

This report was co-authored by Michelle Mascarenhas and Robert Gottlieb. The analysis and opinions contained herein are solely those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District.

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## Introduction

On September 16, 1997, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) launched the Farmers' Market Fruit and Salad Bar, a new and innovative program designed to increase student consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and to link the school lunch program to environmental, community food security, and nutrition education objectives.

During the 1997-1998 school year, the UCLA-Occidental College Community Food Security Project worked with SMMUSD to pilot the program at McKinley Elementary. Based on the results of the pilot, SMMUSD School Food Services (now Food and Nutrition Services) expanded the program to nine sites during the 1998-1999 school year and to eleven schools during 1999-2000. This included nine elementary schools, and two middle schools. Future plans include the expansion of the program to the three remaining schools in the District, including the two high schools. There have also been discussions to link the salad bar to a broader, "healthy schools" approach, integrating school gardens, composting, and nutrition curricula with the salad bar program.

This report describes and assesses the first three years of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar, efforts to move from the pilot stage to the institutionalization of the program, and future issues and opportunities to be addressed. The Report also describes the significance of the SMMUSD program for other school districts and other "farm-to-school" initiatives across the country.

### ***Background: Nutrition and the School Lunch Program***

In 1946, the National School Lunch Act was signed into law to establish the school

lunch program on a continuing basis and to frame it primarily as a nutrition-based program. During and shortly after World War II, the USDA had been instrumental in publicizing various studies documenting the health and education problems of military recruits — problems that were traced to Depression-era childhood dietary deficiencies. The school lunch program was therefore conceived as serving crucial nutrition goals. However, over the years, the nutritional objectives of the program have been compounded by the fact that in nearly all school districts across the country, food services have operated on the basis of the need to generate sufficient revenues to cover costs. As a consequence, food services have sought various strategies to increase revenues that can undermine the nutritional objectives of the program. This has included contracting out services to fast food chains, selling soda and chips to generate additional revenue, and developing exclusive contracts with brand-name junk food producers for the use of their product in vending machines. Faced with cutbacks in funding, many school food services have chosen to squeeze their program, using economic (cost-saving) criteria and menu planning that seeks to attract students by linking offerings to the dominant fast food culture. (*Food Service Director Magazine*, March 15, 2000 page 16; *2000 California High School Fast Food Survey*, Public Health Institute.)

These changes have also coincided with the increasing evidence of significant health and learning consequences stemming from the lack of a nutritious diet, including fresh fruits and vegetables. "Even nutritional deficiencies of a relatively short-term nature influence children's behavior, ability to concentrate, and to perform complex tasks," according to the Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy at Tufts University. Diet is also one of the significant factors associated

with the increasing prevalence of obesity among children and adults. According to the Center for Disease Control, the percentage of youth who are seriously overweight or obese has risen dramatically over the last 30 years. (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, *Chronic Disease Notes & Reports* Vol. 12, no. 2, spring/summer 1999.) A study of fourteen schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District has also indicated that as many as 50% of the school children are obese or overweight (*unpublished study*, Dr. Charlotte Neumann and Dr. Wendy Slusser, UCLA School of Public Health, 1999). Though no comparable study has been undertaken in the SMMUSD, anecdotal evidence and some preliminary evaluations through the Health Champions Program also indicate that a significant number of this district's school children are obese or overweight.

Significant federal and state attention has been given to the problem of childhood obesity which the Surgeon General and other analysts describe as an epidemic. A number of intervention strategies have been proposed, primarily *educational* in nature, emphasizing the importance of eating a nutritious diet, including fruits and vegetables. The 5-a-Day Power Play! Campaign is one example. A community food security analysis of the causes and possible solutions to such alarming obesity trends led the Occidental CFS Project to also assess the *environment* in which children are being asked to make nutritious choices.

The hypothesis was that making healthy choices appealing in the school cafeteria could help overcome the appeal of readily available, highly advertised, high-fat, high-sugar, and/or high-salt foods. As an alternative strategy to more brand-name fast foods, the Farmers' Market Salad Bar sought to provide fresh and tasty fruits and vegetables arranged in an appealing manner that allowed

students to choose from among a selection of healthful items.

In addition, the program sought to utilize the lessons of nutrition education which indicated that children who are actively engaged in a learning-by-doing process are more likely to make healthy choices. For instance, a state-sponsored study revealed that children who reported having worked in a garden and eating what was grown consumed significantly more fruits and vegetables than those who had not gardened. Further, the study found that children who gardened experienced more consumption increase from the *Power Play!* nutrition education curriculum than those who had not gardened. (California Department of Health Services, California Department of Education, and California Public Health Foundation, *The California Children's 5 A Day Power Play! Campaign: Evaluation Study of Activities in the School Channel*. April 1996.) Thus, the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program was also designed to foster a more active learning approach to nutrition, as described below.

### ***Background: Santa Monica Programs and Community Interest***

The development of the SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program occurred in part because of the range of programs and interest in the community regarding environmental, food, and nutrition issues. The City of Santa Monica had already adopted its "Sustainable City" program, which established indicators and goals for a more livable and sustainable city. Among those indicators was a commitment by the City to establish at least five community gardens by the year 2000, including gardens at school sites. In addition, the City expressed interest in helping to develop sustainability programs with community and institutional partners such as the school district.

The City also operates four farmers' markets within its boundaries. Farmers from two of those markets have provided the produce for the salad bar. During the pilot year, the farmers' market managers provided logistical support for the operation of the program, including introducing farmers to the program, helping design a payment system, and even helping collect ordered produce and delivering it to the pilot school sites on market days. In addition, the City has provided matching funds for the program, including \$10,000 for the 1999-2000 school year, and a pledge of an additional \$10,000 for the following year. Finally, the market manager, Laura Avery, developed activities for students that would link their tours of the farmers' market to their school Farmers' Market Salad Bars.

The School District has also been committed to core environmental and nutrition goals. In 1996, the SMMUSD adopted a "sustainable schools" program that identified environmental objectives as a significant mission of the school district. School gardens were established at a couple of school sites prior to the development of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. This included McKinley Elementary, whose garden at a large-sized lot in the northwest corner of the school served as an important reference point in the development of the pilot salad bar program. In addition, in conjunction with St. John's Hospital and under the leadership of the district's head nurse, Kit Dreyfuss, the SMMUSD created the "Health Champions" program that includes a nutrition education component. As part of Health Champions, SMMUSD Food Services had initiated a (non-farmers' market) salad bar program at each of its school sites in the early 1990's. Although student participation in the salad bar program was limited, the school district maintained an interest in the goals of nutrition as part of its food service mission.

Interest in a new approach to schools and food had developed among community food security, sustainable agriculture, and nutrition and community health advocates as well. In 1998, the Community Food Security Coalition adopted a "Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids" initiative that sought to expand farm-to-school purchases in school cafeterias and "learning-by-doing" strategies for nutrition and environmental education through programs like school gardens. In a number of communities, new projects were being established to increase access to fresh and culturally appropriate foods in schools. The Occidental Community Food Security Project was a major participant in the development and evaluation of these new approaches, including the SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar.

The development of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program in turn has been influential in informing and facilitating a number of innovative farm-to-school programs around the country. Most recently, SMMUSD Food and Nutrition Services joined with the Occidental CFS Project and other farm-to-school advocates to develop a major new program that would seek to facilitate the development of nearly two dozen farm-to-school programs in school districts around the country (*From Farm-to-School: Improving Small Farm Viability and School Meals*, Occidental Community Food Security Project, submitted to the USDA Integrated Future Food and Farming Systems). In addition, the development of the SMMUSD farm-to-school model program has been recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture, which has been involved in farm-to-school efforts in Florida and North Carolina.

### ***The McKinley Elementary School Pilot***

In the spring of 1997, the UCLA-Occidental Community Food Security Project approached the SMMUSD Food Services staff to discuss the possibility of piloting a Farmers' Market Salad Bar at McKinley Elementary. The school district, which had instituted its salad bar option in the early 1990s, had become concerned that it would no longer be able to maintain the program at several of its sites due to low participation. A number of the children had been enthusiastic at first, but the numbers of those participating rapidly declined. Focus groups with students conducted by the Occidental CFS Project revealed complaints that the lettuce was brown and wilted, that the choices were limited, and the format unappealing. Most of the produce used was pre-processed and pre-cut.

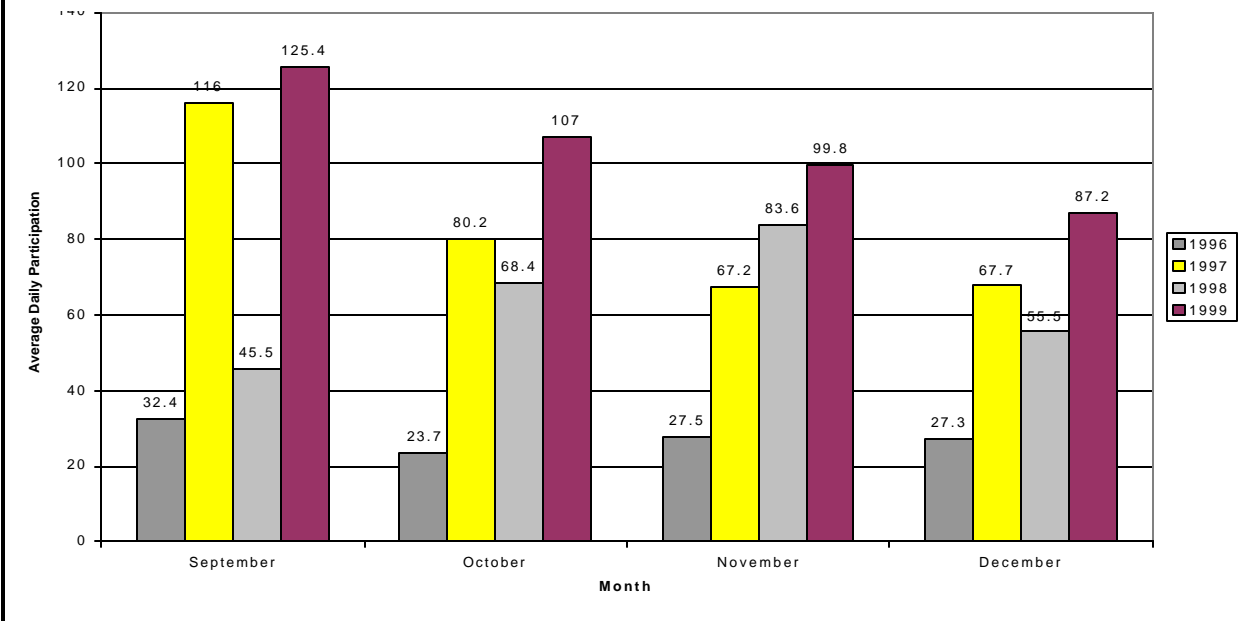
While the Santa Monica school district explored its options, the Occidental CFS Project approached the school district to propose a "farm-to-school" purchasing program, through a local farmers' market, with the produce (often just picked the day before on the farms) to be used in the school salad bars. McKinley Elementary was selected as a pilot site, with the Occidental CFS Project to manage the program the first year, while evaluating impacts on income, expenses, and participation and exploring possibilities for connections to curriculum. Focus groups were held with students to identify issues and concerns regarding the salad bar, and outreach and educational activities were also held, including a farmers' market tour as well as a series of meetings with the mostly Latino parent population at the school.

After a one-week run in the summer child-care program, the program was formally launched about two weeks into the school year, competing against pizza on the first day.

Students were given the option of either selecting the Farmers' Market Salad Bar meal (which included the additional milk and protein items required) or the hot meal. The opportunity to choose between a salad bar and the usual "hot meal" fare was made possible through USDA's "offer versus serve" option. Further, the salad bar which was used (and which enabled the students to choose among the items offered) was similar to the layout one might find at a restaurant salad bar. The bar included offerings from the fruit, vegetable, grains, protein, and dairy categories (students were required to select items from at least three of those five categories to meet USDA requirements). An adult monitor was stationed at the salad bar to ensure that students met this requirement. A poster was displayed and in-classroom education was also conducted to help students remember the importance of a balanced diet and the USDA guidelines when making their selections.

The results, from the outset, indicated significant participation well above the numbers of participants selecting the salad bar in previous years. That higher level of participation continued throughout the school year and through subsequent years (see Chart 1). On average, more than three times the number of children selected the Farmers' Market Salad Bar option than in the previous year when the produce used was pre-cut and purchased through a produce broker. At the same time, the unit cost of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar meal was less than the hot meal option as well as the previous year's non-Farmers' Market Salad Bar items. There were links to the school garden (garden items harvested were displayed about once per month, also encouraging the children to try new items) and by the end of the year a compost program was established, using the peels and clippings from the salad bar.

**Chart 1: McKinley Pilot Average Daily Salad Bar Participation by Month (1996-99)**  
*(Farmers Market Salad Bar Program Launched in September 1997)*



By April, interest in the program had spread to other school sites, and a program was launched at Franklin Elementary School for the remainder of the school year. The Franklin program was developed in part through the work of Franklin teacher Kari Sacks, who helped stimulate interest in the idea by bringing her class on a tour of the McKinley salad bar. Through her participation in the California Department of Education SHAPE program, Sacks, in conjunction with Franklin Vice Principal Patti Flynn (currently principal at John Muir Elementary School) was instrumental in helping develop and promote the program. After touring the salad bar, the third grade class became enthusiastic proponents of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program and helped convince Food Services that a constituency for the program existed at Franklin. As a consequence, the second Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program was established at Franklin late in the 1997-1998 school year.

*Market Fruit & Salad Bar Program for Schools*, Occidental College Community Food Security Project, April 1998), and feedback from the principal, teachers, staff, parents, and children from McKinley and Franklin, a decision was made, with school board review, to extend the program to several additional sites during the 1998-1999 school year. Such expansion was primarily designed for those schools with substantial populations (40% or more) of students eligible for free or reduced meals. The economics for such expansion were also favorable. The first year's program had demonstrated favorable cost comparisons (in relation to the previous year's non Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program) as well as in comparison to the cost of the hot meal option. With matching funding of \$43,800 provided by the California Nutrition Network and an additional allocation of \$3,000 from the school district, Food Services was able to take over the management of the program.

On the basis of the information from the year one pilot evaluation (*Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids: Report on the Pilot Farmers'*

The program's expansion was also made possible due to significant parent support, continuing support by the city of Santa Monica, continuing press coverage, and the development of an Advisory Board for Food Services that helped facilitate community interest about, and accountability for the program.

### **The Program Expands and is Institutionalized: Years Two and Three of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program**

During the second and third years of the SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program, the number of participating schools was significantly expanded and the basis for the district-wide institutionalization of the program was laid. The program continued to receive strong recognition from other school districts, from foundations and policy analysts, and from USDA, as it shifted from its pilot stage to become a continuing district-wide program. This section of the report describes and evaluates the preparatory activities for program expansion in Fall 1998; the expansion and further institutionalization of the program in Spring 1999 through the 1999-2000 school year; and evaluation of the cost/revenue and participation data during the 1998-99 and 1999-2000 school years.

#### ***Fall 1998: Laying the Groundwork***

In the Fall of 1998, Food Services established a Food and Nutrition Advisory Committee to help prepare for the institutionalization and expansion of the program. Members of the Advisory Committee included the City of Santa Monica farmers' market manager, the Health Champions coordinator and nurse, a long-time community health activist, and members of the Occidental Community Food Security

Project staff. A temporary coordinator, James Conway, was hired on a half time basis when the grant monies from the California Nutrition Network became available. The Nutrition Network grant provided for funds to hire an overall coordinator for the program for one year, as well as site coordinator positions at five of the schools where at least 40% of students qualified for free or reduced-price meals. The schools funded through the Nutrition Network's matching grant included: Muir/SMASH Elementary, Will Rogers, Grant Elementary, Edison Elementary, and John Adams Middle School. Training was provided by Lucia Sanchez of the Occidental Community Food Security Project and manuals were developed by the Occidental CFS Project for the new salad bar site coordinators as well as for the Food and Nutrition Coordinator.

Much of the work in Fall 1998 was designed to lay the basis for the program's expansion. A workplan was designed to include individual meetings with school principals, teachers, and parents at several of the schools. Outreach activities, such as food tastings, farmers' market tours, and short presentations at "Back to School" night events, were also planned. Some, but not all, of these activities were completed. Also in the Fall, the district made arrangements to assume responsibility for picking up the food from the farmers' markets and delivering it to each of the school sites as another step facilitating expansion and institutionalization.

Despite an ambitious agenda for laying the groundwork for program expansion in the fall of 1998, a significant amount of the project coordinator's time was instead spent at the two school sites (McKinley and Franklin) where the Farmers' Market Salad Bar continued to operate. At Franklin, school management problems had created a vacancy in the site coordinator position, which

adversely affected the program. An evaluation of the salad bar program during its first year by the Occidental Community Food Security Project pointed to the critical importance of the site coordinator position. As designed by the Occidental team, the site coordinator would have multiple roles. These would include: a) overseeing and facilitating daily food preparation for and monitoring of the salad bar; b) linking the salad bar with other school activities, such as the school garden, composting, and farmers' market tours for classes; c) outreach to staff, students, parents, and the community on behalf of the program; and d) functioning as the site liaison for Food Services. In Fall of 1998, a parent from the school who had been a volunteer with the salad bar program was hired by the district to work 4 hours per day. During the four hours allocated by the district for this position, the site coordinator had just enough time to do the food preparation and monitoring of the salad bar but none of the other activities. Thus, the site coordinator vacancy at Franklin forced Conway, the District's program coordinator, to spend several mornings a week just in salad bar preparation at that school, leaving little time to do effective outreach and planning at other school sites, especially given his half-time status.

As a result, the Food Services Director, in conjunction with the Food and Nutrition Advisory Committee, decided to temporarily close the program at Franklin (one of the two "wealthiest" schools in the District). This was done primarily in order to avoid draining energy and resources from the development of the new salad bar sites at the low-income schools, the designated sites for the California Nutrition Network grant. Initial efforts to raise funds from PTA or other sources for the site coordinator position had been unsuccessful. However, even after it was shut down, there continued to be interest at Franklin in a salad bar program. Renewed

efforts at fundraising in the fall of 1999 were more successful, enabling the salad bar to re-open in January 2000 once a new site coordinator had been selected. With new – and far more effective – outreach, and greater coordination of the preparation of the salad bar due to the site coordinator's activities, participation at Franklin increased more than threefold during the Spring of 2000.

### ***Winter/Spring 1999: Program Expansion***

In December 1998, School Food Services selected Tracie Payton Thomas to be the full-time coordinator of the District's Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. Prior to her position at SMMUSD, Thomas had worked for fast food and hotel food service companies. She had also grown up in a household with a strong tradition of gardening. With a young child at home, she was eager to promote the Farmers' Market Salad Bar as an important way to provide children access to a healthy diet, along with hands-on experience in the garden. Her strong advocacy and outreach skills were instrumental in identifying the support mechanisms necessary for the program's expansion as well as for establishing an effective liaison between the Food Services administrators, cafeteria staff, the site coordinators, and the principals, teachers, parents, and students.

With Thomas able to facilitate and coordinate the different programs, a schedule for outreach and program expansion was established, with rollout dates established for the five new schools. To ensure support from school administrators, teachers, parents, PTAs, and students, and to tailor the program to each school site, Thomas, as the Food and Nutrition Coordinator, conducted a range of activities prior to opening each Farmers' Market Salad Bar, including:

- Meetings with principals, PTA presidents, and school garden coordinators;
- Working with school site staff to identify candidates (especially parents) for the site coordinator positions;
- Interviewing, hiring, and training each site coordinator;
- Sending flyers and announcements to teachers, parents, and students;
- Making presentations to the PTA, Bilingual Advisory Committees, African-American Support Group, Faculty, and Site Governance Committees;
- Facilitating farmers' market tours and nutrition education in classrooms;
- Holding farmers' market produce tastings at lunch one week prior to each start up and receiving student feedback on items to include in the salad bar;
- Meeting with cafeteria managers to explain program and to identify needs for additional storage space, equipment, or supplies.

With the lessons learned from the McKinley and Franklin pilots, in spring of 1999, Thomas was able to establish an ambitious and rapid start-up schedule for Farmers' Market Salad Bar Programs at each of the school sites designated in the Nutrition Network grant. This occurred often with little more than two weeks between openings. Nevertheless, each of the school sites posted impressive numbers of participants, partly due to the growing interest in the program among parents, teachers, and administration staff district-wide. The experiences from the pilot project also facilitated an easier transition in terms of the management and operation of the program at each site. With the funds available from the Nutrition Network grant, Food and Nutrition Services was able to fund the site coordinator positions at each school site for three hours per day. This shifted the tasks associated with salad bar preparation from the

program coordinator and/or school cafeteria staff to the site coordinators themselves. By doing so, it also enabled Thomas and School Food Service Director Rodney Taylor to concentrate on the initial outreach and logistical issues associated with the expansion of the program. By May 1999, when the Occidental CFS Project presented its assessment of the first two years of the program to the SMMUSD school board, nine schools (including Franklin) were participating in the program. Further, as the Occidental CFS assessment noted, parent and school staff enthusiasm for the program had generated a base of support for continuing and expanding operation of the program in future years.

### ***1999-2000 School Year: The Program is Institutionalized***

During the 1999-2000 school year, the salad bar program continued to expand, including into Roosevelt Elementary, where effective outreach and enthusiastic parent support overcame initial administrative skepticism to make it the largest single program in the District. (Parenthetically, the high participation levels and strong parent, staff, and student feedback also turned Roosevelt's principal from modest skeptic into one of the program's biggest champions).

As 1999-2000 found the district in a budgetary crisis mode, the salad bar program was not insulated from the efforts to cut costs. The number of items offered on the salad bar each day was cut to reduce waste and further benefit from bulk purchasing. The coordinator began not only searching for the lowest prices but actually working with farmers to get their prices down even further. For instance, in the first year, organic strawberries were purchased for as much as \$21/flat during off-season. In years two and three, the farmer sold them to the school district for \$8/flat regardless of the

season. Similarly, before the budget cuts, lettuce was being purchased for \$0.75/head. After negotiating prices with various farmers, the district was able to secure purchasing at \$0.50/head.

In 1998-99, food services experienced a fiscal shortfall and the food service director worked to cut costs in every area of the operation. This included reducing the number of items offered on the salad bar each day and shifting towards more reliance on volunteers to prepare the salad bar ingredients. In 1999-00, food services brought in a \$138,000 surplus demonstrating that the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program can be a part of a fiscally and nutritionally sound food services department.

However, with some funding for staff positions coming from grants and because of a strong base of support both in the community and from Food Services, the program was not cut but in fact, was able to continue expansion. Expansion was also allowed by the favorable cost comparison with the hot meal

program and increase in revenues from the additional purchases of school meals (including salad bar purchases by teachers and parents who paid a higher price than the students for the meal). By the end of the school year, the program was operating at eleven school sites, with plans to open salad bars at the remaining three school sites during Fall 2000.

## Participation

Through its first three years, student participation in the Farmers' Market Salad Bar option at each of the school sites has been exceptionally high. On a few occasions, more students have selected the salad bar than the hot meal option. Numbers of participants have fluctuated, partly reflective of seasonal factors (e.g., stronger participation in the late spring) as well as the popularity (or lack of popularity) of particular hot meal items (e.g., pizza). As Chart 2 indicates, student selection of the district's salad bar increased by huge proportions after implementing the farmers' market purchasing program. At some sites,

**Table 1: Salad Bar Participation Before and After Farmers' Market Program  
(Average # of students selecting the option per day)**

	<b>SB (before)</b>	<b>FMSB (after)</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
McKinley Elementary	25	114	711%
Muir/SMASH K-8	25	86	244%
Franklin Elementary	10	28	183%
Rogers Elementary	37	104	179%
Grant Elementary	48	99	108%
Edison Elementary	15	63	327%
Adams Middle School	3	42	1374%
Pt. Dume Elementary	7	40	482%
Webster Elementary	4	68	1540%
District-wide Average			572%

participation in the salad bar program had been in the single digits before implementation of the farmers' market program. At the middle school, just a handful of students had used the salad bar prior to the farmers' market program. With the support of the student council, nearly 50 students per day began to select the salad bar option after the farmers' market program began.

The data shown in Table 1 reflects participation figures in the three months preceding and in the three months immediately following the start-up of each Farmers Market Salad Bar Program.

As Table 2 shows, at most school sites, about 1/3 of students eating a school lunch chose the Farmers' Market Salad Bar over the Hot Meal on any given day. Participation

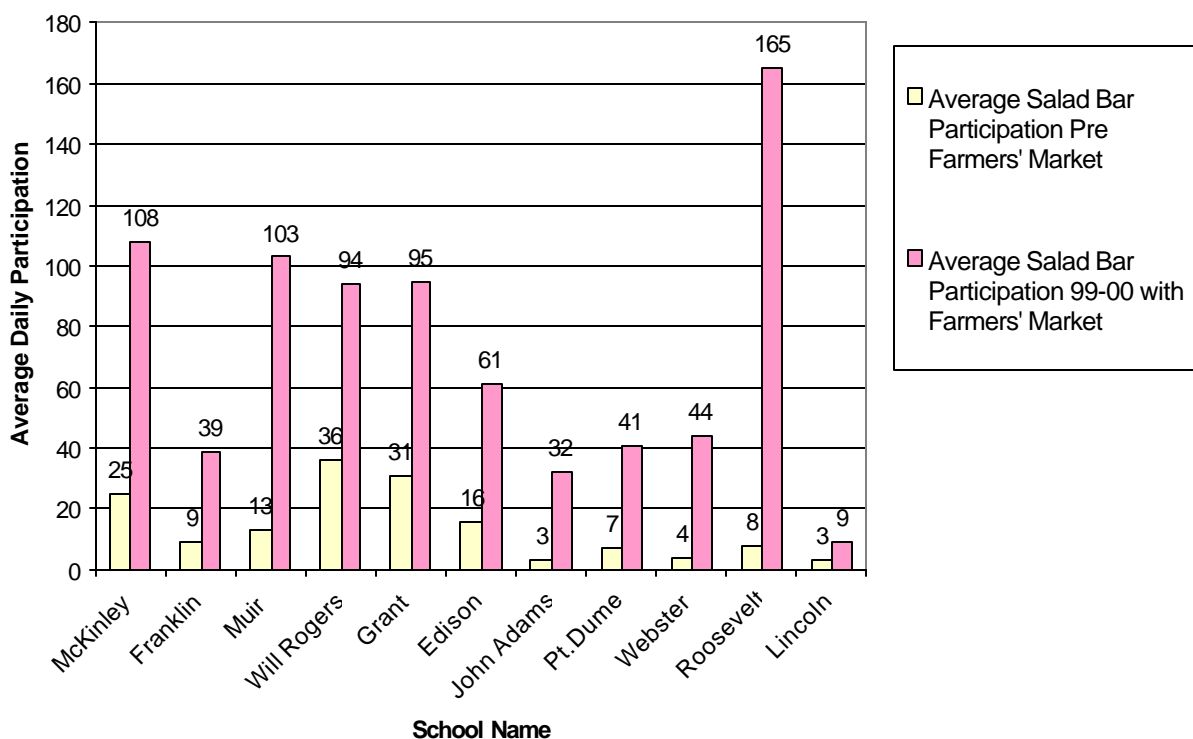
numbers varied by school site so that at some sites such as McKinley and Point Dume, participation was actually around half.

Though data on participation rates over time is not yet available for all school sites, participation levels at McKinley Elementary, the first pilot, have remained stable or increased over the three years it has been in operation (see Chart 1). In fact, preliminary data indicates that the daily average number of students participating in the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program in September 2000 was higher than when the program first started in September 1997. Thus, as the program has become institutionalized as a central component of Food and Nutrition Services, it has also become a healthy habit for a growing number of students.

**Table 2: Daily Average Number of Students Choosing Farmers' Market Salad Bar versus Hot Meal**

	<b>FMSB</b>	<b>Hot Meals</b>	<b>Total Meals</b>	<b>% of Students Eating a School Lunch Who Chose the FMSB</b>
McKinley Elementary	114	128	242	47%
Muir/SMASH K-8	86	219	305	28%
Franklin Elementary	28	210	238	12%
Rogers Elementary	104	287	391	27%
Grant Elementary	99	209	308	32%
Edison Elementary	63	197	260	24%
Adams Middle School	42	130	172	24%
Pt. Dume Elementary	40	26	66	60%
Webster Elementary	68	114	182	37%
			<b>Combined Average:</b>	<b>32%</b>

**Chart 2: Santa Monica Salad Bar Participation  
Before and After Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program**



***Continued Program Outreach (Years 2 & 3)***

In Years 2 and 3, SMMUSD Food Services transitioned to Food and Nutrition Services and began integrating nutrition education as a more explicit component of the program.

The District Food Services realized that to sustain the enthusiasm for the program, continued outreach and linked activities would have to be conducted. Thus, during its second and third years, there were also new items added to the salad bar as well as continued outreach. These efforts included the introduction of salad bar feature days, including a potato bar; the use of school garden items in the salad bar; farm and farmers' market tours; composting of salad bar preparation scraps for the garden; teachers' "two for one" coupons to expand

teacher participation; poster contests; chefs and California Sushi Academy demonstrations in classrooms; and classroom cooking carts, nutrition education materials, food for cooking activities and teacher training.

The potato bar was originally conceived as a way to provide a hot item as part of the salad bar during the winter months when selection of items from the farmers' market was more limited and a "hot" item would be more appealing. Potatoes used on the salad bar were purchased directly from a farmer through the farmers' market. During the winter of 1999/2000, the potato bar was rotated at different school sites each week and was tremendously received. At many school sites, for example, on the day when baked potatoes were included on the salad bar, more students selected this option than the hot meal option.

In 1999-2000, 21 classes went on field trips to farms (approximately 360 students) using school buses provided by Food and Nutrition Services. On farm tours, students were able to pick strawberries, carrots, and other crops and taste a truly fresh-picked harvest. One parent remarked that she was stunned to see the food service director coming out on a farm tour, indicating that he truly was placing this program at the core of Food and Nutrition Services.

In addition to the farm tours, each week, two to three classes toured the farmers' market—for an annual total of 65 to 100 classes or 1400 to 2200 students. As in previous years, students were able to use the public bus to get to and from the farmers' market and once there, were given a tour by the market manager. The manager also conducted activities with the students, such as making a salad and looking at the sugar content of strawberries using a spectrometer.

In 1998-99, Food and Nutrition Services purchased 7 cooking carts for teachers to use in their classrooms to conduct hands-on nutrition education through cooking lessons. The carts are stored in the school cafeterias to make it simple for teachers to check out. Food and Nutrition Services hosted cooking and nutrition education demonstrations for teachers to show them how to integrate curriculum from 5-a-Day, SHAPE, and Team Nutrition.

The district soon discovered, however, that teachers often didn't have time to come to a training and found it difficult to wade

through the large binder to find an appropriate activity. To address these barriers, F&NS began the "Chef in the Classroom" program so that a trained facilitator could conduct the lessons using the cooking carts. In 2000, "Chef in the Classroom" was featured in nearly 20 classrooms. Through the program, Babette Ory, a professional chef, provided

- New Program Features :**
- **Potato Bar**
  - **Farmers' Market Field Trips**
  - **Farm Field Trips**
  - **Cooking Carts for Classroom Use**
  - **Chefs in the Classroom**
  - **Establishment of Curriculum Task Force**
  - **Poster Contest**
  - **Use of Garden Produce in Salad Bar**

hands-on cooking demonstrations using the cooking carts Food and Nutrition Services purchased to help bring hands-on nutrition education into the classrooms. In addition, the California Sushi Academy provided well-received demonstrations and lessons in the art of sushi at middle schools.

To better address the curricular link, SMMUSD Food and Nutrition Services has developed a task force comprised of teachers, the Director of Food and Nutrition Services, the Farmers' Market Salad Bar

Program coordinator, the County University of California Cooperative Extension 5-a-Day coordinator, the Health Champions coordinator, and Gardening Angels to other food and nutrition advocates to develop activities to help teachers teach math, reading, writing, and other standards to gardening, cooking, farm and farmers' market field trips and other nutrition education activities. The group began meeting in Spring of 2000.

In 1999, Food & Nutrition Services developed a poster contest, both as a means to engage students in describing the quality, background, and nutritional value of the salad bar as well as to establish a visual presence in the cafeteria. Students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades

were eligible to compete for prizes that were donated. Posters were judged on originality in conveying the theme “Shape Your Future” and their effectiveness in conveying the message to eat 5 fruits and vegetables per day. Each school was required to arrange its own judging process for winners. First through third place winners were then submitted to the Food Service Office for final judging in December.

Efforts to link the salad bar with school gardens also increased during the 1999/2000 school year. While school garden items had been occasionally displayed at McKinley during its first year of operation, by the third year, three different schools with garden programs were enlisted to develop school garden displays as part of the salad bar.

The school garden items included lettuce, herbs, and various fruit which were often rotated after harvesting. While the quantities harvested from the garden were not high enough to meet the full demand of students, the displays did heighten enthusiasm. At some sites, school garden produce naturally flowed into the salad bar. For instance, on one occasion, the parent coordinator at Roosevelt Elementary used six heads of lettuce from the garden when she ran out of farmers’ market lettuce. On a regular basis, the same coordinator clipped herbs from the garden for special mixed salads and picked lemons from a tree on the school grounds to keep the apples from turning brown. At a site visit, Alice Waters, the famous chef from *Chez Panisse* in Berkeley, commented that the produce coming into this salad bar was fresher than that in most top restaurants.

While at some sites garden produce was occasionally featured on the salad bar,

garden produce as a whole did not flow as easily into the salad bar. At most sites, when produce from the garden was put onto the salad bar, no signs were put up and students may not have even known that they were eating the fruits of their own labor. Training for site coordinators and an expansion of their job description and time allocated for paid

work could help ensure a better educational connection between the school garden and the cafeteria in the future.

### **Cost/Revenue Assessment**

The expansion and institutionalization of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar occurred during a period of fiscal crisis in the District. In addition, the program was expanded without any additional direct District funding of the program

aside from a single “transition” allocation of \$3,000 in September 1998. The program expansion in fact was made possible due to the ability of the Food and Nutrition Service Director to make some other administrative tasks more efficient and to identify cost savings and revenue generation from the program itself. Table 3 shows the costs and additional revenue (not including student meal reimbursements or purchases) associated with the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. The salary of the Food and Nutrition Coordinator was not included in the per meal calculation because in successive years, the district agreed to use one full-time position slot for a food service supervisor for this position, in part because the farmers’ market program had become such an integral component of food services. Additionally, the district does not include such supervisory staffing costs when calculating per meal costs for hot meals. It does, however, include the additional labor required at each site for preparing food and

***In 1998-99, the cost of a Farmers’ Market Salad Bar meal was about \$0.77 per meal as compared to \$0.88 for a hot meal.***

monitoring the Farmers' Market Salad Bars. At the same time, it includes additional revenues generated by sales to adults since very few such sales had been made to adults prior to the initiation of the Farmers' Market

Salad Bars. Table 3 shows that the cost for a Farmers' Market Salad Bar meal was approximately \$0.77 per meal. This compares with the district's calculation of \$0.88 per hot meal.

**Table 3: SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar Costs (1998-99)**

<b>Food Costs</b>		
Produce		\$ 22,473.03
Other Items (estimated (1))		\$ 5,095.49
<b>Subtotal, Food Costs</b>		<b>\$ 27,568.52</b>
<b>Site Coordinators Labor Cost</b>		
Number days worked	840	
Hours per day	3	
Total Hours Worked	2,520.00	
Wages per Hour	\$9.29	
<b>Subtotal, Site Coordinator Cost</b>		<b>\$ 23,410.80</b>
<b>Subtotal cost (food and labor)</b>		<b>\$ 45,883.83</b>
Adult Salad Bar Revenue @ \$3.75/meal		\$ 8,977.50 (subtracted from costs)
<b>Total Cost (less adult meal revenue)</b>		<b>\$ 36,906.33</b>
Total # meals served to students		47,845
<b>Food and Additional Labor Cost/Salad Bar Meal (without milk or paper goods)</b>		<b>\$ 0.77</b>

**Notes:**

- (1) Cost of warehouse and central kitchen items estimated by using the cost/meal for 1997-98 from the McKinley April 98 report. Milk cost (approximately \$0.16/meal) is not included in these calculations since they are the same for salad bar and hot meal.
- (2) Labor cost does not include Food and Nutrition Coordinator/Supervisor. In 1999-2000, the district replaced one Supervisor FTE with this position.
- (3) Some education-related activities conducted by the Food and Nutrition Coordinator/Supervisor are paid through a grant from the Nutrition Network.
- (4) To offset cost of labor, schools without a high proportion of free/reduced eligible students have paid for the site coordinator salary.

### ***Farmer Sales & Farmers' Market Logistics***

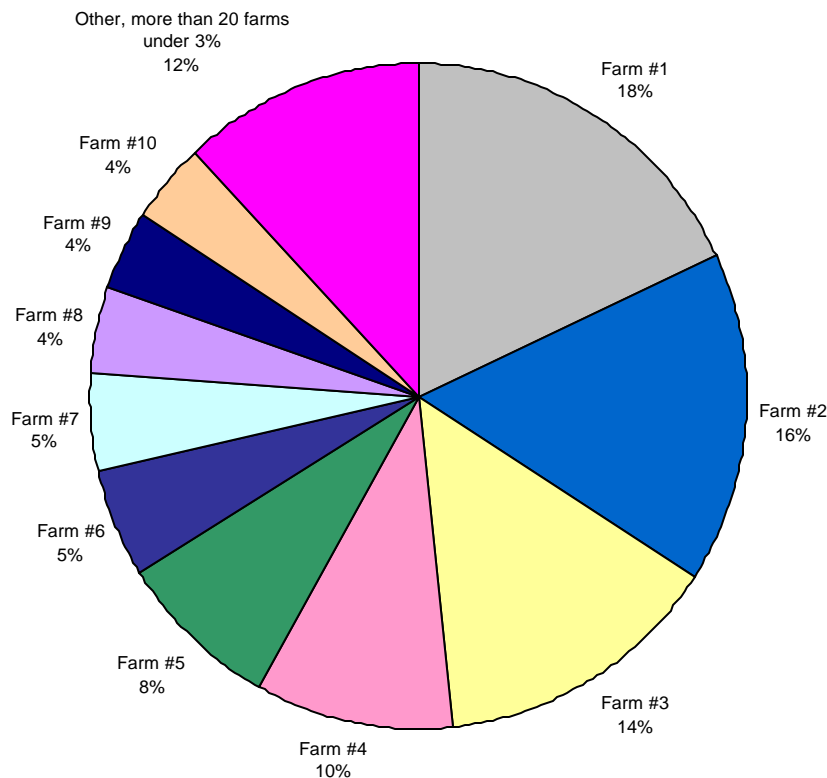
In 1997-98, during the McKinley pilot, the Occidental team coordinated the twice weekly farmers' market purchases. In year two (1998-99) and beyond, the district staff coordinator assumed this role. Therefore, the new Food and Nutrition Coordinator kept up relationships with the farmers the district had received approval to purchase from, placed orders, negotiated price, picked up produce, and ensured that farmers' invoices were paid in a timely fashion. To alleviate the coordinator's workload of going to the farmers' market to pick up the district order every Saturday morning, in year three, Rodney Taylor, the food service director volunteered to take on this responsibility and asked the other food service supervisor (who did not work as directly with the Farmers'

Market Salad Bars) to rotate the responsibility. Taylor says that this experience of taking his family to the market at least once every few weeks, talking with the farmers, and purchasing food and flowers for his own family there made him even more convinced that the direct connection was an important component of the program. Additionally, by exposing other food service staff to the experience, Taylor hoped to further integrate the values of the program into the whole food service operation.

### ***Farmer Sales***

In 1998-99, \$22,473 was spent on direct farm purchases. In 1999-2000, despite an expansion in the number of salad bar meals served, the amount of farm purchases was only slightly higher, \$25,978.

**Chart 3: Distribution of SMMUSD Direct Purchases From Farmers 1999 –2000**



**Table 4: Comparison of Produce Cost per Farmers' Market Salad Bar Meal (1998-99 and 1999-2000)**

	# Student Meals	# Adult Meals	Adult: Student Meals Ratio	Produce Cost	Produce Cost/Meal
<b>1998-99</b>	47,845	2,394	5%	\$22,473	\$0.45
<b>1999-00</b>	110,586	5,211	5%	\$25,978	\$0.22

As shown in Chart 3, in 1999-2000, fifty-eight percent of sales went to four farms. The other 42 percent of sales went to more than twenty farms. Of total direct farmer sales, 19 percent were to organic farms in 1999-2000.

During the first year (1997-98), the Occidental team developed a policy recommendation to prioritize organic produce purchases whenever possible. Attached to this recommendation was a list of conventional produce items identified as having high pesticide residues. (*Environmental Working Group 1995; Consumer Reports 1999.*) During the first year, organic purchases were around 50 percent.

These recommendations were included in the SMMUSD Food and Nutrition Coordinator manual. However, during the year, as the food services department was asked to drastically cut its spending in order to balance its budget, purchases from farmers were one area where these cuts were made. In the process of seeking out the lowest possible prices, purchases from organic farmers went down.

The other complicating factor has been the absence of a single overarching definition of "organic" that could be used to identify purchasing criteria. Some growers at farmers' markets who use no pesticides or "no spray" put up signage or tell buyers to indicate an organic approach. Some farmers may actually

use organic practices but have decided they would rather consumers visit their farms or get to know them as a way to achieve credibility about their approach rather than pay a third party to certify their farm as organic. Additionally, as the program seeks to support family farmers, the coordinator must also choose between purchasing from large-sized farms that are organic or family farms that are not certified organic creating two distinct and potentially opposing selection criteria.

Thus, the district coordinator has found it difficult to balance the issues of price, organic or low-input, and farm scale in particular purchasing decisions, while attempting to achieve a combination of all three where possible (i.e., lower or equivalent price, certified organic, small family farm).

Payment of farmers was initially also an issue for the district as they had been accustomed to paying vendors who could wait months for payment. In contrast, farmers often expected payment within two or three weeks. Purchasing directly from farmers also meant having to purchase from several individuals rather than just one broker. At first, the City of Santa Monica assisted with many of the transactions between the district and the farmers to ensure that the farmers got paid regularly and that the district gained enough confidence in the program to invest its resources.

## ***Key Players***

The success of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program is due in large part to the critical role of certain key players, including the Food Services Director, the Salad Bar coordinator, the farmers' market manager, the site coordinators, and the support it has generated at each school site.

The SMMUSD Food Services Director, Rodney Taylor, was hired from the private sector primarily on the basis of his ability to manage and keep a large and complex organization within its limited budget. Taylor brought his experience working in private industry, including over five years at Marriott Corporation as a consultant to school food service directors. He became director of SMMUSD's Food Services program in 1993, at a point when initial interest was developing, among parents and supporters of the District's own health Champion's program, for establishing a healthy meals approach to the school lunch menu. Prior to Taylor's appointment, a salad bar (based on traditional purchasing of produce through brokers) had been established at each of the elementary schools in the District, though with only limited success.

Taylor, while supportive of the salad bar idea, was increasingly pressed to ensure that the Food Services department maintain sufficient revenues to be an income generator or at least to be cost-neutral for the school district. His initial goal was to generate a \$50,000 surplus from the food service department. With small participation numbers for the salad bar (including some schools with only single digit participation) and income dependent both on the per meal cost as well as overall number of students participating in the lunch program (with the District reimbursed by USDA or by student purchases on a per meal basis), Taylor was concerned that the

salad bar had become a drain on Food Services' bottom line, the District's primary consideration.

When the Occidental Community Food Security Project approached Taylor with the proposed Farmers' Market Salad Bar concept in the summer of 1997, he was interested though still skeptical, given the previous history of the salad bar program. Taylor stressed the need for parent support and volunteer contributions as an important component for the program's success, and outreach to the school community became a major aspect of the pilot program at McKinley and thereafter at the other school sites. By providing the opportunity to develop the pilot, Taylor emerged as the pivotal figure in the development of the program, acknowledging its early success and becoming a key champion as it came to be expanded as a central Food Services' program. In years two and three, Taylor was also instrumental in identifying the key issues and addressing the skepticism of other food service directors, through tours, discussions and presentations at School Food Service meetings and conferences. The importance of that aspect of his role cannot be underestimated, given the concerns and wariness of food service directors buffeted by bottom-line considerations from their districts.

Taylor's appointment of Tracie Payton Thomas as the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program was also instrumental in the emergence of the SMMUSD program as a role model. Taylor recognized the importance of a central coordinator role for establishing relationships with the farmers and farmers' market managers as well as for outreach at the school sites, and support and coordination with the cafeteria staff. As a staff member of Food and Nutrition Services, Thomas served as Taylor's direct liaison to the program, able to speak on behalf of the Director of Food

Services, while implementing the program on the ground. Thomas's energy and enthusiasm and her strong outreach and program skills also played an essential role in the development and expansion of the program.

Recognizing the shift in direction represented by the Farmers' Market Salad Bar, Taylor decided to formalize the expanded mission of Food Services by requesting that the school board change the name of his program to Food and Nutrition Services. Despite this change, Taylor still needed to be responsive to bottom line considerations (particularly during times of financial stress related to external factors such as a rise in the price of milk) and at times limited the selection of certain, more costly, farmers' market items as well as reduced the number of items offered daily. Taylor nevertheless recognized that the shift in name was fundamentally a shift in purpose and direction embodied in the name change itself. Towards that end, Taylor also helped secure support and advice for the program through the development of a Food and Nutrition Advisory Board whose primary, though not exclusive focus was the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. The Advisory Board has included parents, teachers, nutrition advocates, City of Santa Monica staff, the farmers' market manager, and staff from the Occidental Community Food Security Project. It has provided an "outside" perspective on the development of the program, as well as liaison with key city and school district staff and elected officials.

Laura Avery, the manager of the City of Santa Monica farmers' market program, has also been an influential participant in the development of the SMMUSD program. The four Santa Monica markets, including the two markets utilized for the program (the Wednesday market at the Promenade and the Saturday market at Pico and Cloverfield) are

run by the City of Santa Monica and Avery functions as a city employee in her role as manager. When the program was launched as a pilot during the 1997-1998 school year, the City, through Avery and Ted Galvan, the manager of the Saturday Pico market, assumed or contributed to key organizational and logistical functions, including delivery, insurance coverage, and the billing process. Those roles were subsequently taken over by the District's Food and Nutrition Services Department the following year when the program was expanded and institutionalized as an SMMUSD program. The farmers' market managers were also important in working closely with the farmers, several of whom became enthusiastic champions of the program. Tours for students at both the farmers' market and at the farms of participating farmers in the program were arranged by Thomas and Avery and helped strengthen student awareness of where their food comes from and how it is grown—a core feature of the program. Avery has also served on the Advisory Board for Food Services and helped arrange the City's matching grant for the program of \$10,000 per year over a two-year period.

The site coordinators at the specific school sites, many of them parents themselves, have been key players both in preparation of the salad bar and outreach to the school community. Though funding has only been available for a less than half time position (at three hours per day), many of the outreach functions occur above and beyond the designated work times associated with the position. What has remained crucial has been the effort to combine the functions of preparation (in effect, as an extension of the existing cafeteria staff) and outreach to the students, teachers, and parents.

Two site coordinators serve to illustrate their importance in the success of the

program. Graciela Gaeta has 2 children who have attended Muir/SMASH where she is a salad bar site coordinator. Gaeta started as a volunteer at Muir-SMASH prior to the start-up of the Farmers' Market Salad Bar. The principal asked if she would volunteer to help with the salad bar when it first began and she was later hired as the site coordinator. When asked why she chose to get involved in the program, she said that she had witnessed the lunches served to students over the years and thought that the Farmers' Market Salad Bar would provide an opportunity to improve the meals nutritiously. She said that her son used to eat the hot meal but now eats the salad bar every day. The overall program coordinator credits Gaeta's "love and care" for the high participation numbers at that school. (Interview, Fall 1999)

The Farmers' Market Salad Bar was started at Roosevelt Elementary in the Spring of 2000. Georgette Hatour, who had volunteered at the school, was hired to coordinate the program on site. Hatour has three children who have attended the school and thus serves as another model of a parent coordinator. When Alice Waters, chef/owner of Chez Panisse and famous fresh food connoisseur, came to visit the school, she remarked at how much care had been put into the preparation and presentation of the food in the salad bar. Hatour is very comfortable going out into the school gardens and, with permission from the other school staff, harvesting herbs or other produce for use on the salad bar.

These individuals and organizations helped to ensure the success of the program after it transitioned from the Occidental team's management. However, the Occidental Community Food Security Project has continued to play a role in highlighting the program locally as well as regionally, statewide, and nationally. During the course of

the three years, the CFS Project has thus provided a significant "third party" role in the process – as incubator, evaluator, and technical assistance provider – that could potentially serve as a model for similar programs as well as for policymakers seeking to help initiate new approaches in the school-food arena.

### ***External Interest in the Program***

Since its development in the Fall of 1997, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District's Farmers' Market Salad Bar has emerged as a groundbreaking strategy for healthy eating, sustaining small farms, and establishing new kinds of learning. It has also become an influential and important model program that has been explored by other school districts, parent and community activists, food-related and sustainable agriculture advocacy groups, and state and federal policymakers, including local school boards, USDA, and the California Department of Education.

The SMMUSD Food and Nutrition Services has sponsored dozens of tours at SMMUSD school salad bar sites and has made presentations to statewide Food Service gatherings, USDA conferences, the Community Food Security Coalition's annual meeting, and several other forums where interest in the program has been heightened.

It has helped spawn similar programs in other districts, and has been highlighted by funding agencies, notably the California Nutrition Network and the California Wellness Foundation, as a breakthrough concept for promoting community and children's health. And it has been the subject of television and radio shows, newspaper articles, editorial commentary and policy discussions. The basis for this attention is grounded significantly in the success of the

program as measured by the strong and continuing participation by students, its benefits to farmers, and its favorable economic profile as described above.

By the 1999-2000 school year, the SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar had become a magnet for interest in programs around the state and throughout the country. During 1999-2000 alone, Thomas and Taylor hosted more than two dozen tours at school sites for school district and School Food Service officials, USDA staff, representatives from the California Department of Education, media representatives, and interested parents and teachers. Most significantly, the district's program has directly contributed to the launching or consideration of launching Farmers' Market Salad Bar Programs in at least four other school districts in California.

In the fall of 1999, organized by the Berkeley Food Systems Project, a sizeable group from the Berkeley School District — including the Director of Food Services, a parent, a teacher, and the Farmers' Market Manager — went on a tour and held extensive discussions with Taylor and Thomas, a session that became influential in their decision to develop a Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program in Berkeley. That program was launched in May 2000 with a pilot program at one elementary school, with plans to expand the program to three other schools in the next school year.

In the spring of 1999, the acting director of Food Services of the massive Los Angeles Unified School District was hosted on a tour of the SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program. This tour helped assuage many of her concerns and helped pave the way for pilot programs to open at two school sites, again with the assistance of the Occidental College team.

Similarly, tours by farmers' market managers, farmers, and the Food Services Directors from Davis and Ventura, California helped spark the interest in developing a farmers' market salad program in those districts as well, possibly during the 2000-2001 school year.

## **The Future of the Program**

During the 2000-2001 school year, the SMMUSD Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program is likely to achieve two core objectives – expansion of the program to every school in the District and full institutionalization of the program by establishing the program coordinator and site coordinators as permanent positions within Food and Nutrition Services. A logo designed by a student at Santa Monica High School has been printed on shirts for everyone involved with the program to further state the centrality of the program at the school sites. However, a number of issues still need to be addressed in order to continue to maintain and strengthen the program. These include further securing the financial stability of the program, the need to strengthen the role of the site coordinator position and develop a stronger volunteer base at each school site, and the need for greater recognition by the District leadership of the centrality of the program. There are also opportunities that can be pursued to achieve not only expansion of the program but establishing what has been identified as a “whole schools” approach linking the school food program to curriculum and to the community.

### ***Financial Stability***

The financial issues for the program are related in part to its future development. On the one hand, as the cost analysis in this Report has indicated, the cost per meal for the

salad bar compares favorably to the unit cost of a hot meal. By integrating the salad bar program as a central component of the overall operation of Food and Nutrition Services, the Director of Food Services has also been able to accomplish a staff reorganization that includes a permanent program coordinator position, without increasing staff costs. The site coordinator positions have been funded by a combination of grant funding and PTA support. Grant funding has secured positions at the low-income or “lower-income” schools (where the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced meals is higher, e.g., >40%), while PTA support has been essential at the “wealthier” schools (where the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced meals is lower, e.g., < 40%).

***By December 2000, SMMUSD will have created 12 new permanent positions for the Farmers’ Market Salad Bar site coordinators.***

While funding through grant monies is still a significant opportunity, funding directly by the City and School District (perhaps through a matched program) for the whole program, including expanded site coordinator roles should ultimately occur in order to make those positions permanent.

***Expansion of Site Coordinator Role and Volunteer Base***

In September 2000, the site coordinators position will be changed to Cafeteria Worker, Level 1 rather than the current classification of Special Services Worker. Each coordinator will be tested for this position and the positions will be funded through the district rather than temporary “soft money.” While the wage level will go down slightly, the position comes with additional benefits. And it is a position that is represented by the union. Thus, the program will have created 14 new union-represented

positions in the Cafeteria Worker, Level 1 classification.

The Occidental College Community Food Security Project recommends an expansion of job description, training, and hours for the site coordinator position along with an expansion of the position description to include a link to school garden activity. This could include maintenance and supervision of existing school gardens of special salad bar plots as well as the development of new gardens at schools where there are no existing gardens. As part of the salad bar and school garden programs, composting programs can be established (if they have not already been so), with the trimmings from the salad bar preparation can then be recycled as a nutrient source in the garden through

composting. Adding this step in the cycle would also help the district to meet its needs to cut down on waste generated. Similar to the school garden, maintenance and supervision of the composting program can and should be included as part of the site coordinator’s activities. At the same time, the site coordinators could work closely with teachers and parents, to link their outreach activities to curriculum. This could include, for example, helping arrange farm tours and visits by farmers to the classroom, as well as tours to the farmers’ market.

To achieve the goal of additional hours and expanded activities for the site coordinators, training programs should be pursued (such as the Gardening Angels program for the school garden aspect of the work). More broadly, a food and nutrition and/or sustainable schools training program could also be developed in conjunction with

the City of Santa Monica's Environmental Programs Division.

The development of the salad bar program at each school is also dependent on securing an active program of volunteer support and parent involvement. This can be accomplished in part by making the farmers' market itself a more visible presence at the school. This could include coupon programs, farmers' market tastings for parents as well as for students, and by establishing farm-to-school initiatives for after-school programs (e. g., a healthy snacks program), where parent interaction is often more substantial for working parents.

### ***Need for District-wide Recognition***

Each of these activities would be enhanced through a more active outreach program at the community level as well as within the District itself. One of the ironies of the SMMUSD's farmers' market salad bar program is that it has achieved widespread recognition at the regional, statewide, and national level, but not strong recognition within the School District nor within City and community forums. The program has been popular at each of the schools where it has been operating but there has been limited attention to the development and expansion of the program by the school board. Unlike the Berkeley Unified School District which established an overarching policy on food prior to the development of a farmers' market salad bar program, SMMUSD has established a program, largely on an incremental basis, without establishing a formal policy at the board level. The Occidental CFS Project would recommend that such a policy now be developed, perhaps modeled on the Berkeley policy, both for its own value and for the increased recognition of the farmers' market program itself.

Similarly, while the City of Santa Monica has been a strong supporter of the program, through its farmers' market program, specific financial support for the program, and participation by a staff member of Environmental Programs in the Food and Nutrition Advisory Committee, it has not been a focus for policy or activity on the part of the City's Environmental Task Force nor by the City Council. Moreover, while there has been some recognition of the farmers' market salad bar by neighborhood and city-related organizations (such as the "Green Team" program), a natural, stronger community-school link can be established by highlighting the *community* benefit of the program. The farmers' market salad bar program helps establish new community constituencies (e.g., parents and families who become aware of the school salad bar) for the city's farmers' market program as well as enhances a city-wide "healthy foods" approach. The Occidental CFS Project would recommend stronger links, through the neighborhood associations and other community organizations or businesses (e.g., hospitals or restaurants), by identifying farm-to-school programs as just one aspect of a broader "farm-to-community" approach.

Finally, a new initiative launched by State Superintendent of Schools Delaine Eastin in conjunction with the Occidental Community Food Security project and several other advocates for a "farm-to-school" approach will seek to develop funding and support for innovative programs in California linking farm-to-school, school garden, and curriculum initiatives. Given its leadership with the salad bar program, SMMUSD should pursue this opportunity to extend its own program and demonstrate that it can still be at the cutting edge of the new approaches to healthy eating, learning, and sustainable schools and sustainable food systems.

## ***Recommendations***

Based on our analysis of the first three years of the farmers' market salad bar program and the issues and opportunities that should be addressed in its future development, we recommend the following:

- ***Expand the site coordinator position to a full-time position at each school site to include school garden, composting, and outreach as well as salad bar preparation responsibilities.***
- ***Develop a training program and secure permanent funding for the site coordinator positions.***
- ***Establish direct links to curriculum by working with teachers and curriculum development teams to develop a sustainable food and nutrition education component to the program.***
- ***Establish a formal school board policy on food and nutrition as part of a broader "sustainable food/sustainable schools" mission and program. Such a policy could be modeled by the nationally-recognized Berkeley Unified School District policy.***
- ***In purchases made through the district, the advisory board should come up with recommended criteria for purchasing from small and organic farmers and meet regularly with the FMSB coordinator to ensure the viability of meeting those criteria within the budget.***
- ***Food and Nutrition Services should continue to play a leadership role in shaping national policy to link small farms with school meals.***
- ***Establish greater efforts to increase the visibility of the farmers' market salad bar within the School District and with City and community organizations.***
- ***Participate in the new statewide initiative to link farm-to-school programs with school gardens, composting and food waste reduction, and curriculum initiatives.***
- ***Serve as a model to other school districts and identify funding to increase capacity to provide technical assistance to such school districts.***
- ***Fully fund the program from district and city funds rather than relying on outside grants which are less secure.***

In sum, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District's farmers' market salad bar program, based on our assessment, can be considered a major success in contributing to healthier diets for school children, support for local farmers and the farmers' market system, stronger awareness of food system issues, and as a major innovative approach to redefining the mission of the School Food Services department, the key entity in contributing to the success of the program. As it approaches the full institutionalization of its groundbreaking program, the SMMUSD faces new challenges in establishing policies and procedures that extend the link of the cafeteria to the classroom and of its schools to the community.