



FRESNO METRO MINISTRY • www.fresnometroministry.org

1055 North Van Ness Avenue • Suite H • Fresno, California 93728

PHONE: 559/485.1416 • FAX: 559/485.9109 • EMAIL: metromin@fresnometmin.org

Excerpts and Summary of the 54th Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum

Wednesday, April 13, 2005 12:00PM -1:30PM
Trinity Lutheran Church, Fresno

Sponsored by Fresno Metro Ministry

Supported by:

USDA, Community Food Project

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

California Food Policy Advocates

Kaiser Permanente

Vitamin Settlement Cases Consumer Settlement Fund to improve the health and nutrition of CA consumers

Community Alliance with Family Farmers



**NO HUNGER FORUM
IN MAY - JOIN US ON
THE HUNGER ACTION
DAY BUS TRIP**

FOCUS - *School Breakfast: From Farm to Classroom*

Compiled by Carey Berend and Jeremy Hofer

HUNGER AND NUTRITION FORUM

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

FARM TO SCHOOL includes cafeterias, farmers, nutrition education, ag curriculum in the classroom, and school gardens in a program which give students healthy food choices while they are at school and at the same time teaches them good eating habits and where their food comes from.

In January of this year, **Fresno Metro Ministry** received a grant from **Community Alliance with Family Farmers** to do a feasibility study on implementing Farm to School in the Central Valley. What we've found is that there is a lot of local support for Farm to School because many food service directors and teachers come from farming families. Metro is now collaborating with its partners in the development of a Family-Farm Cooperative which will be able to service school districts in the Central Valley with fresh great-tasting produce

LUCY HICKS is the school nutrition coordinator with California Food Policy Advocates. She works with School Districts throughout the state assist them with their school meals to think outside of the box and look for healthier options for kids.

Lucy Hicks: The most important thing when we're looking at school breakfasts is to increase healthy participation in school breakfast. What we really want to look at is, first of all, whether kids are eating breakfast at all. Do they eat anything in the morning before they go to school? If they are eating, what are they eating? Are they eating sugary donuts and soda and Cheetos or are they eating healthier options like milk or cereal or something, and where are they getting those things? Are they getting those healthy/unhealthy foods from their school or are they going and buying them somewhere or are they getting them at home?

Fifteen percent, or one out of seven, elementary and middle school kids do not eat breakfast at all, so that means they have nothing in their stomach to start their day. Eighty-five percent of high school students do not eat breakfast. Obviously, lower income equals fewer meals, so if you look at this graph from National Health and Nutrition Survey, from ages 1 to 10, 93 percent of kids eat

WWW.BREAKFASTFIRST.ORG

"This particular website of ours will tell you everything you ever wanted to know about school breakfast and about some of the really healthy things that are being done, *particularly in Farm to School*, with school breakfast."

breakfast, but from the 12 to 19 group only 14 percent eat breakfast. If kids don't eat school breakfast, if they're not eating breakfast at school, and **the norm across the state right now is about 30 percent participation in breakfast at school**, what do they eat? Twenty-nine percent of kids whose parents made their breakfast at home ate more fresh fruits and vegetables compared to 47 percent of all the school breakfast eaters. Kids who don't eat school breakfast eat less calcium, fiber, and vitamin C than kids who do, so we know that the breakfasts that are provided at the schools are much healthier than nothing or sometimes what they get at home. Kids who don't eat school breakfast eat more sugar. Eating breakfast is a healthy habit, obviously. Overweight kids are more likely than healthy-weight peers to skip breakfast. That's a very important fact. **Eating breakfast lowers fat intake and limits snacking.** Obviously, eating breakfast or skipping breakfast is linked to greater body fat.

We wanted to look at what the stats look like for breakfast eaters versus non-breakfast eaters in terms of five a day, more fresh fruits and vegetables. Kids that eat breakfast meet their five a day quota or exceed it or get close to it. We're doing a huge promotion on school breakfast right now addressing not only participation and access for schools that don't serve breakfast but quality as well by getting more fresh fruits and vegetables in the breakfast program. I don't know if all of you know this, but **schools do not get any commodities at all for school breakfast, so no fruits or vegetables at all, so the Farm to School concept, particularly in breakfast, is really exciting to me.**

In Provision 2 or UNIVERSAL FEEDING all kids are equal. They eat for free, so there is no stigma in terms of free, reduced, or pay. You need a high free and reduced percentage, it can be site based or district based. You're not collecting that application from kids every year, which we all know is very difficult to get and sustain. Universal feeding eliminates the paid category completely and local revenue so that you're not dealing with money at all. By eliminating the co-pay, your participation increases, and most importantly, it removes the stigma so that all students are equal. Provision 2 in breakfast particularly increases the likelihood of students eating breakfast at school. Students know they can come to school, have a breakfast on their desk or in their cafeteria, and have more fresh fruit and vegetable options in that meal, so it ensures better quality and it's more nutritionally balanced. **We're looking for State funding to add a fresh fruit in school breakfasts all over the state every day.** We have a pilot school that's going to be doing it in Santa Clara County.

VENTURA SCHOOL DISTRICT FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM:

I never eat at my school districts, but when I went to a meeting at Ventura and was lucky to have the fresh fruit and vegetable salad bar for a meeting that I was out there for, and it was just amazing. The director of Ventura Unified, **Sandy VanHouten**, is a former healthcare professional. She's a very, very innovative woman and very willing to step way outside of the box to do things to help her students. She calls her Farm to School Project the *Healthy School Project*, and it builds a lifelong attitude and skills that foster healthy food choices. She really promotes her school lunch program, increases her kids' awareness of the relationship between agriculture and the food they eat, and creates connections among the schools, the community, and the farmers. There are a lot of farmers in Ventura County that she has really worked hard to build a relationship with. She has a Farm to School salad bar that she serves, I believe, two or three times a week that is just absolutely incredible. She also has Farm to School options in her breakfast bar, so this is how she's serving breakfast rather than in the cafeteria just in the line or in the classroom. She has these breakfast bars with all kinds of different choices. She has classroom enhanced nutrition, so nutrition is taught in the classroom. They do garden-based learning. They do a lot of work out in their gardens. Their nutrition and physical activity taskforce is very, very highly involved in a lot of the things they do at the school.

FARM TO SCHOOL SALAD BARS:

Just the way it looks is so appealing to me with the fruits and vegetables up on the top. Sandy has them at 19 of her schools. The salad bar is twice a week. She has a theme bar which she offers once a week. The salad bar specifically is used for fruit and vegetable choices on non-salad-bar days, so she still uses it but not specifically as a stand-alone. **The Salad Bars meet all the USDA nutritional requirements, which is very important, and build skills needed for making healthy choices so the kids are really learning at an early age to make healthy choices.**

FARMER PARTICIPATION:

Starting in 2000-2001 there were only two local farmers involved. Now the Ventura Farm to School Program program is up to 25. The farmers come in and talk to the classes, which is really great. There are farm tours where the students actually go to the farms and tour the farms.

NUTRITION EDUCATION:

Sandy also has enhanced nutrition education where the younger kids are really involved. You see them here making food. They have a recipe. It supplements basic curriculum to emphasize healthy habits, integrates experience with classroom learning, and the kids really learn the connection between the food and where it comes from. **There is classroom taste testing where the kids actually taste different fruits and vegetables in the class.** She has class visits and cooking demonstrations. She has staff training, and then of course we always have to think about the state standards, so she integrates all of that.

She wants to expand her Healthy School Project to middle and high school sites, because right now she's just doing it at elementary schools. She wants to further integrate nutrition education into the standards, develop project sustainability, which is very important, have a district-wide garden team, more collaboration, and of course we all have to put together our wellness policies by 2006, so that's what she's working on as well. This is what her taskforce does. They really work with her on fundraising and being able to sustain her program and making sure that the things they're doing comply with SB 19 and SB 677. Her teachers and her whole community is very, very involved in the program.

Participant question: Is the project in Ventura using organic farms only or conventional or both?

Lucy Hicks: I believe she uses both.

BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM:

("Everybody Eats!" In the background)

This is an elementary school where they're actually packing the claimable breakfast in a little red wagon. It's called the Little Red Wagon Program. They pack the milk and the cold items in one cooler and the warm items in another. The students come into the kitchen and get the wagon when they get to school in the morning, take it into the classroom, and the kids consume their breakfast at their desk while the teacher is teaching. **There is a complete communal atmosphere in the classroom and all the kids are equal.** The teachers really like to talk about how it ties into their curriculum as well, which I think is really important because we all know that teachers have to meet the state standards in terms of instructional time.

Everyone we interviewed said it's a great program, the kids are less tardy, there is less sickness, they're all eating, they're performing better on their tests, all these things that we know are great selling points for administrators.

GRAB & GO CARTS:

This is the high school. I had mentioned earlier that 87 percent of high school kids don't eat breakfast. These kids are actually participating. The grab-and-go carts with fresh fruits and vegetables move all over their school campus and they have a claimable meal on them, so they can pull their meal in between period one and two as they transition into their next class. **When Cutler-Orosi first started this program, out of 900 kids he had about 125 participating. Now he has two-thirds of the population of the school participating in the program.** The kids actually do take the fresh fruits, and he's thinking of putting more fruit and vegetable options and Farm to School options on the claimable cart.

"The teachers that are interviewed in this video talk about how they can integrate the classroom breakfast into their day in terms of their instructional time and how it's working so well."

**To receive the "Everybody Eats! Breakfast for Learning Video" contact Lucy Hicks
(707) 781-6999
lucyhicks@earthlink.net**

Betsy Blossom: I'm wondering how long it takes for the kids to consume this breakfast.

Lucy Hicks: Ten minutes. That's it. They go in before the bell to get the wagon. The wagons are all prepped and ready. They bring them into the classroom. They check in with their teacher and the teacher actually does the point of service by taking attendance and then they consume their breakfast, they're done in ten minutes, the garbage is gone, and then that's it.

Participant question: You mentioned the garbage. How much waste is there?

Lucy Hicks: Well, the waste is typical of a school district. Obviously, a lot of our directors are concerned about recycling and those types of things. In many districts the waste is picked through and recycled out, but there's not a whole lot of food waste at all because it's really down to a fine art. The kids eat everything that's sent in there.

Participant question: At the high school you were saying that they were able to use the grab-and-go cart between first and second periods, and I noticed there was a cash register. Is this also free or is there a fee?

Lucy Hicks: There's no fee. It's probably a cash register that's just attached to the cart because they use it for other things like fundraising events or something at their high school. The video showed a PIN pad where they actually put their PIN number in and then they're identified in the system as taking the meal, so that's how they're claimed.

Participant question: Is the farmer able to sell directly to the school district or do the school districts or the individual schools prefer to have a cooperative to work with?

Lucy Hicks: There are districts that do both. Jeff can talk to this, I'm sure, because he's going to talk in a moment about his Farm to School Program in his district. Some districts like to deal directly with the farmers and get their produce and everything directly from them. Some like to co-op because then they have more options and choices. Obviously, if you're buying in bulk it's hard sometimes to have the farmer have enough product, so the co-op is a good idea in many counties.

Participant question: Are they working directly with the school districts or are they going through the Department of Defense Program?

Lucy Hicks: Both, because they do participate in DOD. I've seen some DOD deliveries throughout the state. Some of them are wonderful, some of them are not so wonderful. That's kind of a hard one. I as an advocate would love to tackle that program some day because I've worked a lot with the Commodities Food Program. Whether or not there is going to be more availability in DOD is hard to say. I find it a shame to drive through the state and see so much product out there growing and have none of it coming into the schools.

Participant comment: We tried to work with DOD up in Davis and Sacramento for those school districts with CAFF and other organizations. It was such a cumbersome project and many of the farmers just dropped out. The paperwork was horrendous. There was one tangerine/mandarin grower that was supplying them, but I'm not even sure whether he's still with them or not. It was just a long, involved process.

Lucy Hicks: Yes, it's a shame, too, because having been on the other side of receiving some of that product, I would get product that I couldn't use. It would either be overripe and spoiled or it would not be ripe at all and I just couldn't give it to my kids.

Participant question: Are the fruits and vegetables organic or just random?

Lucy Hicks: They're a little bit of both. I think that Sandy, who is the director there, is trying to go more and more organic. The biggest thing that faces so many directors – and again, Jeff is here so he is perfect to talk about this – is the challenge of costs because organic product costs more money than nonorganic product. That's why I like the concept of the co-op because I think that there is a better type of price break there. Jeremy and I were out at a district last week where I was talking to him about the possibility in West Fresno of doing some kind of organic co-oping in terms of Farm to School product, so it's an idea that we hopefully will pursue.

Participant question: I know there are a lot of oranges and strawberries and everything like that. How about kiwis, mangos, that kind of thing? Are any farmers growing those items in Ventura?

Lucy Hicks: In the Commodities Food Program, which I just talked about, the DOD, there was a huge abundance of kiwis recently. Did you get all those kiwis that they were offering, the kiwis and the avocados? I know that a lot of our directors just took as much as they could because there was this blitz of kiwi and avocado, so it's not always just the apple, orange kind of concept. You do get other things. I've never seen a mango in the DOD program, though, unfortunately.

Participant question: Are there some sort of guidelines that you have as to which products you will buy or where you buy them from? Do you buy things from Oregon or from other states or is it all from California in terms of these programs in Ventura?

Lucy Hicks: These are all bought locally. All the products that are in these programs are local.

I would like to introduce Jeff because I do want to say this. About two months ago I was lucky enough to go out to Sanger and actually see for myself the incredible things that Jeff is doing at his school district. I met Jeff at a conference several years ago when he was at Tipton, and now he is the director at Sanger and has just made all the difference in the world at that school. I was incredibly impressed, and I'm hard to impress. I'm very pleased to introduce Jeff Davidson, who is the director of food services at Sanger Unified.

JEFF DAVIDSON *is the Food Service Director at Sanger Unified School District. For the past 35 years Jeff Davidson has worked in the food service industry, in restaurants, hotels, and healthcare facilities. About 4 years ago he took over at Sanger Unified as and has implemented many positive changes there including what he calls "Farm to Classroom".*

Jeff Davidson: A lot of people don't know the school food service was started up because during the draft of World War II there were so many people who were malnourished and couldn't be drafted to go fight, so Congress enacted the act which gave us school breakfast programs. As you can see, Robert over at Cutler-Orosi uses Provision 2 school-wide, all his kids eat for free. When I came to Sanger I came into a different entity. Some sites are 98 percent free and reduced, some sites 20 percent free and reduced, so we had this big mix of schools and mix of things to do.

I want to get into how Farm to School came about. We started a breakfast pilot program in one of our poorest schools in hopes that it would magnet other schools to come on board because principals are very competitive, and it worked. **We went from 150,000 breakfasts a year to 850,000 breakfasts. We went from serving 40 pieces of fruit in a basket to now we're doing 200,000 pieces of fruit a month. We took away the juices.** What facilitated me to go start this Farm to School Program was not something I read. It was the cost of the produce I was buying and the fact that I was teaching cooking classes to my students and my students had no idea where the food came from. They had no idea if broccoli was a bush or a tree. That really fried me. So Cathy, one of my site managers who is also a small farmer, said, "Hey, let's go find some oranges locally." That's how it was born. I went to a packing house. I buy a case of oranges for \$7. That same case today from a produce company costs \$17.

I had a teacher call me up and I went down to a site and she was very perturbed because there was a little bit of mold around the stem. I asked her where she shopped and she said Save Mart. They polish their fruit and it's all perfect. She's never gone to a discount store. She's never gone to a field and picked an apple. Her concept is that it should be shiny just like Save Mart. **So then I saw a second reason for Farm to School. The teachers. We have to educate them as well as the kids.**

Right now we have oranges and tangerines going and we just got a connection for large strawberries. When peaches and pears and plums come in we're going to do those. I was lucky because we have an infrastructure. We have two big kitchens which transport, so I have four trucks and I have the ability to go out and pick up my fruit from the local packing houses. I try to avoid local farmers, the farmers themselves in the field, because I'm looking for universal size. When the state comes in and does the CRE audit if I say I'm serving a medium orange they had best all be medium or I'm going to be in trouble, so for that uniformity I go to packing houses of local farmers. They love me because I'll call them up and order five pallets, I'll go pick up five pallets and distribute the fruit, so **I'm saving money hands over fist on this program and I'm offering fresh fruit to the kids.**

We also do breakfast in the class at the ritzier schools, schools that are 20 or 30 percent free and reduced. We do what's called a no-charge breakfast. **Why should a free breakfast be related to their income? It shouldn't. Breakfast helps the kids learn.** Study after study after study shows hungry kids don't learn, period. I have one or two teachers that are still not on board. That alone means we should keep this program because we're feeding that many more kids.

KICKING OUT THE JUICE:

I had managers come up to me when I first put the fresh fruit out there and they said, "What are you doing? The kids like juice. They're going to hang us! We're going to have a riot on our hands because the kids want juice." So we took away the juice and there was a rumble for maybe one day and all of a sudden the fruit went nuts. We got to the point in Sanger where we had to build more refrigerators, we had to build more storage because we created this monster with this fruit. All of a sudden we went from ten cases of bananas to two or three hundred cases of bananas. If they come in green we wonder where we're going to put these things until they turn yellow. A lot of things have evolved with our program.

We serve a box now, so the kid grabs a box, he/she opens it up, and there's a banana, orange, plum, whatever is in there, his entrée, and milk. We did away district-wide with juices. We're seeing so much less stomachaches. **I believe in the last study we did, 65 percent of the stomachaches disappeared because now we had fruit instead of juice. Juice is not bulk and fruit is, so the kids eat an orange and they're not hungry before lunch. It saves you money, it educates the children, and it supports local farmers.**

When you get these kids to participate in a breakfast program, your lunch participation goes up. We communicate with the children. Every site has a student council so we ask the kids what they like and what they don't like. Sometimes, too bad, that's what you're getting, but most of the time they tell us what they like. We could sit there and say, "Well, we don't want to do it because of the fat." No. We analyze our recipes, we make it compliant with state regulations, and we serve it, so we have participation. Ninety-five percent of our students eat on campus. Even in our high school, which has open campus, we captured 95 percent of our kids. They eat on campus because we serve foods they want. We ask them what they want and we serve it. We've gone from a negative of a quarter million dollars a year in operation to a positive, and that's by participation. We bring the kids in.

If you don't have trucks to deliver, you'll find farmers out there will deliver it for you. Believe it or not, they're out there and you can bring this fruit in.

Now we talk about cost. The state gives us on a child who is completely free \$1.43 for a special needy breakfast. If you can save ten cents a meal you're talking good money. **When you start talking about doing 6,500 breakfasts a day and 8,100 lunches a day and you're talking ten cents a meal, that**

saves me some money. I can hire more people and do more fresh products. So cost is everything to the food service director. It's absolutely everything. You have to meet the costs if you want to implement a program, so therefore the Farm to Class is perfect. It's a perfect fit for school food service.

I'd like to invite anybody out to Sanger Unified. If you want to come out I'll give you the tour, or if you just want to come out without me. Are there any questions I can answer?

Participant question: I'm very curious. Why aren't all of the teachers on board? Is it a philosophical thing with some of them that they don't want to get on board?

Jeff Davidson: Some teachers tell me that they should be fed at home, and I agree. They should be fed at home, but they're not. **We have a lot of students who are fed at home at 6 in the morning. They're good parents. They feed the kids at 6 and they go to work. When 8:30 rolls around they're hungry.** If you ask any child in this country whether they would rather eat in the cafeteria or go play, they're going to go play. It's just fact. It's all about expectations. We all know that. We've gone into teachers' classrooms where everything is nice and clean and perfect, kids are well behaved, and we've gone into the zoos. Well, with breakfast in the class you'll have the same thing. You have the kids who get done in two minutes and you'll have the teacher with the zoo and they take 20. But it's proven. Ten minutes, it's done. **I give them timers and I work with them a lot.** If anybody in this room thinks that starting a breakfast in the class program is easy, you're wrong. I used to have hair before this thing started two years ago. It's a lot of work and it's a lot of dedication and it's a lot of education, teacher education. The teacher unzips that bag when it comes in the classroom, she opens that lid up, and if she goes, "Yuck!" there it goes. You're not serving any today. If a teacher sees a donut or she sees something that looks like a donut she automatically says, "Hey, that's a donut. It has a lot of sugar. I'm not serving it." **In actuality it's a cinnamon roll sweetened by fruit juice made by sweet potatoes.** They don't know that. **So educate your teachers first** before you implement a program like this because your teachers are your core. I used to tell teachers, "I don't come in your classroom to teach math. Don't come in my cafeteria and teach nutrition." Well, the minute I stepped into their classroom I can't say that anymore because now I'm in their realm so now I have to listen to them. My heart is in it for the kids, but we have to support the teachers. If a teacher doesn't like something it's gone, period.

Participant question: How are the school PTAs involved, or are they?

Jeff Davidson: They hug me. It was the strangest thing. We went into a very poor school, Del Rey, which is 98.5 percent free and reduced, and we started feeding the kids and the PTA were just so happy. They were just absolutely ecstatic. When you go to schools that are 20 percent free and reduced your education now goes to the parents because the parents will tell you they don't want the program because it's for poor kids. So that's the education. You can get them. I'm winning over. I have a school which is 21 percent free and reduced. The PTA has asked me to come on board with breakfast in the class. Once I get the PTA on board without question the principal follows over, students, teachers stand in line. **The California Teachers Association is on board with breakfast in the class.** They endorse it.

Bill Smittcamp: My hat is off to you. I'm sorry that it's taken you 15 years to get in the food service side. You should have been there 15 years ago. My question to you is you went from 150,000 breakfasts a year to 800,000. How are you financially doing that?

Jeff Davidson: With the schools that are free and reduced I get a full \$1.43 reimbursement. They become a profitable entity. Now my schools that are 30 percent free and reduced become a negative, so they balance each other out. So far they're balancing out.

Bill Smittcamp: So when you go to a school district that doesn't have that ratio then it doesn't work.

Jeff Davidson: It does work. If you go to a school district that's completely district-wide 30 percent free and reduced with breakfast in the class, yes it would work. It's a little harder to implement, a little harder to run, a little harder to track because you're not a Provision 2 so you're not doing simple counts. If

you're Provision 2 you just do a simple count of the people eating. If you're not Provision 2 then you have to count the free student, the reduced student, and the full-pay student. You get a quarter back here, \$1.18 back here, and \$1.43 here. It's feasible if you watch your costs. You can do it and break even.

Participant question: There are districts in the state that do universal classroom breakfasts and still tier their students, so they still do the free, reduced, and paid claiming. They just have their paid kids prepay so they don't collect any money. Then there are those that are bold that try it and somehow manage to increase participation enough in the classroom breakfast to break even or maybe be a tad bit in the hole, but it's worth it to them because their kids are eating.

Jeff Davidson: Exactly. **I'd go before any board in this state if I was running a program that was running a slight deficit but I was feeding every kid. I would have no problem standing up there and saying, "Hey, I'm sorry, but we have a small deficit."**

Richard Molinar, UC Cooperative Extension: Jeff, what specific vegetables and fruits are you currently purchasing, and do you purchase during the summer months?

Jeff Davidson: Yes, we do purchasing during the summer months, oranges and tangerines. We'll get the strawberries. I've got two local farmers now that are plotting ten acres each for the school district. We can come in and we can ask them to do five acres of broccoli and five acres of this. We plan on bringing classes down to see the broccoli before it gets harvested so the kids can see it in the field and then see it on their plate. This program is really getting involved. We're going from tree fruits, then we're going to start doing vegetables. It would be my goal eventually to have everything if possible, but I can bring in from local farms to do it. We already operate salad bars at all 17 sites. All have salad bars, so we do salad bar every single day. To implement a broccoli from a local farmer the cost is so small it would be foolish not to do it to help educate the kids. Kids like broccoli, believe it or not.

Bill Smittcamp (Wowona Foods): You're not stuck on organic, are you?

Jeff Davidson: No. I'll tell you, on organic I think it would be wise for organic farmers if they want to educate somebody they had better start educating children and if they want to come down on costs and get their product in the schools, let kids come and visit these farms that are organic. I think it would be very smart for them, a marketing tool. Any choices you give the child in younger years he's going to be a better person when he grows up.

FARM TO SCHOOL WEB RESOURCES:

Farm to School resource websites:

Community Alliance with Family Farmers:

<http://www.caff.org/programs/farm2school.shtml>

National Farm to School Webpage:

www.farmtoschool.org

Community Food Security Coalition Farm to School page:

http://www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_school.html

Gold Coast Growers Collaborative in Ventura:

www.gcgrowers.org

STEPHANIE JOHNSON *has been in ag business, since 1979, marketing fresh fruits and vegetables. For 25 years she worked directly with school food service. She now works with the African American Farmers Association on implementing Farm to School in the Central Valley.*

Stephanie Johnson: What I'm going to talk a little bit about today is the fact that I did join with Jeremy on the Farm to School Program because I wanted to work with the African American farmers and the small farmers associations and come up with a way that we can market our product into the schools. I am an advocate of breakfast in the classrooms, an advocate of the school lunch program, an advocate of the after school programs where they are feeding the children there, as well as the summer food programs. These are all avenues in which the small farmers can participate in. **Schools are already using Sysco and the other major organizations to get our product in, but we also have an organization called the farmers.** Unfortunately, the farmers are being put to the side. They built this country and they seem to be a smaller entity year by year. Everyone seems to forget the farmer, and the middleman becomes the main entity. The farmer has a lot to offer. Not only is he providing fresh fruit locally, and right here in the Central Valley everything that you purchase in the grocery stores can be grown here in the Central Valley as far as fruits and vegetables. However most of that product, even in our retail stores, believe it or not, goes to the Midwest and East. You don't find a lot of it here. There's not any reason why we as local farmers cannot provide you with those fruits and vegetables. You're saying, "How can I get it?" Jeff was saying that Sanger has an advantage because they have trucks that go out. He has a large school population, but what if schools only need to buy one box? Is a farmer just going to give me one box? **What I'm here to offer is that the farmers are willing to come up with some type of cooperative, an organization that can provide local fresh produce to schools as well.**

One of the shortfalls for farmers is that not all of them know the USDA standards, how to come up with a medium-size orange or apple or what the proper bunch size is for the carrots or the broccoli, the cauliflower, the lettuce. That's where someone like myself and others who are in marketing and ag come in to give them this information so that when you want a box of 72 size oranges, when you want a box of 138 size apples, you can get that from the small local farmer. What if you only need one box? Well, that's where you do have an advantage, because if you call on the major distributors it is very costly for them to provide just one box. Jeff gave a perfect example that he was able to purchase straight from the packing house oranges for \$7, and by the time Sysco has to go pick it up, put it in their system, and distribute it back out, that same \$7 box is now \$17. Not that we want to totally eliminate that business, because there will always be a need for the large distributors, but we want to be able to provide to have fresh fruits and vegetables for children, and the best way to do that is to use your local farmers. There are farmers that are already proving that can provide healthy alternatives because we're in farmers markets here locally, Los Angeles, and in Oakland.

There are a lot of ways to make this work. **Farmers need information from the Schools what the servings and need will be. Schools need from the Farmers what type of yields they'll be able to provide, what time of the year certain crops will be available.** All this information can be put together and sent out very easily. The State Department has done a very good job with the school districts where they send out to them what is available through the commodity program on a monthly basis and then they check off what they want. The same concept can be used with the schools and the small farmers. We can tell you when the oranges are available, when the apples are available, when the strawberries, the kiwi, the broccoli, the carrots, the lettuce, the parsnips, and the radishes are available. We can tell you when all those things that are grown here locally are available and when you can get them. The other advantage of doing that is, let's say that there's only one farmer here locally that's doing broccoli and another in Tulare County. Well, once I merge these two supplies together, then I can now supply more than one school district with that opportunity.

The other thing that you can keep in mind is, as was mentioned several times, **there are no commodity dollars available for the breakfast. I keep looking at my son's breakfast menu and I keep thinking,**

“Why do I not see fresh fruits and vegetables?” Why am I only seeing these other items?” Well, the perfect way to pilot the program through the breakfast program is to let the kids see how easy it is to have an apple, to have a pear, to have an orange, to have a tangerine rather than having a juice.

The same way that you’re ordering presently with your major distributors is the same way that you can order from the farmers. You would mark off the items that you would need, the time frame you would need it, and you would get that back to us. You would fax it back or e-mail it back.

I worked for Sunmet Agribusiness that was out of Del Rey, and my project there was the **Apple in the Bag. That was fresh sliced apples that we put in the bag, and that’s the project that I piloted and it has been very successful and is still in the school programs now.** Even with that item some of the schools knew they wanted it, they knew when they wanted to use it, they would put it on their menus, and so what they would do to assist me in packaging that, getting that ready for them, is that they would just fax me their whole menu for the month. So now I’m looking at the different school districts and I’m seeing Tulare wants it here, so and so wants it here, and I could put on my calendar on my production time when the different schools want it, so that way as I’m starting to try to get all the orders together I can get the transportation also lined up easily.

Lynn Graham: Jeff, when you did away with the juice do you still have chocolate milk?

Jeff Davidson: Yes. **It’s three more grams of sugar per serving. We do it on Fridays only.** One of the reasons why we do Friday at most of the sites is when we took the chocolate milk away the parents had an absolute fit, absolute, calling me on the phone, having a complete tizzy because they have a given right to chocolate milk, so that’s why it’s on Friday. Again, we have to educate kids, teachers, and parents.

Participant question: Children establish their choices early in life, and if they are given choices that taste better...everybody knows sugar makes everything taste better, and especially children. They love candy and all those things. Once those habits are established it’s very difficult to change them later in life.

Participant question: A question for all of the speakers. How receptive would the schools be to some of the specialty crops? For example, we talked about broccoli. Would they be receptive to the Chinese broccoli, which is a thinner stem, more tender, and it’s sweeter. Would they be receptive to Chinese eggplant instead of the American eggplant, which doesn’t have much flavor? We’ve had zucchini for many, many years. Would they be receptive to sinqua as an alternate, which is, I think, much better tasting than the old zucchini?

Jeff Davidson: Yes, they would be. **If you implement the Farm to Class program properly and that farmer comes out and we educate that child and we do taste testing of the product in the classroom.** I’ve made the mistake and put things out, the kids looked at it and went, “Oh, what is that?” I only did it once. From that point on I taste tested something at every site. Once we got it taste tested, kids became curious, they became educated about the product, and they’ll do it. So it’s up to the farmer and us.

Stephanie Johnson: One of the other projects that I had done was called Veggie in a Bag, which was a broccoli carrot mix, and it was really interesting because so many people thought that was just not going to run because of the broccoli and it went very well. The kids loved it even to the point where we were putting more broccoli than carrots in there.

Esmerelda Rosetti, Mendota Unified: We offer chocolate milk and white milk every single day of the week. That’s from pre-K on. It’s the teacher’s choice whether they want to take the chocolate or not on some of those occasions. We only offer one percent milk. We do not offer the two percent or the whole milk. We took that away. We made the option to go straight to one percent because we knew that was the lowest that we could serve there in the school. We’re even thinking of implementing skim milk for the

older kids because they do have a tendency to watch their calories. Not everyone does, but the high school kids do, so we do offer every day a choice of milk, whether it be chocolate or white, and they seem to take it half and half. Just some kids take one more than the other, but there are days when they all take the white milk for some reason.

Stephanie Johnson: So many people think that it would be hard to bring the Farm to School Program into the junior high and high school level, but as she is mentioning, that is the group that is really looking at their weight, and so they would much rather eat an apple or a piece of fruit than they would a potato chip or a donut.

Participant question: Do the farmers who sell to these programs sell at a lower price than they would if they were selling to some other entity? Is the payment in cash?

Lucy Hicks: The farmer isn't getting what you're paying at the packing house. The farmer is going to get \$4 a case. My packer is going to make \$3.50 a case, so you've got \$7.50 a case. The farmer's price isn't going to change from the packing house. He's still going to get the same amount. If you go Farmer to School then you might have an opportunity to adjust the price a little, but the farmer still has to make the money to pay his bills.

Participant question: There was a comment about organic farmers coming down on their price. Ours is an organic farm. If we come down on the price we can't pay the farm workers who are providing the food, so that's why our price is set because that's the price that we need.

Stephanie Johnson: The other thing you need to look at is that your price is here, but by the time it goes through the whole retail warehouse, by the time you get to the retail stores and the time it gets back to the schools it is now too expensive, but if they were able to purchase it directly from you at this level versus this level than it's something that you can work with.

Participant comment: This comment is for Jeff. I'm one of those kids who had the stomachache when I was a kid and I didn't realize at the time that it was the dairy products that did it for me. As a result, I would suggest maybe in your system to have possible soy. There is a lot of soy in the area as well as almond milk and things of that sort.

Jeff Davidson: If a parent comes up and requests something we go 360 degrees to get that request implemented because we're there to make sure the child eats. Some requests we can't do. Kids aren't getting steak and eggs, but 99.99 percent of the time if you as a parent come to me and say, "Look, my kid's upset with chocolate milk," we will bend over backwards. We do have some soy products on hand for certain students. When I said juice was gone I need to fix that. **We do carry about six cartons of juice a day for students who are lactose intolerant.**

Lucy Hicks: I will say that USDA does not allow you to claim any kind of soy product or rice milk at all, and so if a district serves that to kids, we have to pay for it. So I think that unfortunately USDA is not as aware as directors are in terms of their student populace and what they need to supply for them, but it's something that we've tried to work with legislatively to allow for those products to be claimable because there are many, many kids and grownups as well that cannot eat dairy products.

Sharon Todd: One thing I'm concerned about is the chemicals and the steroids and all those things that are being fed to the animals and also in the produce today. I think that just as important as making sure the kids have vegetables is making sure that they don't have all the additives that are causing them to have the growth problems, the sugar diabetes, and also the mental problems that are happening now with the kids. They're feeding them more prescription drugs, which is also adding to the chemicals in the system, so I am very, very concerned about milk in general that is not organic when the cattle are not roaming around like they used to, the chickens aren't roaming around and getting the feed and things that they used to get, so this is very important for us to think about as well.