- The Healthy School Food Coalition was expanded and the group has made an impact on the creation of a food policy in the Los Angeles Unified School District.
- While no campaign for City support of community gardens has been established to date, the City has continued to fund the construction of new gardens through the Fresh Food Access Project.
- Work to stabilize and increase sales at farmers' markets in low-income areas is continuing through a grant from the City of LA through the Fresh Food Access Project.
- The City of Los Angeles helped to encourage a community-based policy advocacy process through their co-sponsorship of the conference.

- The lack of access to healthy affordable food in low-income communities was brought to the attention of the public through media generated by the conference.
- A Los Angeles Food Network was established to facilitate the exchange of information on food and nutrition campaigns and to foster collaboration between groups.

By identifying the lessons from past efforts to establish a food policy council, the new Los Angeles Food Network will work for the creation of a new food policy council that is rooted in the needs of neighborhoods and communities and that is accountable to the people.