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Overview of School Food in Vermont

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Authors	Grubinger, Vernon P.
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OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL FOOD IN VERMONT

Vern Grubinger
University of Vermont Extension and Center for Sustainable Agriculture
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Why be concerned about school food?

* Children and adolescents are becoming increasingly overweight (1), which has a number of negative health implications. Schools have a unique opportunity to help children improve their understanding and behavior around food choices, nutrition and health.

* Poor eating habits among children cannot be blamed on schools alone, nor can schools effectively address the issue in isolation. The messages that kids get from media, advertising, food packaging, as well as parental and peer behavior all contribute to the problem. However, schools can facilitate the community-wide efforts that are needed to improve children's diets.

* In most schools, there is relatively little emphasis on nutrition, diet and health as part of the classroom curriculum. When these topics are covered, it is not on an ongoing basis across grade levels in an effort to reinforce positive messages. The opportunity exists to connect the cafeteria and the classroom through food education at all levels, in ways that conform to the Vermont Framework of Learning Standards.

* The school "eating experience" tends to be separated from the educational process. Information about food choices, supervision of the choices children make, and consequences for poor eating behavior are limited or absent in school cafeterias.

* The Federal Government provides significant funding for school food, especially through the National School Lunch Program (2). However, this assistance can also make it difficult to provide high quality meals because the programs encourage an "institutional" approach to food service that emphasizes inexpensive, processed items and attainment of minimum rather than optimum nutritional standards.

Who eats school food?

* Vermont has about 101,000 students attending school up to and including the 12th grade (3). As of October 2002, there were 98,635 students attending one of the 339 schools (307 public, 32 private) participating in the School Nutrition Program administered by the Vermont Department of Education's Child Nutrition Program (4). Participating schools that follow the food service guidelines and fulfill the record keeping and reporting requirements are eligible for Federal and State reimbursement of lunch and breakfast program costs.

* In 2001-2002, about 17% of students enrolled in participating schools ate breakfast prepared by the school, and 51% ate school lunches. An average of 14,273 breakfasts and 14,273 lunches were served in participating schools every day (4).

What does school food cost and who pays?

* The total cost of school meals in Vermont in 2001-2002 was \$30,193,910 of which 44% was the food itself. The average cost per meal, including food, labor, supplies, etc. was \$2.26 per lunch and \$1.55 per breakfast (4).

* Students were charged an average of \$1.56 per lunch. Of the 51% of students that participate in the lunch program, 60% paid full price, 10% paid reduced price and 29% got free lunches (4).

* Of the \$30 million school lunch and breakfast program costs in Vermont, about \$22 million comes from local school district funds and meal payments (4). The remainder, about \$8 million, is paid for by Federal reimbursements, plus the State of Vermont is required to provide about 5 cents of matching funds to schools for each meal that was federally reimbursed, or about \$600,000 (5).

* Schools charge for meals depending on the ability to pay. Children from families that earn 130% or less of Federal Poverty Guidelines are eligible for free meals and snacks, those from families that earn 185% or less are eligible for reduced prices. All others pay full price. In 2002-2003, a household of 4 with an annual income of \$23,530 or less was eligible for free school lunch for their children (6).

* The Federal government reimburses schools for food based on number of meals served and the income level of the people that eat them. In 2002-2003, reimbursement rates to Vermont schools were: \$0.22, \$0.87, and \$1.17 for paid, reduced and free breakfasts, respectively, and \$0.20, \$1.74, and \$2.14 for paid, reduced and free lunches, respectively, and \$0.05, \$0.29, and \$0.58 for paid, reduced and free snacks, respectively. Schools identified as 'severe need' get an additional \$0.23 reimbursement for free and reduced breakfasts (7).

* The cost of school meals is also subsidized significantly by the free food provided to schools through the USDA's Commodity Foods program (see below).

Where does school food come from and who decides?

* School food programs in Vermont are as diverse as the towns and cities in which they are located. Thus, Vermont schools procure food and manage their meal programs in a variety of ways. Some schools buy and prepare their food independently, under the supervision of a school cook or food service director. Others contract with food service management companies that have their own contracts with food distributors (see Appendix A).

* Many different food distributors are utilized statewide, and with a few notable exceptions there is little coordination among nearby schools, except where a food service director or a food management service manages meals for a group of schools within a supervisory district.

* According to information provided by the Vermont Department of Education, in 2003-2003 there were 88 schools with a total enrollment of 31,363 that were served by food management service companies. These companies are: the Abbey Group, Café Services, Chartwells, Fitz-Vogt, and Sodexo-Marriot. (Appendix A)

* Schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program must meet the applicable Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend that no more than 30% of an individual's calories come from fat, and less than 10% from saturated fat. Regulations also establish a standard for school lunches to provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium, and calories. Although school lunches must meet these Federal nutrition requirements, decisions about what specific foods to serve and how they are prepared are made by local school food authorities (2). Schools vary in how they determine if they are meeting these guidelines; most schools make that determination by averaging their weekly menus (so that an individual meal can exceed the calories from fat as long as another meal is under the guideline). Some schools have software to help them do this (5).

How does the USDA's commodity food program work?

* Almost all Vermont schools participate in USDA's Schools/Child Nutrition Commodity Programs, one of several USDA Food Distribution programs that provide food to schools. The goal of these programs is to "help American agricultural producers by providing cash reimbursements for meals served in schools, but also by providing nutritious, USDA-purchased food for the National School Lunch Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program" (8). While some beneficiaries, such as childcare centers, can 'opt out' of the program and take cash in lieu of commodity foods, schools cannot. The National School Lunch Act requires at least 12% of school lunch assistance to be commodity foods.

* There is a wide range of commodity foods offered to states for their schools (9). The list is pared down for Vermont, so not all subsidized food are available here. Group A is the surplus removal type of food that is seasonal and perishable, including fruits, vegetables, poultry, fish and meats. Most of it is purchased by the Agricultural Marketing Service of USDA, which offers it to states that can accept all or part of their share. Group B is the food that relates to price support programs including dairy, cereal, grains, peanut products and vegetable oils (9). These are acquired by the Farm Services Agency, then offered to states, which choose what percentage of their entitlement they want to receive as Group A or B commodities for the entire year. 'Bonus' foods sometimes offered to states on a 'fair share' basis are not counted against their entitlement, and are brought into the state as available if the coordinator of the Donated Foods Services feels that Vermont schools will want them.

* USDA commodity food is free of charge to schools, except for transportation cost. A school's 'entitlement' to free commodity food is based on the number of lunches served the previous year, multiplied by the current 'commodity rate', which is \$0.1525 at present (8). For new programs, Vermont usually uses 85% of the enrollment as a base on which to calculate entitlement. Vermont's total commodity foods entitlement was about \$1.75 million in 2001-2002 (10)

* Vermont's Donated Food Coordinator is Holly Peake, who works in the Department of Children and Families in Waterbury. She manages the process that offers all schools the same commodity choices. She collates the school orders for delivery to a central warehouse (provided for the past decade or so under contract by Lucky Day Poultry in Plainfield). Schools must make their own delivery arrangements from the central warehouse, often using their 'regular' commercial food distributor for this transportation along with their conventionally-purchased food and supplies. Meats, pasta products, flour, peanut butter, canned fruits and vegetables are popular commodity items (10).

* A unique arrangement exists between USDA and the Department of Defense (DOD) to supply fresh produce to schools. The Defense Supply Center in Philadelphia (DSCP) Produce Business Unit buys and distributes fruits and vegetables to states using the USDA's federal school food commodity entitlement funds (11). The idea is to take advantage of large scale buying power to support Child Nutrition Programs. The program began as a pilot in 1994 with 8 test states. At least 42 states now participate. According to the DSCP "the Produce Unit uses its diverse network of produce suppliers, mostly small business, to distribute now over 300 produce items to schools at the place and time they designate. In 9 pilot states, emphasis is being placed on using as much local produce from nearby producers and suppliers as possible, pending satisfactory inspection of their facilities." The USDA has authorized a listing of 200 produce items for this program. The majority of the items are available throughout the U.S. but many items are only regionally requested and available (11). The cost of these items to schools is subtracted from their total commodity entitlement.

* Vermont is served by a DOD office located in Avon, MA, which develops the contracts for supplying fresh produce to New England states. According to Sam Turner, director of that office, they deal only with vendors and the state commodity coordinators, not directly with schools. About 50 vendors have contracts in New England to provide fruit and vegetables, 5 or 6 of these vendors serve Vermont. They deliver to the central warehouse, as with other commodity foods.

* Each state commodity coordinator provides the regional DOD office with a list of needs, then that office bids out the requirements for each state, seeking the lowest price that meets the 'number one, grade-A quality' standard. A blanket purchase agreement is then set up with the vendors and payments are charged against the state commodity entitlement. In 2001-2002, Vermont spent \$85,000 of their commodity funds on this program, primarily to acquire apples, potatoes, peeled baby carrots, oranges, lettuce, grapes and kiwi. Other items do not hold up well over the month that they may be in storage. Typically, 3 or 4 items are offered each month (10).

Using local food in schools.

* Greater use of local foods in schools has the potential to improve child nutrition as part of an effort to incorporate fresher, less processed food into school meals and snacks. Combined with nutrition education, farm visits, school gardens, and education in the classroom, children can develop healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime. However, aiming to connect local food to schools is secondary to the broader goal of improving the nutritional quality and variety of food that schools purchase and serve, wherever it comes from.

* Some Vermont farmers are selling food to local schools, either directly or through Vermont-based food distributors like Black River Produce, Squash Valley Produce and Burlington Food Company. The Vermont foods these distributors carry include produce, some meats, cheese, and other dairy products. Milk and bread tend to be delivered to schools by distributors that specialize in these products. Most milk is co-mingled from several states at the processing facility. Commercial bread, although it may be baked in Vermont, is not likely to contain local ingredients. Meats from Vermont tend to be higher in cost than commercial sources, and the free meats from the commodity program make school purchases of local meat even more unlikely.

* Liability issues around food are important. Farmers selling direct to schools should have substantial liability coverage. However, when a farmer provides food to schools through a commercial food distributor (who likely has a \$5 million policy), the distributor's coverage is in effect. It is not advisable for farmers to sell directly to schools without having liability insurance.

* When farmers were questioned about their sale of food to schools (including Dave Marchant of Fairfax, Read Miller of Dummerston, Bruce Kaufman of Hardwick, and Hank Bissell of Starksboro) they all indicated that school food sales were a very small part of their overall business and did not represent a particularly profitable market, but they viewed it as a positive way to connect to their communities.

* Similarly, distributors that strive to carry local food (such as Mark Curran of Black River Produce and Allen Freund of Squash Valley Produce) indicated that distributing fresh food to schools is barely profitable for them because of the small average size of the orders and the amount of travel time required. Sales to larger schools and/or districts have more profit potential.

* The obstacles to getting more local food into schools are numerous and complex, and they include limited school food budgets, limited storage and refrigeration facilities, small order sizes, especially of perishables, and lack of awareness about price and availability (see diagram by UVM Professor Richard Schramm, based on a workshop at NOFA-VT's Nov. 2003 'Weaving the Web' School Food Conference, Appendix B).

* The perception exists that lack of distribution is a major obstacle to greater use of local foods by schools, but in fact this does not appear to be a key barrier. There are several distributors that handle many school food accounts in Vermont (Appendix C) and between them most geographic locations of the state are covered. Issues such as availability of product, pricing, competition from commodity programs (especially for meat, apples, cheese) and other issues mentioned above are at least, if not more, important.

Efforts to improve school food in Vermont.

* The Child Nutrition Program of the Vermont Department of Education is charged with oversight of school food programs for the State. Jo Busha has been in charge of the program for many years and she has a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities. She described her work and shared her insight in an interview (Appendix D).

* FoodWorks, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) and Shelburne Farms created the FEED (Food Education Every Day) program in 1998. It is working with schools to improve students' diets by helping classroom teachers to develop curriculum that meets the Vermont Framework of Standards and incorporates food, local farms, and nutrition. FEED also trains and works with food service staff to feature local, seasonal produce in healthy and appealing meals in the cafeteria. To date FEED has worked with teachers, administrators, cooks and students in dozens of schools, including intensive efforts in Alburg, Burlington, Chelsea, Hardwick, Jay/Westfield, Milton, Starksboro, and Waitsfield (12). Feed is also consulting with about 15 other schools that are poised to introduce new produce to students, start a food council, or to purchase local food.

* The Westminster Central School has a healthy snack program in two multi-age K-4 classrooms where children prepare healthy foods as well as and grow some of their own in a large garden with the help of a neighboring organic vegetable farmer. Teacher Irene Canaris developed this program and has successfully integrated it into classroom curriculum for the past 15 years. Parents pay a small monthly fee (\$5) to cover the cost, and one classroom has a fully equipped kitchen. It has helped many kids expand their diet to include healthy items they would not otherwise have tried (13).

* 'Feed Your Head' is an educational program of the Brattleboro Food Co-op. It provides free in-class programs for grades K-8 on topics such as 'healthy snacks', 'good carbs/bad carbs', 'as sweet as sugar', and 'local farms and food'. The Co-op also provides discounts on fresh produce to schools or individual classroom teachers that want to provide more healthy snacks and establish or improve salad bars. (14) As a result of this work and efforts to collaborate, other food co-ops have sought nutrition education training and are offering discounts to schools.

* 'Reinventing the Meal' is a non-profit organization based in Windsor, Vermont, that offers health education, nutrition and fitness programs for children and families, with a focus on fresh local foods. The program has provided nutrition workshops at summer camps, in the classroom, and in the community. (15)

* Many school food service personnel are performing heroic efforts to provide the best food they can to students, often under difficult conditions. Some schools have developed exemplary food service programs. Details about a few individual school food programs (Brattleboro, Whitingham) are provided in Appendix E. Many other Vermont schools are taking innovative steps to improve their food, including Ferrisburgh, Huntington, and the Jericho-area High School. In Warren, food service director Claire Simpson is striving to provide organic food.

Efforts to connect to local farms and improve school food in other states.

* In Connecticut, the Hartford Food System (HFS) Project Farm Fresh Start has provided new markets for area farmers and increased the consumption of fresh produce among lower income Hartford children. Through the program, the HFS has worked with several Hartford teachers to run 67 separate food education classes and events (16).

* In Massachusetts, Cooperative Extension and non-profits are working to connect farmers with schools to improve the supply of fresh local produce. (17)

* In Iowa, one school district purchased local food for 1,200 lunches per day and incurred a 34 percent higher cost, an issue that has to be weighed against the positive student response (18).

* In North Carolina, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs has worked with Department of Defense and other organizations to connect farms and schools. In 2000-2001, thirty of 117 school systems in the state purchased a total of \$415,653 worth of produce from farmers in the state (19).

* The Washington State Department of Agriculture has produced a detailed publication called “Farm to Cafeteria Connections: Marketing Opportunities for Small Farms in Washington State.” It includes a lot of practical advice for starting a program as well as case studies (20).

* Oklahoma has a statewide document about local purchasing. That report, as well as a compilation of state program reports from across the nation, federal policies, other resources, and evaluation tools can be found at www.farmtoschool.org.

National efforts to improve school food.

* The USDA established the Small Farms/School Meals Initiative (21) which was an “important step toward improving both the economic stability of small farmers and the long term health of children in our school systems” according to Shirley Watkins, Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services for USDA. The Small Farm Commission Report recommended that USDA develop an interagency initiative to promote and foster local and regional food systems that feature farmers markets, community gardens, CSAs (community supported agriculture), as well as direct marketing to school lunch programs (22).

* The Community Food Security Coalition, a nationwide group of small family farm and community food security advocates, has held conferences and workshops promoting farm to school as opening up “important new opportunities to enrich the school lunch for students and establish valuable new partnerships while building relationships with teachers, parents, other school staff, and community members.”(23). They also published a book of general guidelines for building partnerships around programs linking farms and schools, based on successful farm-to-school projects across the country, called Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids (24).

* The 2002 Farm Bill provides funding to communities and institutions that seek to develop such projects. Section 4303, Purchases of Locally Produced Foods (effective date October 1, 2002,) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage institutions participating in the school lunch and breakfast programs to purchase locally produced foods, to the maximum extent practicable; advise institutions of the locally produced food policy; and provide startup grants to up to 200 institutions to defray initial costs of equipment, materials, storage facilities, and similar costs. It authorizes \$400,000 a year for each of fiscal years 2003-2007.

* In June 2004 Congress passed the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act. The bill includes Farm to Cafeteria legislation under Section 122 entitled, "Access to Local Foods and School Gardens." This language is based on the Farm to Cafeteria Projects Act and includes additional language about school gardens due to a merger with another section on a school garden pilot. The legislation creates a grant fund to cover the initial costs of Farm to Cafeteria projects, including equipment, nutrition education, and school gardens. However, the law doesn't translate into a real program without two important items: funding and implementation. (25)

* Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) is a nationwide initiative dedicated to improving the health and educational performance of children through better nutrition and physical activity in schools (26). This effort is a response to our nation's epidemic of overweight, sedentary, and undernourished children and adolescents. The concept is that healthy schools produce healthy students and healthy students are better able to learn and achieve their true potential. AFHK is composed of 51 State Teams and a national coordinating and resource group. "AFHK fosters sharing and collaboration among diverse stakeholders to encourage and facilitate meaningful change in schools. Guidance and direction is provided by more than 35 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, physical activity and nutrition."

An integrated grassroots network of AFHK State Teams is launching state level Action Plans focused on improving nutrition and physical activity opportunities in schools. Vermont's team goals are to: Provide food options that are low in fat, calories and added sugars, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or nonfat dairy foods; and to provide all children, from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with quality daily physical education that helps develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors and confidence needed to be physically active for life.

Specific Recommendations for Vermont.

* Every school board should develop a school food policy in collaboration with the community, faculty, food service staff, parents and students. The policy should be as specific as possible, setting clear goals and guidelines. (See Appendix G for examples)

* The Vermont State School Board Food Policy should be revised to provide more specific guidelines and goals to the state's schools and communities.

* State agencies and boards should consider and establish long term, measurable objectives around improvements in child nutrition, related health issues, and dietary behavior in schools.

* The State should provide financial assistance to schools to help them make positive changes in their meal programs. This need not be a mandate, but could be: incentives for achieving certain goals; voluntary enrollment for specific products or service; or competitive grants for implementation of self-identified improvements.

* A simple financial incentive should be offered by state government to assist schools with the purchase of fresh local food, allowing flexibility so many different schools can participate.

- * Schools should not ‘indirectly’ promote consumption of unhealthy foods and drinks such as candy or soda, via poster advertising, scoreboard decals, or equipment or uniform logos.
- * Special events, bake sales, classroom parties, etc. should emphasize or include healthy food choices. Guidelines should be developed and distributed to help parents and volunteers do this.
- * Vending machines in schools should contain only healthy drink choices: water, milk, or 100% juices. They should contain healthy snack alternatives to non-nutritional foods like chips and candy. (The New England Dairy Council helps eligible schools buy vending machines for dairy products such as flavored milks, yogurts and cheeses.)
- * School food service staff should have a good understanding of menu planning and food preparation as it relates to diet and child nutrition. Position descriptions need to require this knowledge and professional development opportunities need to be encouraged to strengthen it.
- * The Department of Education and other agencies should work to expand the awareness of teachers, food service personnel and administrators about programs and resources that can help them 1) include more local and fresh food in their cafeteria menus, and 2) do a better job of including nutrition, farming and food system issues in the curriculum while meeting the requirements of the Framework of Standards.

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- 15) Charles Fenton, Exec. Director, Reinventing the Meal, 1 Railroad Plaza, Windsor VT 05089. (802) 674-2900. Email: cf@reinventing.org
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APPENDICES

Appendix A.

Vermont School Districts With Food Service Management Company Contracts
For school year 2003-2004

Appendix B.

Diagram of Challenges to Getting Local Food into Vermont Schools, by Prof. Richard Schram,
based on Weaving the Web school food conference, Montpelier VT 11/2003.

Appendix C.

Some food distributors that provide local food to Vermont schools.

Appendix D.

Interview with Jo Busha, Director of Child Nutrition Programs, VT Dept. Education.
September 26, 2003

Appendix E.

Profiles of some individual school food programs in Vermont

Appendix F.

Some published resources on farming, the food system and school food.

Appendix G.

Sample Vermont school food policies

APPENDIX A
Vermont School Districts With Food Service Management Company Contracts
For school year 2003-2004 (adapted from Vermont Department of Education)

School(s)	Enrollment	# of Schools	Current Company	Last Bid Date
Barre City/ Spaulding High School	1,887	2	Chartwells	1999
Barre Town	986	1	The Abbey Group	2000
Barstow Memorial School	252	1	The Abbey Group	1999
BFA – Fairfax	974	1	The Abbey Group	2002
BFA - St Albans	1,024	1	The Abbey Group	1999
Brattleboro Town	509	5	Café Services	2000
Brattleboro- BUHS	1,581	2	Café Services	2000
Cambridge	258	1	The Abbey Group	2003
Castleton-Hubbarton	519	2	The Abbey Group	2001
Clarendon Elementary	327	2	Café Services	2003
Coventry	125	1	The Abbey Group	1998
Fairfield	279	1	The Abbey Group	2000
Fair Haven Graded School	450	1	The Abbey Group	2001
Georgia	591	1	The Abbey Group	2000
Grand Isle	288	2	The Abbey Group	2002
Johnson	259	1	The Abbey Group	2002
Leicester	104	1	The Abbey Group	2000
Mary Hogan School, Middlebury	505	1	Café Services	2001
Middlebury UHS	1,041	2	Café Services	1998
Middletown Springs	55	1	The Abbey Group	2003
Mill River Union High School	747	1	Café Services	2003
New Haven (Beeman Elementary School)	156	1	The Abbey Group	2002
Newport Town	170	1	The Abbey Group	1998
North Country UHS	1,403	2	Sodexo-Marriott	2003
Orwell	160	1	The Abbey Group	2003
Pittsford (Lotthrop School)	268	1	The Abbey Group	2002
Poultney	657	2	Café Services	2002
Putney	240	1	Fitz-Vogt	2000
Rutland City	3,690	11	Sodexo-Marriott	2000
Rutland Town	400	1	Sodexo-Marriott	2002
Rockingham	1,466	7	Fitz-Vogt	2002
Sheldon	321	1	The Abbey Group	2000

School(s)	Enrollment	# of Schools	Current Company	Last Bid Date
Sout hwest Vermont SU	3,536	10	Sodexho-Marriott	2001
Springfield	1,570	5	Caf é Services	2000
St. Albans City Elem	885	1	The Abbey Group	2000
St. Johnsbury Academy	957	1	Sodexho-Marriott	2002
Swanton	702	2	The Abbey Group	2000
Vergennes UHS	638	1	The Abbey Group	2001
Vernon	202	1	Fitz-Vogt	1999
Washington	86	1	Caf é Services	1999
Wallingford	163	1	Caf é Services	2003
Westford	301	1	The Abbey Group	2000
Williamstown	547	2	Caf é Services	2002
Windsor	741	2	Caf é Services	2000

APPENDIX B

Diagram of Challenges to Getting Local Food into Vermont Schools, by Prof. Richard Schram, based on Weaving the Web school food conference, Montpelier VT 11/2003.

APPENDIX C

Some food distributors that provide local food to Vermont schools.

Black River Produce
Route 103 PO Box 188
Proctorsville, Vermont 05153
Phone: (800) 228-5481
Fax: (802) 226-7490
Website: www.blackriverproduce.com

Burlington Food Service
784 Hercules Drive
Colchester, VT 05446
Phone: (800) 272-5302
Fax: (802) 655-5655
Website: www.bfcfoods.com

Squash Valley Produce
2597 Waterbury-Stowe Rd.
Waterbury, VT
Phone: (802) 244-1290
Fax: (802) 244-1276
website: www.squashvalley.com

APPENDIX D

Interview with Jo Busha, Director of Child Nutrition Programs, VT Dept. Education. September 26, 2003

What are your primary responsibilities?

We do 3 major things: 1) act as the conduit between the federal government and local school food authorities - passing through federal reimbursement payments and overseeing implementation of the programs, 2) we have monitoring responsibilities to make sure that local programs follow regulations, and 3) provide technical assistance and training to help school personnel to the gain knowledge and skills they need to operate effective programs that comply with regulations and provide high quality food.

What do you think is working well in school food programs?

A lot of Vermont schools are still doing a fair amount of cooking from scratch. On a national level one hears many complaints that are a result of pre-prepared food dominating the school menu. Although we have more convenience food than I'd like to see, a lot of schools are still making meals from scratch.

Over last 5 years one significant change is that more schools are conscious of dietary guidelines and are making more of an effort to meet them - looking at fat content of foods, offering more fruits and vegetables than before.

In recent years we have urged schools to stop making so many desserts and just serve fruits instead. Many schools have dropped brownies and cookies in place of fruit, and this helps their bottom line while improving the nutritional quality of their menu.

What areas are most in need of improvement?

There are still plenty of schools where variety is a problem - repeated offerings on the menu. And there is too much use of processed foods. I'd like to see fewer chicken nuggets, and more experimentation with whole grains.

What 'policy and political' challenges are there to improvement?

Not enough schools have addressed creating a local food policy that establishes their own standards. The politics part ends up being about money - schools are being asked to put on a good meal for a total cost of \$2, and there's a level of unrealistic expectations on the part of people that are not looking at the budget constraints.

About how many schools in Vermont have food policies in place?

Anecdotally I would say less than a quarter of the schools.

Are there examples of good local school food policies?

I do not have a comprehensive collection of them, but Lincoln's is an example to some other schools because it's a small school that has managed to address the issue. The Vermont State Board of Education policy adopted in 1992 provides general structure for such policies, but in an advisory rather than mandatory manner. "Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn" is a book from the National Assn. of State Boards of Education that deals with creating school health policies. It includes a chapter about nutrition policies.

To what extent are schools trying to connect the cafeteria to the learning environment?

I don't see much connection. A few school service managers have somehow worked their way into doing some nutrition education in the classroom - but often it is separate from the classroom curriculum. Examples include Earleen Eosley in the Enosburgh elementary school, Carol Brill, at the St. Johnsbury school, Allison Forrest in Huntington elementary, and Kathy Alexander, in Ferrisburgh. Such classroom activities are few and far between for several reasons: it's hard for food service people to find the time, and most of them are not teachers, so they don't feel they have the necessary skills, or the teachers don't see them as potential resources. In general it's harder to do this in larger schools both because of amount of work on food preparation required every day, and the numbers of students -it's easier to do activity for 15 versus 100 kids.

Can you give me some examples of successes that other schools should note?

Doug Davis, Food Service Director in Burlington, has responded to parental involvement and is working with parents and the NOFA-VT FEED program to improve food awareness.

What is the basis for evaluation of school food programs?

Every school food authority in Vermont (a single school or in bigger districts usually several schools run as one food service) is evaluated once every five years. We evaluate about 50 a year. It's a big job since there are so many schools and they are generally small. I wish we could do more because 5 years is a rather long time for food service personnel not to get seen by us. We have a set of compliance criteria that we use evaluate schools, much of which is the bean counting side of things.

Only within the last 5 years have we been required to evaluate the nutrition standards. We are supposed to do a menu nutrient analysis for the schools that don't do their own. Some schools actually plan their menus based on a nutrient analysis. Most of these schools use the 'Nutrikids' program, approved by USDA for this purpose. It uses a weighted average that's based on the actual numbers of servings of the food choices a school offers for each meal. The analysis calculates the weekly average nutritional information. Most of the schools using nutrient standard based menu planning are in the 25 or 30 food school management authorities. A few small schools are also doing this, such as Holland, VT, with only 100 kids or so.

How do cooks evaluate what they serve if they don't the use computer programs?

They use their best judgment when planning menus. It helps if they use the 'enhanced food based menu planning' guidelines (developed by USDA) which bumps up the size of fruit and vegetable servings and also increases the number of bread and grain servings over more traditional menus. We find that schools that pay attention to menu planning and are relatively careful about it are able to meet the nutrition standards when we do their nutrient analysis.

We are finding that the average fat content of the weekly menu has come down from about 34% to 35% fat calories to 31% to 32% over past 5 years, a trend that is going the right way. We still have individual schools up around 35% to 36%, and these are usually schools where the food service personnel has been there a long time and is resistant to change, or schools that are serving a lot of fast foods that are attractive to kids. In other words, either an old-fashioned or pop culture approach. The majority are in the middle.

Is the concept of good fats vs. bad fats entering into the school food discussion?

Not really. The USDA school food nutrition standards do distinguish between saturated and unsaturated fats, but beyond that there is still a way to go and it's a complicated issue. Plus, labeling of trans fats is just getting underway.

How much of all school food is 'commodity' food?

I'm not sure. This may be hard to determine given the possible discrepancy between the invoice price provided to schools and what would be the 'open market' value of that food. But, by calculating the \$0.1525 per lunch of commodity allocation times the 8,745,135 lunches served last year, Vermont's total commodity food value should have been \$1,333,633. That's 10% of the total cost of school food in fiscal year 2002.

To what extent are commodity foods driving the menus, and are they a positive, negative or neutral influence on child nutrition?

In small schools they drive the menu quite a bit - these schools rely heavily on commodities. They have less impact on bigger schools. The program is a mixed bag in that schools get some raw products and fairly unprocessed products turkey rolls, canned tuna, and a mix of fruit and vegetables. On the other hand, places that would like to do something more exotic, with whole wheat and other whole grains may be frustrated because in Vermont we are not getting these products. It turns out there's a more complicated reason for that than we would like. If we are going to order a shipment, we need to take a lot of it, and not enough schools have expressed interest in whole wheat or a variety of beans, or brown rice.

How effective is the commodity produce program in enhancing fresh fruit and vegetable consumption in schools?

I gather that it's been very effective, the schools seem to be very pleased with it, and they get good produce for less money. There's not been a lot of publicity recently for the program and since turnover is high among school food service directors, they need to be regularly informed.

How many schools use Food Service Management (FSM) companies, and what are the main companies being used?

About 15%, or 43, of Vermont's school food authorities contract with FSM (which probably amounts to 3 or 4 times that number in individual schools). The Abbey Group, Sodexo, Café Services and Fitz-Vogt are active in Vermont.

What is your view on the role of local food in schools in terms of enhancing child nutrition?

If they are used that needs to be publicized - then it can help with the community being in support of the lunch program. It can also mean more availability of tasty fresh foods so kids will eat them. It's good for Vermont's economy to some extent and it's a good learning experience for kids. Even in small towns they often don't know that food is grown right around them. Some food managers do buy locally and often they don't think tell anyone.

Why did school lunch participation go up between 2001-2002 (from 48 to 51% of students)?

In part, enrollment itself went up. Also, more schools have joined the lunch program. We are down to 19 schools that are not participating; mostly they are really small schools that don't have a kitchen and are isolated enough that it's not easy to ship them food from other schools. A few schools have an ala cart food service they are happy with. Windham County has the most non-participating schools: Leland and Gray H.S., Brookline, Marlboro, Newfane, Windham, and Grafton elementary schools are not participating. The Vermont Campaign to end childhood hunger has been trying to encourage non-participating schools to offer food service.

Any suggestions for policy changes?

I don't think that just one or two things that would really make a difference. It's not just a question of money, but that's a part of it. Sometimes schools are motivated by relatively small amounts of money. Constantly building awareness is key.

Any suggestions for local communities wanting to improve school food?

People need to be aware of the issues. Communities can make changes in their food service, support their staff in getting training and making changes, look at policies that will promote healthy nutritional environments. It's not easy and there are no magic answers. My office is always happy to help in any community.

APPENDIX E

Profiles of some individual school food programs in Vermont

Brattleboro Elementary Schools. This profile is based on May 14, 2003 interview with the food service director Chris Bateman. He is a Café Services employee. Other paid staff are also Café Services employees. Chris supervises the staff, sets the menus and orders the food and supplies for all schools. All meals are prepared daily in the Academy School kitchen and delivered to the other locations by van. Chris has been in the position for only 5 months, but has held food service management positions before. He has already made some positive changes, especially by adding a lot more fruit to the dessert menus. He serves the following schools:

Academy School	K-6	enrollment - 379
Green Street School	K-6	enrollment - 257
Oak Street School	K-6	enrollment - 162
St. Michael's School	K-8	enrollment - 110 (parochial school)
Head Start program	varies	enrollment - 100

Total number of meals served daily (average) 280 breakfast, 960 lunch

Average actual food cost per meal: breakfast: \$0.55-0.75 lunch: \$1.00 - \$1.10

Food service personnel: 4 paid full-time, 4 paid part-time. Kitchens and storage: All food is stored and prepared at Academy School, in a kitchen designed to feed 250 students, so it is a challenge to prepare meals for 3 to 4 times that many kids. The ability to process raw foods (wash, cut, prepare) is limited both by available space and labor. There is one walk-in fridge and one walk-in freezer, and a stand up fridge. All the schools have their own milk coolers.

All schools are under one contract with Café Services, and the contract has been in place for approximately 6 years. Prior FSM contract was with Marriott (now Sodexo). Before that, the schools ran the food service themselves but lost money. A copy of the contract was not available without permission from proper authorities. Café Services provides food service management for 22 schools and about 20 corporations in VT, NH and MA.

Purchase of local food. This is done only on a very small scale by using petty cash for minor purchases (at Albee’s farm stand up the road) because Café Services has a contract with Sysco to provide all their food, except milk (Hood) and bread (Nissen). Chris uses petty cash to get fresh produce occasionally since what he gets from Sysco is often of poor quality.

Budget – total budget is private information. The budget is managed by Chris. It is built by calculating labor, food cost, plus vehicles to drive food. Café Services is paid a modest administrative and management fee above their costs, there is no additional ‘profit’ to be earned. As with most other public schools, the federal reimbursement program is crucial to the budget.

Reimbursement rates:	Standard	Severe Need
Bkfst free:	\$1.38	\$1.40
Bkfst reduced:	\$1.08	\$1.10
Bkfst full pay:	\$.20	\$.22
Lunch free:	\$2.14	\$2.16
Lunch reduced:	\$1.74	\$1.76
Lunch full pay:	\$1.38	\$1.40

The school takes commodity foods. Usual items are cheeses, meats (breaded chicken, fajita chicken, beef patties, ground beef, chicken patties) canned fruit and vegetables, and trail mix. According to Chris, fresh produce has not been offered through the commodities program since he has been in this position.

Annual dollar value of commodity foods: \$18,835 last year; the school pays about \$200 a month for it – the cost of transportation and handling.

Satisfaction with commodity foods: mostly OK. Some kids don’t eat what’s offered by the program (turkey roast, turkey ham) .The ground beef has a funny color sometimes. Pasta is too starchy.

Menus – Chris plans menus and uses the NutriKids program to evaluate them on a weekly basis to meet USDA guidelines for protein, carbohydrate, fat content. Other nutritional analysis is not done. The menus are audited by the state for claiming procedures but not for nutrition.

Snack sales – there are no snack sales offered by Café Services, but Academy School runs their own vending machines - 2 with soda (with Snapple) and one with snacks.

Corporate contracts: The school contract is out to bid now for a 6-year term.

Interest in local: Chris is interested in using more local food if he can. He was doubtful that his superiors would be very supportive of making the effort to pressure Sysco to allow them to buy some local foods. The school district would have to say: “we want this.” Working with the school principals would be a good way to start the conversation. Local food, especially produce would have to be ‘ready to use’ and not require additional processing . Local products he could use: Most any in-season produce: apples, pears, salad bar stuff: tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, fall broccoli. Currently he uses: apples 140 count 5 cases weekly; lettuce, about 20 heads in case, 4 cases weekly; carrot processed baby cut 30 lb weekly; cucumbers 50 count 1 case weekly; raw potato 50 lb bag bi-weekly; processed potato 150 lb per meal, sometimes twice a week.

Obstacles: already mentioned: contractual limitations, limited budget and lack of available facilities to process raw products.

Is food and nutrition in the curriculum? There is an Oak Grove School food and nutrition group that Chris has been meeting with. One plan is to put stars on menu choices to identify healthy choices and use as them a teaching tool. Some teachers involved in the food and nutrition group.

What type of programs would work best? Those that are not ‘preachy’ , we need to keep in mind that the majority of his ‘customers’ are relatively poor kids and many are without much support at home with regard to good food choices and nutrition. There is already a perception among some of the ‘lunch ladies’ that groups like the Oak Grove school food and nutrition group are ‘rich hippies telling kids what to do’.

Whitingham (newspaper article by Mike Eldred)

WHITINGHAM- Whitingham School students and teachers are finding something a little different on their cafeteria trays these days.

Remember those classic school hot lunch menu favorites like Salisbury steaks (30% real meat!) peas and carrots, instant mashed potatoes? Or the suspicious “mystery-meat” shepherd’s pie that appeared behind the cafeteria sneeze guard the next day? Those United States Department of Agriculture-inspired menus were, no doubt, responsible for countless legions of new vegetarians.

For some, eating the school hot lunch offerings was a challenge, a game of chance that pitted one’s palate against the worst that institutional food service had to offer. Others resorted to toting a cold bologna and cheese on Wonder Bread to school every day.

For Whitingham School’s students and teachers, those adventures in gastronomic roulette are a thing of the past, thanks to chef Gail Beauregard. Under her innovative management and common-sense cooking style the school cafeteria is serving up meals that would be the envy of any upscale restaurant.

Whitingham Sophomore Justin Berry is a self-proclaimed school lunch critic. He says he has never been one to “brown-bag,” opting instead to buy lunch at school. Since Beauregard took over the school kitchen, Berry says he looks forward to lunchtime each day. “It’s a lot better than it used to be,” he notes. “There’s a lot more flavor now, and a different variety of stuff to choose from - it’s not the same thing every week.”

Beauregard took over the “spatula” at Whitingham School at the beginning of the last school year. With 30 years of food service experience that ranged from running the Copper Angel restaurant in Shelburne Falls, MA, to adult institutional cooking at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Whitingham School officials initially wondered how long their luck would last. But Beauregard says the school cafeteria job is just what she was looking for.

“After 30 years in the restaurant business, I was ready for a slower pace,” she says. “I liked the idea of a school that’s small enough that it’s easy to know all the kids and teachers. And it’s been great to have weekends and summers off for a change.”

Soup is Beauregard’s signature specialty. She began making some of her more exotic soup creations strictly for teachers. Soon, however, students started asking for samples of the delicious-smelling concoctions. Before long, bowls of Salmon Chowder, Butternut Bisque, and other seasonal delights became part of regular school lunch line up. “Even the kindergartners and first graders will ask for soup now,” Beauregard notes. Demand for the gourmet soup creations finally prompted a monthly “soup day,” when Beauregard ladles up three or four different varieties, ranging from run-of-the-mill to more unique and flavorful creations such as sweet potato soup.

Many parents may not even be aware of how well their kids are eating at the school. The printed monthly menu selection for last Monday suggested kids could choose pasta with a choice of sauces, salad, and fresh bread. In reality, Beauregard served up linguine with a choice of three different delicious sauces, including a creamy Alfredo sauce, homemade rolls lightly brushed with garlic butter, and fresh, seasoned broccoli. And the menu didn’t even mention the mouth-watering roasted turnip and apple soup. “It’s important for kids to eat well, and to learn to eat well,” Beauregard says. “They burn so much energy, and good food keeps them going.”

The switch from mundane to delicious hasn’t been accomplished without some skepticism from the staff, but Beauregard has proven kids will eat well when offered the opportunity. “At first they told me to go easy on the flavor, so I cut back a little,” she recalls. “But the kids really love things like garlic bread with fresh garlic and broccoli with garlic butter. Sometimes you see them picking the garlic off and eating it first, before they eat the bread.”

Although prevailing wisdom held that younger kids wouldn’t be up to the psychological challenge of trying mysterious new foods, Beauregard says even the youngest elementary students have become more adventurous. “There’s a big difference between this year and last year,” she says. “This year both the younger and older kids are more willing to try something different.”

Teachers have also eagerly taken to the improvements in the lunchroom. “It really improves the atmosphere of the school – literally,” says elementary school teacher Carol Millet. “The wonderful smells from the kitchen waft through the school all morning.”

“Brown-bagging” is at an all time low and even staunch brown-baggers, like teacher Dave Kolkebeck, say they’ve given in to Beaugard’s temptations. “I still bring my sandwich every day,” Kolkebeck says, “but the soup; I can’t resist the soup.”

But if it sounds like Whitingham’s lunchroom budget is over-funded, nothing could be further from the truth. Whitingham is one of only two schools in the state of Vermont with a hot lunch program that turns a profit. “When I first came here, (former principal) Jurg Jenzer said I had to look at this like a business,” Beaugard says. “So I have.”

Beaugard says she uses many of the same foodstuffs available to other schools through the federal school lunch program, but she avoids purchasing prepared foods and sticks to basic ingredients. “We buy quality ingredients, and make things from scratch so we’re not paying extra for packaging and preparation,” she says. “Those things are usually more expensive and lower quality, anyway.”

In addition to an increase in customers and her cost-saving “from scratch” cooking style, Beaugard has expanded the school’s food service beyond the confines of the hot lunch program. To supplement her purchasing revenue, Beaugard offers a variety of different types of bread for sale to teachers. During the week she takes orders, and on Fridays, teachers can pick up their fresh-baked bread. With the proceeds, she is able to provide a wider variety of fresh fruit and vegetables for her lunches.

“She even asks teachers to bring in any excess garden vegetables at harvest time,” notes Angel Colford, Whitingham School’s dean of students.

Perhaps most amazing is that Beaugard accomplishes so much with a staff of two assistant cooks, Willie Siedlarz and Elaine O’Connor. “We make it fun,” says Beaugard. “We do it for the kids, and we do it for ourselves.”

APPENDIX F

Some published resources on farming, the food system and school food.

Azuma, Andrea, and Andy Fisher, Jan. 2001. Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids: Evaluating the Barriers and Opportunities for Farm to School Programs. Community Food Security Coalition, Venice CA

Center for Science in the Public Interest. Sept. 2003. School Food Tool Kit, A Guide to Improving School Foods and Beverages. Washington DC. www.cspinet.org/schoolfoods

Coblyn, Sarah. 2001. French Fries and the Food System. The Food Project, Lincoln MA

Kiefer, Joseph and Martin Kemple. 1998. Digging Deeper. Food Works and Common Roots Press, Montpelier VT

Patten, Elizabeth and Kathy Lyons. 2003. Healthy Foods from Healthy Soils, A Hands-On Resource for Educators. Tilbury House Publishers, Gardiner ME.

Singer, Kelli and Leslie Zenz. Nov. 2003. Farm to Cafeteria Connections. Washington State Dept. Agriculture. Olympia, WA.

Stewart, Courtney. Nov. 2002. Healthy Farms and Healthy Kids: The Potential to Increase Local Food Sourcing in Vermont Schools. B.A. Honors Thesis, Environmental Studies, Brown Univ, Providence RI

Valliantos, Mark. Oct. 2002. Healthy School Food Policies: A Checklist. Center for Food and Justice, Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA. <http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj>

Wilkins, Jennifer and Joanna Green. >From Farm to School Cafeteria: Partnerships for Supporting Farms, Improving Health, & Building Community. Proceeding of the Northeast Regional Farm to School Conference, Dec. 9-10, 2001. Nutritional Sciences, Cornell Univ., Ithaca NY

APPENDIX G

Sample Vermont school food policies

1. Vermont State School Board Food Policy, 1990
2. Putney, VT 2003
3. Winooski, VT 1998

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION SCHOOL NUTRITION POLICY STATEMENT (Adopted 1992)

The Vermont State Board of Education recognizes that:

1. Vermont children are growing up hungry.
2. This hurts their ability to learn, to succeed in school, to develop into healthy and productive adults.
3. Resources available to correct this problem are untapped.
4. It is not "someone else's" problem. It is society's problem.
5. It will persist unless our schools become stronger players in a comprehensive public effort to end childhood hunger.

To redress these problems and to assure the health and well being of all students, the State Board believes that:

1. All schools should participate in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program.
2. School Food Service Programs should model healthy eating habits by offering students an attractive variety of highly nutritious foods and meals that meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
3. Schools should practice the principles of good nutrition. All school activities including fund raising, classroom parties, and incentive awards should reflect the same sound nutrition practices that are taught in the classroom and implemented in the cafeteria.
4. Where appropriate, school nutrition programs should support students' growth and nutritional needs by offering after school snack programs and Summer Food Service Programs.
5. Modern school food service programs are complex operations that require qualified and professionally trained managers. Effective program administration should be promoted by the establishment of supervisory district food service managers who could oversee the operations of several schools' programs.

Therefore, the Board recommends that all school boards in Vermont adopt a School Nutrition Policy which contains these elements:

- Recognition that the school food service program is an integral part of the school environment

- Food service guidelines which promote the implementation of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and encourage healthy choices
- Guidelines on competitive foods and non-cafeteria food sales
- Encouragement of participation by all students in the food service programs in such a way that promotes applications for free and reduced price meals and doesn't stigmatize students who receive those benefits
- Establishment of greater collaboration between the cafeteria and the classroom including nutrition education for adults and students
- Professional development for food service staff
- Parent, student and community involvement
- Standards for the environment in which food is served, including sufficient meal time

The Board further believes that some guidance and limitations on food choices in the school environment are needed to foster a lifetime of healthful eating habits. To safeguard the health of students, the Vermont State Board of Education recommends that local governing boards adopt the following policies:

- Certain foods which contribute little other than calories should not be sold on school campuses. These foods include carbonated beverages, nonfruit soft drinks, candies in which the major ingredient is sugar, frozen nonfruit ice bars, and chewing gum with sugar.
- Snack foods which are available at times other than meal times should be of good nutritional quality. Recommended snack foods include nuts, dried and fresh fruits, frozen and regular yogurt, juices, seeds, cheese, sandwiches and milk.
- Food offered for sale as money-making projects for schools should also be of good nutritional quality. These foods should reflect the concepts from health and nutrition education taught in the classroom.

The Board is committed to forging education, health, nutrition and business partnerships to develop broad new strategies with the goal of resolving childhood hunger and assuring nutritional adequacy for all students.

Putney Food Service Program Guidelines

The Putney Town School Board recognizes its responsibility to create a healthy school environment by offering quality school nutrition and food service programs. The food service program will meet all the requirements as defined in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program. The goal of the food service program is to serve the best possible meal to the most students possible. The purposes of school nutrition and food service programs are to:

- Provide children with a wide variety of foods to choose from with a strong emphasis on healthful, fresh and low-fat foods.
- Serve food in a safe, welcoming, relaxing and accepting atmosphere that represents individual needs and preferences.
- Promote consistent messages about what constitutes a healthy diet, positive eating habits and personal responsibility.
- Convey the school nutrition and food service programs as integral to the total school program.

Cafeteria Atmosphere

- Students will be provided with adequate eating time and space.
- Role modeling at mealtime and positive supervision will be assured by the school and lunch staff.
- Emphasis will be placed on food safety and customer service.

Nutrition Education

- There will be integration with the curriculum consistent with the *Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Health Education Framework*.
- The cafeteria will be viewed as a learning environment and the food service program shall be coordinated with nutrition education efforts.
- Nutrition education will be provided to school staff including food service program representatives, family and the community through print materials and, on occasion, presentations.

Free or Reduced Meals

- Qualifying students will receive Free or Reduced meals per federally defined guidelines.
- All parents shall receive applications for federally funded school meals.
- The Putney Central School Handbook shall provide information for parents and students regarding federally funded school meals.

The Putney Central School Board further believes that some guidance and limitations on food choices in the school environment are needed to foster a lifetime of healthful eating habits. To safeguard the health of students, the following will be observed:

- Certain foods that contribute little other than calories will be offered at school only on a limited basis. These foods include sugary beverages, non-fruit soft drinks, frozen non-fruit bars, baked goods, and any item in which the major ingredient is a simple and/or processed sugar.
- Snack foods that are available at times other than meals will be of good nutritional quality and that profit generation must not take precedence over the nutritional needs of students.

Approved February 2003.

A Policy Statement From: WINOOSKI SCHOOL DISTRICT, WINOOSKI, VERMONT FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM . . . POLICY #3546

Background - Good nutrition is essential to peak academic performance and to longterm health. Nutrition programs and nutrition education are an integral part of a high-quality education.

Statement - The Winooski School District participates in the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program in order that all students are assured of access to high quality nutrition every day. The district promotes the use of these programs by regularly informing families of the program's benefits. All staff will work collaboratively to achieve the goals of this policy.

Application -

1. The food service program will strive to offer meals that meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. To do this the following standards are used in menu planning and meal preparation:

- a) Menus will emphasize low-fat main dish protein items.
- b) Fresh produce will be used as much as possible. At a minimum a fresh fruit or vegetable is offered at least three days per week. A fruit is always offered as a dessert choice.
- c) Fresh and frozen vegetables are preferred over canned. They will be prepared by steaming whenever possible.
- d) Desserts, other than fruits, will be limited. Whenever served, sweet desserts shall contribute essential nutrients to the meal.
- e) Breads and bread alternates used will usually be made with whole grains. School baked breads will always contain whole grains.
- f) The use of salt will be limited to recipes where it is an essential ingredient.
- g) Foods will not be deep-fat fried.
- h) Menus will be planned a month in advance to assist in providing needed nutrients over the long term.

The goal for lunches is to provide an average of 1/3 of the RDA's averaging 750 calories and no more than 25 grams of fat. Breakfasts will contribute an average of 560 calories with no more than 19 grams of fat.

2. The food service program will participate in the "offer versus Serve" method of meal service. A wide variety of healthful foods will be offered and students will be encouraged to make wise food choices. Good food habits will be encouraged through the modeling of appropriate portions, suitable variety and preparation techniques that emphasize high quality nutrition.

Author contact: vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu

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