



### **Case Studies On Meal Quality In The Summer Food Program**

Prepared by Lucy Hicks for the Partnership for Children and Youth  
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The purpose of this report is to document recommendations to improve meal quality in five school districts in California during the summer of 2010. These five districts are: Whittier City School District (Los Angeles County), Central Unified School District (Fresno County), Gilroy Unified School District (Santa Clara County), San Francisco Unified School District (San Francisco County), and Oakland Unified School District (Alameda County).

### **Background**

In 1968, as part of an effort to feed free and reduced price meals to eligible children when not in school session, Congress established the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The pilot program became permanent in 1974. The program can be delivered to students during the summer in one of three ways:

- 1) If the district is on a year-round calendar, they may opt to continue to serve students under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) which is run during the school year.
- 2) As of 2001, districts have the option to serve meals during the summer under the Summer Seamless Option, which allows students in a 50% FRP eligible area the ability to receive free meals during the summer months. Reimbursements are at the free level.
- 3) Districts may partner with local city agencies (such as the Department of Parks and Recreation) or community-based organizations (such as the Boys and Girls Club). The city agency or community-based organization (CBO) can also directly sponsor the program to serve students who are not in either traditional school or summer school during the summer months. Reimbursements are given to the school district if they provide the meals or directly to the CBO who in most cases contracts out with a local vendor for the meals.

In California, 320 school districts statewide once offered SFSP to all students, whether they attended summer school on the districts' campuses or not. This number has decreased due to budgetary cuts and the elimination of many summer school programs. However, as you will see in several case studies in this report, some districts have continued to serve SFSP eligible students, even though they did not offer summer school in 2009-10.

In putting together recommendations for these five district summer meal programs, a consultant for the Partnership for Children and Youth, Lucy Hicks, reviewed meal planning requirements and best practices in summer meal provision from her experience with other California school districts. The Meal planning requirements for the SFSP (modified 10/5/2009) can be found at

[www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/Administration/meal\\_patterns.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/Administration/meal_patterns.html) and are as follows:

### **Breakfast meal Pattern (all three components for a reimbursable meal)**

1 milk	1 cup	fluid milk
1 fruit/vegetable	½ cup	whole fruit, juice (full strength), and/or vegetable
1 grains/bread	1 slice	bread or
	1 serving	cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or
	¾ cup	cold, dry cereal or
	½ cup	hot, cooked cereal or
	½ cup	pasta or noodles or grains

(Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour. Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified)

### **Lunch meal Pattern (all four components for a reimbursable meal)**

1 milk	1 cup	fluid milk
2 fruits/vegetables	¾ cup	juice, whole fruit (full strength) and/or vegetable
1 grains/breads	1 slice	bread or
	1 serving	cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or
	½ cup	hot, cooked cereal or
	½ cup	pasta or noodles or grains
1 meat/meat alternate	2 oz.	lean meat or poultry or fish (portion must be edible) or
	2 oz.	alternate protein product (such as tofu, tempeh, etc.) or
	2 oz.	cheese or
	1 large	egg or
	½ cup	cooked dry beans or peas or
	4 Tbsp.	peanut or other nut or seed butter or
	1 oz.	nuts and/or seeds or
	8 oz.	yogurt

Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour. Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified. Nuts and seeds may meet only one-half of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch requirement. Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.

Best practices in summer meal service include:

- 1) Provide locally grown produce
- 2) Provide locally procured entrée items, grain products, and milk
- 3) Survey students for input on menus
- 4) Test new menu ideas for the fall via the SFSP
- 5) Create as many “choice” options as possible (salad and fruit bars, sandwich stations, etc.)

**Case Study #1: Whittier City School District (Los Angeles County)**

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The Whittier City School District (K-8), along with the Whittier City High School District (9-12) resides in the city of Whittier along the eastern side of Highway 5 in Los Angeles County. The elementary district has a student population of 6,700 average daily attendance (ADA) and has 68% free and reduced price meal eligibility (FRPM) district wide. SFSP operated at 4 school sites in 2009-10 (2 middle schools and 2 elementary schools) with daily service averaging 480 students at the two middle schools, and 320 at the two elementary schools. The SFSP program ran for 5 weeks this summer with 20 total service days (with no service on Friday). The program served only the students who attended summer school and did not serve the community at large. The POS (Point of Sale – which allows students to scan their ID card or put in a pin number to identify each student) is in place for all meals served. Ms. Obregon stated that she intends to offer the summer seamless option of SFSP next year (2010-11).

Whittier City School District utilizes the enhanced menu option and implements a cycle menu. The district serves two meals in SFSP – breakfast for ½ hour and lunch for ½ hour. There are no operable cafeterias at the elementary sites and meals are served outside with no multi-purpose rooms available for service during rain or other poor weather conditions. This clearly deters from the many meal quality enhancements that could be offered. Ms. Obregon stated that her menu options are limited due to these circumstances; however, the following suggestions were made.

**Existing Menu: BREAKFAST**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Cereal (Fruit Whirls)	4 oz. yogurt	Cereal (Honey Nut)	Banana Mini Loaf
String Cheese	Apple Slices	Colby Cheese stick	Wild Berry Juice
Orange Juice	Milk	Banana	Milk
Milk		Milk	

**Suggested Menu:**

Whole grain cereal (no added sugar)	Add 1 serving whole grain to make compliant	Menu compliant	Banana Mini Loaf (whole grain) Fresh fruit (local)
String cheese			Wild Berry Juice
Orange wedges			Milk
Milk			

**Existing Menu: LUNCH**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Twin Cheeseburger	Cheese Pizza	Corn Dog	Bean and Cheese Burrito
Green Salad	Green Beans	Baby Carrots	Seasoned Corn
Banana	Diced Peaches	Orange	Mixed Fruit
Milk	Milk	Milk	Milk

**Suggested Menu:**

Whole wheat or enriched bun	Pizza dough should be whole grain	Change entrée to a healthier option, unless corn dog coating is whole grain	Tortilla should be whole wheat Fruits and vegetables should be fresh, not canned
Fresh fruit (local)			
A large variety of vegetables in the salad			
Fruit should be seasonal			

The above changes were recommended to Ms. Obregon. It was suggested that as many fresh fruits and vegetables as possible should be made available since they were in season. Ms. Obregon agreed to revisit purchasing fresh, local fruit for her meals programs and, if the facilities issue is resolved, proposed to pursue more “communal” meals in the SFSP next year – some of the suggestions were: a fresh sandwich bar, a seasonal fruit/vegetable salad bar, more locally procured products to create fresh, homemade entrees (rather than prepackaged, purchased entrees), and input from students regarding their summer meals.

**Case Study #2: Central Unified School District (Fresno County)**

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The Central Unified School District resides in the heart of Fresno County, close to one of California’s largest cities – Fresno. The area is rural with an abundance of local, sustainable agriculture. The district is a K-12 district with a current year ADA of 14,500. CUSD’s FRPM was 64% district wide for 2009-10. In the summer of 2010, there were 4 SFSP sites in the district – Central HS East, El Capitan Middle School, Harvest Elementary School, and Herndon Barstow Elementary School. Three of the four offered summer school with the 4<sup>th</sup> site strictly for SFSP. All four sites implemented the summer seamless option. Between 80 and 120 students were served at El Capitan MS which served lunch only with a cold and a hot entrée choice. This site has the most communal setting with the meals served outside with parents joining students. Parents were required to purchase their meals as they cannot be served for free. At the high school site (Central HS East), over 1,000 meals were served per day for SFSP. There were a summer enrichment program, two summer school sessions, and roughly 100 community members participating.

Ms. Pollack has stated that she is committed to purchasing all fresh fruit served in meals across the board at Central USD (breakfast, lunch, snack, SFSP) from local vendors and has established excellent working relationships with farmers in the district’s geographic area. The SFSP program models many of the meals that are currently served in NSLP – bean burritos, chicken teriyaki on rice, taco sticks, pizza, chicken nuggets, macaroni and cheese.

**Existing Menu: BREAKFAST (Elementary Schools)**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Power Alley Bar w/Cheese Stick 100% Fruit Juice Milk	Breakfast Quesadilla 100% Fruit Juice Milk	Cherry Turnover 100% Fruit Juice Milk	Breakfast Bean and Cheese Burrito Milk	Apple Cinnamon Muffin 100% Fruit Juice Milk

**Suggested Menu:**

Fresh fruit with each meal is much healthier for students than juice, although fresh fruit is served with lunch. Also, to avoid sugar items, eliminate the cherry turnover (unless the dough is whole grain or enriched)

**Existing Menu: LUNCH (Elementary Schools)**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Turkey & Cheese Sub Sandwich	Little Smokies w/ Baked Beans and Corn Muffin	Toasted Cheese Sandwich	Cheese Pizza Tossed Green Salad	Taco Sticks Carrot Sticks
Carrot and Celery Sticks	Tossed Green Salad	Carrot and Celery Sticks	Mixed Fruit Orange Juice Bar	Spiced Apples Raisins
Fresh Apples	Orange Slices	Diced Pears	Chocolate or White Milk	Chocolate or White Milk
Elf Grahams	Peach Fruit Pops	Granola Bar		
Chocolate or White Milk	Chocolate or White Milk	Chocolate or White Milk		

**Suggested Menu:**

Vegetables should vary. Suggestions were jicama sticks, radishes, sliced bell peppers, or anything fresh that would give the student a variety. Chocolate milk should be eliminated due to sugar content. We noticed that Central USD serves local, fresh stone fruit in the high school and middle school menus and suggest commodities fruit be utilized during the regular school year via healthy desserts (canned) or smoothies (frozen) and that elementary students benefit from the fresh fruit during the summer just as the older students do.

The menu options at Central USD were excellent, in our opinion. Ms. Patton and her staff clearly make every effort to incorporate fresh, local produce into the menus and give the students healthy, yet appealing entrees. Although we were not able to make a site visit to this district and see the program during serving, we believe this menu could be a sound model for other districts throughout the state that are starting up an SFSP program.

**Case Study #3:**

**Gilroy Unified School District (Santa Clara County)**

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Gilroy Unified School District, located in the southern part of Santa Clara County, has a student population of close to 10,000 with a 68% FRPM eligibility district wide. The district currently contracts with Sodexo to provide all student meals in accordance with USDA regulations for NSLP, School Breakfast Program, After School Snack Program, and SFSP.

The district ran 3 SFSP sites for 2009-10 – Eliot, Glenview, and Brownell. The district also had summer school at Christopher High School, but did not include them in the SFSP outreach. One hundred flyers announcing the program were distributed to over 100 CBOs to announce free breakfast and lunch, indicating serving times and serving sites. These flyers were posted at the offices of the CBOs for public viewing.

Average daily SFSP service ran as follows: 250 meals at Eliot, 300 meals at Glenview, and 120 meals at Brownell. The program administrator reported that all SFSP schools offered the summer enrichment program where attending students were served breakfast and lunch before community-based students who were not enrolled in the enrichment program were served.

**Existing Menu: BREAKFAST (Elementary Schools)**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cereal Bar	Cereal Bar	Cereal Bar	Cereal Bar	Cereal Bar
Breakfast on a Stick	Waffle Sticks Sausage	Breakfast Pizza Fresh Fruit	French Toast Sticks Sausage	Pancake & Sausage Fresh Fruit
Fresh Fruit	Fresh Fruit	Milk	Fresh Fruit	Milk
Milk	Milk		Milk	

**Suggested Menu:**

Daily cereal bars are unnecessary with the other entrée components – grain requirement were exceeded. While these entrees are not unhealthy, more variety such as hot cereal like oatmeal or cream of wheat and breakfast burritos have proven popular in other similar districts. Fruit should be seasonal, not out of season like the currently served bananas, apples, and oranges.

**Existing Menu: LUNCH (Elementary Schools)**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Ham and Cheese Sandwich	Salami and Cheese Sandwich	Bologna & Cheese Sandwich	Turkey & Cheese Sandwich	Combo or Tuna Sandwich
Corn Dog	Hamburger	Spaghetti	Pizza	Bean/Cheese Burrito
Fresh Vegetables	Fresh Vegetables	Fresh Vegetables	Fresh Vegetables	Fresh Vegetables
Fresh Fruit	Fresh Fruit	Fresh Fruit	Frsh Fruit	Fresh Fruit
Milk	Milk	Milk	Milk	Milk

\*\* Salad bar served with each meal

**Suggested Menu:**

Milk served is either 1% chocolate or white. Chocolate milk should be eliminated. Students have a choice of either entrée – in this case, we find it helpful to offer at least one vegetarian entree. Past experience has shown that daily sandwiches are not too appealing to students. Our suggestion would be to have a sandwich option two or three days per week and fill in the other days with a hot entrée. As mentioned above in the breakfast suggestions, all fruit and vegetables should be seasonal and the district should pursue contact with local growers.

Ms. Reedy stated that the district had been working closely with Sodexo around quality issues in order to increase participation. Ms. Reedy also stated that chips and cookies have been eliminated from the menu.

The district has made great strides in outreach efforts for the SFSP program, keeping in mind that the existence of the summer enrichment programs helps boost participation. Time limitations for meal serving were an issue this year due to multiple programs running in facilities that were designated for eating.

Knowing that the district has made strides in offering whole fruit and salad bars with each meal, our recommendations (which were agreed upon) were to initiate partnerships with local fruit and vegetable growers in order to provide sustainability in all programs. This practice has proven to be more cost effective for districts in California that are buying local.

**Case Study #4:****San Francisco Unified School District (San Francisco County)**

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San Francisco Unified School District has over 140 schools (K-12) and over 60,000 students with close to 65% FRPM eligibility district wide. The Nutrition Services Department, which serves close to 25,000 meals per day has made great strides in improving the quality of their school meals by doing the following:

- Fresh, locally procured fruits and vegetables served on salad bars at many elementary schools, all middle schools and all high schools and fresh packs (consisting of carrots, celery sticks, zucchini sticks, and jicama) to elementary schools without a salad bar
- Whole grain breads from local vendors
- Whole grain rice, pasta, and pizza crust
- Locally grown organic fruit 1 day per month
- Grab and Go Breakfast at 3 sites
- Student approved and taste tested entrees

The SFSP program is run by the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families in conjunction with the San Francisco Unified School District, which delivers the meals to the sites. Preferred Meals prepares the meals and vends to SFDCYF. With the absence of summer school this year, SFUSD did not sponsor any SFSP sites.

In the past, SFSP menus have consisted of different types of sandwiches with no hot entrees. This year, SFDCYF worked with Preferred Meals and SFUSD to include hot entrée items along with salads and local fruit. The district has committed to purchasing a large percentage of their fruit for all their schools meals from local growers. They have also been supportive of eliminating only sandwiches and serving hot entrees.

Last year, an average of 5,500 meals was served per day at all SFSP sites. Because there are many varied ethnicities within San Francisco, what is served in the SFSP meals varies by geographic area and aligns specifically with what students are used to eating at home. Labor costs and cost of meal preparation versus federal/state reimbursement has proven to be challenging. Suggestions were made to incorporate more commodities products into the meals and purchase locally.

Menus were not available from SF DCYF.

**Case Study #5:**

Oakland Unified School District (Alameda County)

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The Oakland Unified School District is the largest district in Alameda County with an ADA of close to 40,000 students (and over 6,000 public charter school students) and FRPM eligibility of 64%. The district operates Provision 2 which is a specific claiming option in the NSLP that allows all students to eat for no charge. 45 sites currently offer Provision 2 and, of those, 39 sites offer free breakfast and free lunch and 6 sites offer free breakfast only.

The district adopted its Health and Wellness Policy several years ago and has spent an incredible amount of energy in changing the following:

- Elimination of high sugar items in school meals and a la carte items sold on campuses
- Scratch cooking at all high schools
- Non-fat and 1% milk only at all sites
- Elimination of white flour – all flour used is whole grain
- Salad bar programs at 32 sites
- 100% fruit juice only
- Harvest of the Month program at over 50 sites
- Goal set to be 25% locally procured by 2015
- 2010 “Soda Free Summer” campaign city-wide – this was through partnerships with the city of Oakland and the Alameda County Food Bank

SFSP was operated for 2010-11 at 6 sites in conjunction with the East Bay Asian Youth Center. The district vended all meals (morning snack and lunch) to the sites. Highlights in the program were Meatless Mondays, fresh local produce daily, and hydration stations. Outreach for program participation was done in conjunction with the Alameda County Food Bank and the Alameda County Health Department via press releases, flyers and banners.

**Existing Menu: Morning Snack**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Bear Grahams Milk	Lowfat Yogurt 100% Apple Juice	Sausage Biscuit 100% Fruit Juice Punch	Asst Cereal (Cold) Milk	Banana Mini Loaf Milk

**Suggested Menu:**

Addition of whole fruit would be enticing. Some districts throughout the state provide a USDA funded fresh fruit during morning snack. The district may want to apply for this program (USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program – funded annually)

**Existing Menu: LUNCH**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Whole Wheat Grilled Cheese	Cheeseburger on Whole Grain Bun	Pepperoni Pizza (WG*) Cheese Pizza (WG)	Deli Sandwich (WG) Taquitos	Soft Chicken Tacos Grilled Chicken Salad
Cheese Quesadilla Fresh baby carrots	Cucumber/Tomato Salad Fresh Grapes	Spinach Salad Banana	Tossed Salad Peach	Cauliflower w/Ranch Honeydew Melon
100% Fruit Juice Milk	Fresh Fruit Milk	Milk	Milk	Milk

\* WG = Whole Grain

**Suggested Menu:**

Fresh fruits and vegetables are served daily on this menu. All bread products are whole grain. Entrée offerings are appealing and service those students who are vegetarian. This district has done a wonderful job enhancing their menu to incorporate healthy choice items.

Oakland USD has made tremendous strides toward a healthier, more nutritious menu. We were very impressed by their incorporation of fresh fruits and vegetables into each meal. Suggestions (which were merely around elimination of chocolate milk) were accepted wholeheartedly and we look forward to seeing many more new and exciting options at this district regarding food choices. Ms. LeBarre and her staff have done an excellent job upgrading the menu and this is an outstanding example of good nutrition offerings in SFSP.

## **Conclusion**

For many years, the school food community has been working to improve the quality of school meals by encouraging the use of fresh, local, healthy food. The districts highlighted in this report are part of this movement and have made significant strides in the recent past to serve more nutritious and sustainable meals. We hope that the analysis in this report is encouraging and that the recommended improvements are achievable.

Many students, particularly those in low income communities, have serious food distress issues at home and, particularly in these times of recession, many families depend on school meals. At the same time, participation in SFSP is still very low statewide, compared to participation in the NSLP and the School Breakfast Program throughout the school year. With state budget reductions, many districts are no longer offering summer school or operating summer meal sites. Where summer meals are being offered, communities work hard to encourage participation. The districts highlighted in this report all did extensive outreach efforts and partnered with CBOs to spread the word. They also offered summer enrichment programs at the sites which attracted participants and their families to the summer meals.

While the SFSP offers many benefits to the communities it serves, it could be improved. Food advocates in California and across the country are working for an increased federal reimbursement rate, a lower FRPM requirement from 50% to 40% (or even 30%), and more partnering between school districts and CBO SFSP sites. With these changes, the NSLP and the SFSP will be well positioned to support young people's and families' nutritional needs throughout the year.