

"A COMPELLING AND ORIGINAL WAKE-UP CALL." JANE BLACK, FOOD WRITER

# CAFETERIA MAN

**BAD  
SCHOOL FOOD  
just met its  
match!**

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of Nutrition Services  
at City Public Schools*



**COMMUNITY SCREENING  
ACTION GUIDE**



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## THE POWER OF FILM

This action guide is designed to help you organize a successful screening of ***Cafeteria Man*** that will inspire your community to radically improve local school food programs.

Depending on your community's current situation, you may use the film and this guide in a number of ways:

- To start the conversation about improving school food
- To spark collective thinking about possible solutions
- To promote productive dialogue among different stakeholders
- To organize for real change

Many communities have found ***Cafeteria Man*** to be a stirring and powerful instrument for inspiring school food reform. A film screening is an engaging and fun way to bring together people and discuss critical issues. By providing a shared experience of the film, and then a chance to talk about concerns and possible solutions, you will be providing the motivation and the tools for community members to take action.



## ABOUT THE FILM

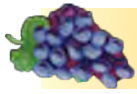
What does it take to reform school food programs so that the food served is fresher, more wholesome and tasty for students, more sustainable for local communities, and so kids develop a healthier relationship to food?

***Cafeteria Man*** is a 65-minute documentary about one school district's move toward a more nutritious and more sustainable food program. The film offers an inspiring portrayal of the possibilities, as well as a realistic view of the challenges of transforming school food.

***Cafeteria Man*** follows chef Tony Geraci's ambitious efforts in Baltimore City Public Schools, a large urban district that serves 83,000 students. Responding to student complaints about the unappealing pre-plated food being served, Baltimore hired Geraci as Food and Nutrition Director of the city's schools. Chef Geraci launched a sweeping, multi-faceted plan to transform not just what students eat, but their whole relationship to food. His vision includes more locally sourced foods, nutrition education in the classroom, student-designed meals, a teaching farm, and school vegetable gardens.

The film traces Geraci's reform efforts in Baltimore over the course of two years. Viewers see him working with a broad base of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and local farmers. They witness what it takes to get local produce and freshly prepared food on school plates. And they watch as inner city youth plant and harvest vegetables at the district's new 33-acre teaching farm, and develop job skills through a new culinary training program.

***Cafeteria Man*** shows what is attainable with inspired leadership and a shared vision. It illustrates many possible elements of a healthy and sustainable food program, and suggests ways for overcoming obstacles to get there.



# BACKGROUND ON SCHOOL FOOD

Since 1984, the percentage of overweight children in the U.S. has more than doubled, and one out of every three kids is now classified as overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup> Not only are these children at risk for diabetes, joint problems, asthma, depression, and other health concerns, but they are also much more likely to have difficulties learning than children of normal weight.<sup>2</sup>

While there are several causes of this alarming epidemic, one of the most astonishing factors is the food served in many school cafeterias. More than 26 million school kids across the United States get up to half of their calories through school meal programs. When made from prepackaged, processed food and surplus USDA commodities—as it often is—school food not only tastes bad, but contributes to students being overweight. In fact, a 2011 report by the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine concluded that girls who participate in the National School Lunch Program gain weight more quickly than girls from low-income families who do not participate.<sup>3</sup> (See the box on page 5 for more about the National School Lunch Program.)

A growing number of communities all over the country are working to reverse this trend. As **Cafeteria Man** illustrates, there is much we can do to improve school meals and children's health at the same time. Some steps include getting rid of vending machines that sell unhealthy snacks and sodas, moving away from unappetizing pre-plated meals, offering salad bars with fresh fruits and vegetables, and replacing processed foods with local ingredients. Many communities like Baltimore are also embracing sustainable school food as a goal (for more information, see "What is Sustainable School Food," on page 6).

The experience in Baltimore shows that change doesn't happen overnight: it comes slowly over time through the dedication and perseverance of parents, students, advocates, and school administrators. Other communities are also finding that with enough tenacity, change is possible. For example, frustrated parents in Berkeley, California sparked a debate in 1999 about better school food. Many years and small steps later, the district's cafeterias today serve meals without a single pre-prepared food item, and students work in school gardens and kitchens to help provision and prepare lunches.

As suggested in the film, a common obstacle to change is resistance within the system itself. Most school food is tied to federal meal programs (see the box on page 5 about the National School Lunch Program), which means perpetual underfunding that limits choices. Cheaper, highly processed foods are often seen as the only affordable option. However, as Geraci proved in Baltimore, using better ingredients can be cost-effective: as more kids participate in the school food program, the district receives more federal reimbursement money to work with.

In addition to funding issues, another challenge is the fact that districts have been steadily dismantling their school kitchens over the last 30 years, making in-school preparation difficult or impossible. That's why the central kitchen was such an important piece for Geraci. Changing school meals also requires restructuring procurement procedures, longer lead times for getting products and ingredients, and retraining staff – all of which take considerable time and effort.

While there are many obstacles to changing school food, school districts around the country are finding ways to overcome them. When everyone agrees that children's health and well-being come first, positive change happens. And that's where you and the film can play an important role, building that consensus.

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<sup>1</sup> "Childhood Overweight and Obesity." Centers for Disease Control. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Judge, S. and Johns, L. "Association of overweight with academic performance and social and behavioral problems: an update from the early childhood longitudinal study." *The Journal of School Health*, 77(10):672-678. 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Kaplan, K. "Is the National School Lunch Program to Blame (In Part) for the Rise of Childhood Obesity?" *Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 2011. <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/apr/06/news/la-heb-school-lunch-program-obesity-20110406>.

## THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

Most school food is tied to the National School Lunch Program and other federally-assisted meal programs. Established in 1946, the National School Lunch Program provides low-cost or free lunches to over 26 million children in 95,000 schools each school day.<sup>4</sup> Important changes to the program will begin in the 2012-2013 school year (see Recent Changes below).

**Purposes.** The program was established as a way to provide nourishment to low-income children, and to encourage domestic consumption of agricultural products in order to bolster food prices. From its inception, the program has had inherent conflicts between student nutrition and industry interests – with industry often winning out.

**How It Works.** Schools in the lunch program get cash reimbursements and donated commodities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for each meal they serve, and must follow Federal nutrition guidelines. As shown in Baltimore and other districts, schools get more money to work with when they entice more students to participate.

**Who Participates.** Children from low-income families are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, depending on family income level. Other children at a participating school may also purchase lunches. Local schools set their own prices for full-price meals, but must operate a nonprofit lunch program.

**Nutritional Requirements.** Nutritional requirements for the \$9 billion federal meal program are established by the USDA, and approved by Congress. Decisions about nutrition requirements are often fueled more by politics and economic interests than by children's health. Rulings such as whether tomato sauce on school pizza constitutes a vegetable are lobbied heavily by food manufacturers and the agriculture industry.

**Recent Changes.** The recently-signed Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, championed by First Lady Michelle Obama, will double the amounts of fruits and vegetables served in schools; require that all school milk be low- or non-fat and that all grains be whole; and limit the amounts of calories, salt, and trans fats contained in school meals. The new regulations mark the first overhaul of the school lunch program since the 1990s, and will be phased in over three years starting July 2012.

While it is a promising step, the act is neither perfect nor a panacea. For example, the National Potato Council successfully blocked a proposed limit on potatoes—including French fries—in school lunches.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The School Breakfast Program was added in 1966.

<sup>5</sup>Pear, Robert. "Senate Saves the Potato on School Lunch Menus," New York Times. October 18, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/19/us/politics/potatoes-get-senate-protection-on-school-lunch-menus.html>.



## WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL FOOD?

Sustainable school food is food that is fresher and healthier for students, minimizes impacts on the environment, and supports the local economy.

One of the most important steps toward sustainable school food is to incorporate local produce and other ingredients in school menus, which is often called “farm to school.” In many schools, food served is grown or prepared hundreds of miles away. Using local ingredients increases the freshness and nutrition of the food, makes the meal service more appealing to students, reduces waste and greenhouse gases, provides a new market for local farmers and producers, and benefits the local economy. For example, Portland Public Schools in Oregon started showcasing regionally-grown products each month. Many of the inner-city children had never tasted freshly harvested blueberries, apples, strawberries, or salad mix – and literally ate them up. Another example is Tony Geraci’s current work in Memphis schools, where \$10 million a year is spent on local ingredients.

In addition to locally sourced foods, many sustainable school food programs cultivate school or district gardens, involve students in planning and preparing school meals, and incorporate food and nutrition into the classroom curricula. Initiatives such as these have the added benefit of deepening students’ connection with both food and the land.



# HOW TO ORGANIZE AN EFFECTIVE SCREENING

A film screening of ***Cafeteria Man*** can be a powerful tool for bringing people together around the issue of school food and setting the stage for change. Careful pre-planning will ensure that your event has as much impact – and garners as much support – as possible.

While the issue of school food is a serious one, adding some fun elements to your event will encourage more people to come. Consider offering food tastings or coupons from local restaurants, door prizes, or a brief music performance by local students.

Following are the primary considerations to plan your event and followup. See the Event Checklist on page 11 for a more detailed list of tasks and to help you get organized. See also Tony's Tips on page 14 for more help in developing an effective event.

## Before the Screening

### Find Out What's Happening

We suggest that you first learn as much as you can about the state of school food programs in your community. You may already have some knowledge and concerns, but it can be helpful to learn more to help clarify your goals and strategy. Find out who the main people or groups are working on school food in your area, both within the school district and in the local community. Ask them what they believe are the greatest needs for improvement and the primary obstacles. Identify the key decision-makers you'll need to try to partner with and pinpoint the most important things people can do to focus their efforts to make a difference.

### Identify & Recruit Outreach Partners

Ask the groups and people you identify in the first step to partner with you to organize and promote the film event, and to work with you to tackle the issue in your community. Create a small organizing committee to help with the specific tasks of organizing the event. Also, network with counterparts in other regions or nationally who are already working on this issue, in part to learn from their successes. See the Selected Resources on page 15 for national organizations that may have local chapters in your area.

### Find a Venue and Date

Depending on your anticipated audience, find an appropriate venue for your screening and pick a date. Make sure the venue is convenient for people to get to, that it will meet your audiovisual needs, and that it has adequate space. It could be a school auditorium, a local church or synagogue, community center, or even a theater. It's good to allow at least 4-6 weeks to organize an event. So, set a date far enough in advance that doesn't conflict with any other major events. Consider organizing your screening around one of the following national food-related dates: National Farm to School Month (October), Food Day (October 24), or Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution Day (May 19).

### Plan the Program

Your screening will have the most impact if you do more than just screen the film. You'll want to invite a few people to speak after the film about what's happening locally, what can be learned from the film, and to share solutions. It can also be helpful to plan for a Q&A session with the audience, or small group discussions on focused questions. It's best to limit your event to no more than two hours, or you may lose people, especially in the evening (the film is 65 minutes long).

Consider carefully who you will invite to speak. Our experience is that it's best to limit speakers to just one or two so as not to dissipate the energy and inspiration the film generates. It's also important that the program be solution-oriented and that the audience be given specific things they can do. Be selective about your choices,

aiming for people who are knowledgeable about the state of local school food, can identify changes most needed, and have specific practical solutions. School nutrition directors or school board members may not be the best choices, as they often have a stake in the status quo and may be put on the defensive.

### **Make Invitee List**

Plan to invite the “influencers” on this issue in your community, which includes parents, students, supportive teachers, health professionals, farmers and others. Young people play a key role, so be sure to make a special effort to target them. (Note that the film is appropriate for upper elementary students and older.) Consider whether to invite key decision makers to attend, such as the school nutrition director, school board members, or the state agriculture director – or whether it would be better to arrange a meeting with them afterwards to present your proposed changes.

### **Promote the Event**

Create a list of all possible channels for publicizing the screening. Write a short announcement of differing lengths for different publicity channels. Email and social networking sites can be fast, effective, and are free. Include announcements in local PTA and other partner newsletters. Send a press release to your local newspaper and other news outlets to get the word out more broadly. Have leaflets or postcard invitations available to hand out or send.

See the *Cafeteria Man* website [[www.cafeteriaman.com](http://www.cafeteriaman.com)] for downloadable publicity materials you can customize to help promote your screening, including postcards, a poster, a flier, and more.

## **At the Screening**

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Assign volunteers to greet attendees as they enter, hand them any leaflets or other materials, and ask them to sign in. Sign-in sheets are an invaluable way to gather data about your attendees that you can later use to keep them informed and prompt their support. In addition to contact information (name, address, email, and phone number), you may ask what skills or interests they bring to the issue.

When it’s time to start the event, welcome everyone and thank them for coming. Explain the purpose of the event, the program, and the desired outcomes. Introduce the speakers or panel members, and encourage attendees to stay after the film for a Q&A, discussion, or other program you’ve planned.

### **Pre-Film Discussion**

Before showing the film, if there’s time, you may want to engage the audience by having them very briefly (5 minutes) discuss a question on the topic. This can help focus their attention and break the ice. A simple way to do this is to have audience members turn to someone sitting near them and share for a few moments their thoughts on a question. Possible questions include:

- What brings you here today? What interests or concerns you most about school food?
- Do you think it’s important for schools to provide healthy, fresh food to students? Why or why not?

As they are talking, you may want to listen in on some of the conversations. After a couple of minutes, get everyone’s attention again. You might share one or two things you overheard, keeping it very brief. Also, say that you hope the film will inspire more conversation and ideas.



### **Show the Film**

Briefly introduce the film as one that provides inspiration for what's possible, as well as a realistic portrayal of the obstacles to change. Encourage attendees to watch the film for concrete lessons and ideas that could be applied to your local school food program. You might also mention that Tony Geraci is now school food director in Memphis, transforming the food program in an even larger district, and that he's been named one of the 20 most influential food service people.

### **After the Film**

Immediately after the film, start your program. You want to capitalize on the energy created by the film, and keep the momentum going. Introduce your speakers or panel members and open the floor for them to share their thoughts and proposals. You might want to spend a few minutes before your speakers with a Q&A period to answer questions about the film. You'll find answers to frequently asked questions on pages 12 and 13.

### **Call to Action**

As part of the discussion after the film, be sure to provide a few specific actions your audience members can take to improve school food in your community and let them know how they can get involved in the ongoing efforts. For example, you might ask them to call or write school board members, spelling out the key points they should make. You could even hand out materials to write letters or sign petitions at the event.

### **Post-Film Discussion Option**

If you don't have speakers or a panel, after the film you could ask audience members to discuss and reflect on the film and the lessons for your local school food programs. As with the pre-screening questions, an effective way to handle the discussion is to provide focus questions for audience members to discuss with someone near them, or have people break into small groups. A few representatives can share some of their ideas with the whole group. Possible questions include:

- What are one or two things you learned from the film that you would like to see happen locally?
- The film highlights Tony Geraci's dynamic personality as a force for change. What do you think it would take for our community to move forward on this issue?



## After the Screening

After your successful screening, pat yourself on the back! But, also take time to do some follow-up, which will help make sure your event has the desired impact.

### Plan Next Steps

Convene a meeting of organizers and partners to assess the overall results of the screening event and to plan next steps. Write up the results of this meeting to send to your event attendees and speakers.

### Send Thank You Notes

Send thank you notes to your speakers, key partners and volunteers. Be sure to point out the impact of the event, their part in making it successful, and your desire to continue working with them for local change.

### Follow Up with Attendees

A few days after the event, send out an update and survey via email to your attendees. Ask them to provide feedback on the event and inform them of your next steps, inviting them to get involved and identifying one or two concrete things they can do to support your efforts.

### Share The Outcome With Us

Please let us know the results of your screening and your ongoing plans. We've setup a form on the Cafeteria Man website for you to report the details – including any lessons you learned. We'll share your event results and plans with others so we can all learn from each other. Find the report form at: [www.cafeteriaman.com](http://www.cafeteriaman.com).





# EVENT CHECKLIST

## At Least Four-Six Weeks Before

- Find Partners.** Identify who is working on this issue in your community or state, and contact them as possible outreach partners.
- Clarify Goals.** Identify the outcomes you'd like to see from the event.
- Determine Budget.** Knowing the financial resources you have to work with will guide decisions about the venue, speakers, publicity, and refreshments.
- Plan Program & Invite Speakers.** Considering your goals, decide how you will structure the event (speaker, panel, discussion, etc.) and who you will ask to speak.
- Book Venue, Date, and Time.** Based on your plan for the program and the anticipated audience size, choose a suitable venue. Confirm availability of audiovisual equipment.
- Make Invitee List.** Extend invitations to key organizations and influencers in your community.
- Begin Promoting Event.** Use a combination of publicity avenues such as email, social media, newsletters, newspapers, radio, mail, and posters. See the **Cafeteria Man** website for downloadable publicity materials – [www.cafeteriaman.com](http://www.cafeteriaman.com)
- Order the DVD.** Signup for the appropriate screening option on the **Cafeteria Man** website.

## Two Weeks Before

- Confirm Speakers.** Articulate your expectations and goals for the event.
- Plan Handouts.** Think about what information and materials you want the audience to have. Plan for design and printing. A sample handout is available on the **Cafeteria Man** website.
- Plan Refreshments.** If possible, arrange for locally-sourced food or drinks.
- Test DVD.** Make sure you've ordered the **Cafeteria Man** DVD and tested it in a DVD player.
- Recruit Event Volunteers.** Make sure you contact potential volunteers to help at the event.

## One Week Before

- Update Promotion.** Send out reminders through emails and social media.
- Reconfirm AV Equipment.** Consider securing a technician to run audiovisual equipment at the event.
- Finalize Set-up.** Ensure that you will have necessary chairs and tables, and other set-up needs.
- Finalize Program.** Determine what will happen when, and who will do what; for example, who will introduce the film and speakers, and facilitate the discussion. Also, identify possible questions to kick off the discussion, if necessary (see pages 12-13 for ideas).
- Assign Volunteers.** Get help to buy refreshments, set up the space, set up tables and chairs, greet attendees as they arrive, handle sign-in sheets, and clean up after the event.

## One Day Before

- Assemble Supplies.** Gather materials, refreshments, and everything else you'll need at the venue. Don't forget the DVD of the film!
- Test Audiovisual.** Make sure equipment is operating properly and the DVD works in the equipment.
- Remind Volunteers and Speakers.** Confirm arrival times and any other details or assignments. Remind speakers of their topic and time limits.

## Two Hours Before

- Arrive Early.** Get to the event well in advance and be ready for any surprises.
- Set Up.** Double check that everything is in place and working. Test out the AV equipment.
- Signup Sheets & Handouts.** Make sure these are ready and available.

## At the Screening

- “Roll ‘em.”** Present the film, and carry out your planned program.
- Have fun!**

## After the Screening

- Decide Next Steps.** Meet with outreach partners to determine the best actions.
- Send Thank Yous.** Be sure to personally thank your speakers, panel members, and key attendees.
- Follow Up with Attendees.** Send surveys and next step plans via email.
- Report Your Results.** Post your event results and lessons on the **Cafeteria Man** website: [www.cafeteriaman.com](http://www.cafeteriaman.com)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some of the most common questions we have found people ask after watching the film. You may find these helpful for your screening. You'll find several more FAQ's on the Cafeteria Man website.

### **Q: Where is Tony Geraci now and what's he up to?**

After catalyzing change around school food in Baltimore, Geraci felt he had taken his role as far as he could, and left with confidence that the people and programs were in place to sustain the momentum. Geraci is currently the Executive Director of Memphis City Schools Nutrition Services, which provides over 200,000 meals a day for 110,000 students. Since his arrival in Fall 2011, he has increased participation in the Breakfast in the Classroom program, initiated an At Risk Supper Meal Program, expanded the farm to school program, and established a 100-acre farm. He also continues to speak nationally on school food reform issues, and was recently named one of the top influential people by Food Service Director magazine.

(continued on next page)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

### **Q: What has been happening in Baltimore since Tony left?**

The current nutrition services director in Baltimore is committed to building on Geraci's accomplishments. He is leading several key initiatives, including increasing the number of schools with salad bars, overcoming obstacles to getting more locally-farmed produce into schools, increasing dialogue with students and parents in making food program choices, and moving to a Classroom Breakfast model for morning meals. He is still studying the central kitchen idea.

### **Q: Why is the central kitchen such an important point?**

Geraci advocated for a central kitchen because it would allow food service staff to improve the quality of food being served – providing freshly prepared food rather than preplated, reheated frozen food. It would also increase the amount of local produce used in cooking, provide a venue for staff training, and serve as a site for culinary students to receive job training. A 2009 budget estimate showed that a central kitchen for Baltimore would reduce operating costs by 20-30%. Finding the capital funds for the kitchen is still an issue in Baltimore. But there is a central kitchen in Memphis.

### **Q: How is Baltimore typical or atypical of other school districts on the issue of school food?**

Like all school districts throughout the country, Baltimore has to work within the rather complex federal nutrition program reimbursement guidelines, which constrain costs and can drive decisions (see page 5 for more about the National School Lunch Program). However, each school district has a unique population, culture, history, guidelines and climate that influence its specific path toward school food reform.

### **Q: What can communities do without a dynamic leader like Tony?**

While it's great to have a person in a leadership role who is a passionate and persuasive advocate for school reform, it's not essential. As important is organizing broad community support into a strong, unified voice that is vigilant and committed to pushing for positive change.

### **Q: How can students make a difference?**

K-12 students generally have limited avenues for advocating for change in their educational systems. However, their voices are important and can be amplified effectively with the help of pro-active and caring adults. Alice (in the film) and her peers were encouraged to take action by their social studies teacher, who believes in applying what's learned in the classroom to real world situations and encouraged their efforts to "speak truth to power." (To learn more about youth-led efforts to create a national Youth Food Bill of Rights, visit: [www.youthfoodbillofrights.com](http://www.youthfoodbillofrights.com).)

### **Q: What can parents and citizens do to promote healthier school food?**

Because they are overburdened, school personnel are often unable to take on this issue. For this reason, active parent involvement is essential to transforming school food. Parents are able to mobilize in numbers and make their voices heard—at PTA meetings, before school boards, in letters to the editor, etc. Many organizations offer assessment tools and resources that can help you create change in your community (see Selected Resources for Action on Page 15).



# TONY GERACI'S TIPS FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL FOOD

From his experience with dozens of school food programs around the country, Tony offers the following suggestions for instigating change:

**Get involved!** Your voice is needed. Don't be passive or expect others to make the change for you. Changing school food programs isn't necessarily easy, so don't expect a quick fix. Be ready to stay in it for the long haul.

**Mobilize support.** Change requires developing sufficient community will. You'll need to reach out and mobilize broad support from parents, students, community organizations, local farmers, health groups, and others working on childhood obesity and food issues. (See the Selected Resources section on page 15 for national groups that may have local chapters in your area.)

**Learn what's going on locally.** Keep in mind that every school or district is different and is working within set guidelines and budgets. Make sure you've assessed the current situation and understand where things stand with school food, what the obstacles might be to further progress, and who the main players and decision-makers are.

**Aim to work with the school staff.** Approach the school food service director and administrators in your district or school first in an engaging and understanding way. You can learn a lot from these professionals, even if they may not be initially fully supportive of your efforts. Ask what improvements they would like to see, what the obstacles are, and how you can support them and help get the change you'd like to see. If they can't or won't support your proposals, you'll need to take your case to the school board, backed by your community supporters (including kids, of course).

**Articulate your goals.** Outline clearly what your desired outcomes and expectations are, and the steps in your campaign. As you progress in your efforts, keep everyone informed and in the loop. In those inevitable difficult moments, keep spirits up by reminding people why the changes you desire are so important: kids that are more healthy and ready to learn. And celebrate the small victories, as well.

**Help students make healthier choices.** My experience from serving tens of thousands of kids from varied backgrounds is that when you surround kids with better choices, they will choose healthier foods. More nutritious foods can be tasty, too. The food industry is largely driving the message that kids won't eat healthier foods. But also keep in mind that bad eating habits usually begin at home and are reinforced there. Ask your school to hold events for parents and families that encourage healthier meals at home and offer samples of nutritious, tasty food options.

**Help the district see that it can afford a better program.** Schools provide kids the basic tools they need to learn: desks, books, and teachers. But nutritious school meals are just as important. Studies have shown that healthy food is linked to better academic performance and a decrease in behavioral problems. Frankly, school districts can't afford NOT to provide the funding to feed students healthy, appealing food. Also, done right, school food programs will see greater student participation, thereby increasing federal reimbursements from the National School Lunch Program: a win-win for all.





# SELECTED RESOURCES FOR TAKING ACTION ON SCHOOL FOOD

## Free Guides

**Rethinking School Lunch Guide** (Center for Ecoliteracy, © 2010).

Download from: [www.ecoliteracy.org/downloads/rethinking-school-lunch-guide](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/downloads/rethinking-school-lunch-guide)

A planning framework that provides strategies for changing school meal programs, promoting health, and increasing ecological understanding. One of the best guides available.

**Cooking with California Food in K-12 Schools** by Georgeann Brennan and Ann M. Evans. (Center for Ecoliteracy, © 2011).

Download from: [www.ecoliteracy.org/cooking-with-california-food](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/cooking-with-california-food)

A cookbook and professional development guide for adding fresh, local, healthy foods to school lunches. The concepts and most of the recipes are a model for any region.

**Everybody's Guide to Fixing School Food** by Dana Waldow, PEACHSF

Download from: [www.peachsf.org/how-to-guides-3/](http://www.peachsf.org/how-to-guides-3/)

Provides a concise overview of what you need to know to start working to make changes in your school district. Several other great guides to school food organizing also on this site.

## Books

**Free for All: Fixing School Food in America** by Janet Poppendieck (University of California Press, © 2011). An examination of the politics of food from multiple perspectives—history, policy, nutrition, environmental sustainability, and taste—and a sweeping vision for change.

**Lunch Lessons: Changing the Way We Feed Our Children** by Ann Cooper & Lisa M. Holmes (Harper Collins, © 2001)

An exploration of how parents and school employees can help instill healthy eating in children; how to support local, organic food; and ways to promote widespread community change.

**School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare** by Susan Levine. (Princeton University Press, © 2008)

A history of the National School Lunch Program that investigates who decides what American schoolchildren should be eating, and the policies that surround those decisions.

**Lunch Wars: How to Start a School Food Revolution and Win the Battle for Our Children's Health** by Amy Kalafa (Penguin Press, © 2011)

Kalafa explains all the complicated issues surrounding school food; how to work with your school's "Wellness Policy"; the basics of self-operated vs. outsourced cafeterias; how to get funding for a school garden, and much more.

**Fed Up with Lunch** by Sarah Wu. (Chronicle Books, © 2011)

An eye-opening account of school lunches in America. Provides invaluable resources for parents and health advocates who wish to help reform school lunch.

## Organizations and Programs

### **National Farm to School Network**

[www.farmentoschool.org](http://www.farmentoschool.org)

A program that connects K-12 schools and local farms to serve healthy school meals, provide agriculture and health education, and support farmers. Check the website for what's happening in your state.

### **LunchLoveCommunity**

[www.lunchlovecommunity.org](http://www.lunchlovecommunity.org)

An online documentary project offering shareable films, community engagement, and creative resources to inspire change in the way school kids eat.

### **Slow Food USA**

[www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org)

A national organization dedicated to good, clean, and fair food, with 225 local chapters, many of which are working on school food issues.

### **Alliance for a Healthier Generation**

[www.healthiergeneration.org/schools.aspx?id=5655](http://www.healthiergeneration.org/schools.aspx?id=5655)

The Alliance's Healthy Schools Program supports more than 14,000 schools nationwide and offers resources and tools to help schools purchase healthier options.

### **Center for Science in the Public Interest**

[www.cspinet.org](http://www.cspinet.org)

Organizers of annual Food Day, focuses on issues of nutrition, health, food safety and more.

### **The Edible School Yard**

[www.edibleschoolyard.org](http://www.edibleschoolyard.org)

Tools include organic garden and kitchen lessons, class management tools and ideas for integrating food into the academic classroom.

### **The Lunch Box**

[www.thelunchbox.org](http://www.thelunchbox.org)

An online toolkit with Healthy Tools For All Schools, founded by pioneering school chef and author Ann Cooper.

## More Resources and Updates on School Food

[www.cafeteriaman.com](http://www.cafeteriaman.com)







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**Richard Chisolm**, Director and Co-Producer, is an Emmy award-winning documentary filmmaker and cinematographer whose 25 years of production experience include projects produced for PBS, National Geographic, BBC, Discovery Channel, HBO, and many other broadcast entities.

**Sheila Kinkade**, Co-Producer, has advocated for the needs of disadvantaged children and youth in the U.S. and internationally for more than 20 years. A writer and communications consultant, she is co-author of *Our Time is Now: Young People Changing the World*, a book profiling 30 young heroes in 20 countries, and the writer of four non-fiction children's books celebrating our world as a common home.

**David Grossbach**, Editor and Co-Producer, has edited award-winning documentaries for over 25 years broadcast on The History Channel, Discovery Channel, National Geographic TV, and PBS, among others.

## Action Guide Credits

**Guide Writer: Leslie Comnes**, an education writer with over seventy publications on science and environmental education topics, including the Food, Inc. Discussion Guide, Center for Ecoliteracy's Big Ideas: Linking Food, Culture, Health, and the Environment, and Project Learning Tree's Exploring Environmental Issues: Focus on Forests.

**Guide Producer: Steve Ladd**, Specialty Studios

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[www.specialtystudios.com](http://www.specialtystudios.com)

**Specialty Studios** is a production, distribution and engagement studio for socially conscious media. Specialty Studios provides experienced support and resources that enhance the profile and impact of cause-related films.