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Changing the Food Environment: Making it Happen

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Healthy Schools: Making Healthier Food Choices Easier For the Next Generation

Mary Kay Fox, MEd

Senior Researcher, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

**Member, IOM Committee on Nutrition Standards for the National School Lunch
and Breakfast Programs**

I'm very privileged to be here representing the IOM Committee. And the work I'll be talking about obviously was the result of a large group of people working over a period of a little over two years. And we issued our report last fall, and USDA is currently in the process of considering our recommendations for improving the quality of school meals. And I'm told that there should be some draft regulations out for review incorporating lots of our recommendations sometime before the end of the year. So, I would like to begin with just a little background what our committee's task was. The committee was actually commissioned by USDA. USDA asked the Institute of Medicine to bring together a group of experts on school meals, child nutrition, nutrient assessment; and in particular, they asked that that committee include at least three representatives of working real time school food service operators. And these three individuals were a very, very important part of our deliberations because they applied the reality test that we needed going all the way along so that the recommendations that we came out with at the end had a chance of being viable in a real world situation. So, I really want to tip my hat to those members of our committee. We were asked to review and assess food and nutrient intakes of school-aged children against the most current dietary guidance, which is the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Dietary Reference Intakes. And as many of you know, the standards that the school meal programs are currently operating under are based on the now obsolete, 1989 RDAs, an older version of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. We were asked to make very specific recommended revisions to the existing standards to improve the nutritional -- the nutritional quality of food content of the meals offered in the programs. So, the goal for the committee's work would be to come up with a group of recommendations that reflected current nutritional science, increased the availability of key food groups, improve the ability of the programs to meet children's nutritional needs, foster healthy eating habits and overall safeguard their health, and to result in a process that would allow for a simplified process for menu planning and monitoring.

As many of you may know, the current program allows five different approaches to planning menus. And even across those approaches, schools may not be planning menus for the same ages and grade groups and may not be trying to reach the same nutrient targets. So, the goal was to try to come up with something that was more simplified that could be a "one size fits all" and make it easier to implement in the field and monitor on an ongoing basis. We weren't asked to make our recommendations cost neutral; however, we were asked to be sensitive to costs and also to be sensitive to the realities that school food service programs work. And for many of them there is a broad variability in the amount and type of equipment that school food service programs have available to them in preparing meals for students.

So, now I am going to talk about the recommendations. Ultimately the report includes eight different recommendations but I will only focus on the first two. And these are the two that are most focused on: Implications for the menu planning process, and implications for change in the amount and types of food that would be offered to children in school meals. Later, I'll give a broad brush view of the other recommendations, and if not, I've got information about where you can find the report and read about the other recommendations yourselves. So, the first recommendation was that USDA use an elaborate set of nutrition targets that the committee set up as the framework or definition for setting meal requirements for both breakfast and lunch. We went through an elaborate process where we set targets for over 25 nutrients and dietary components such that providing meals that would meet these targets would minimize the likelihood that children would receive either too little or too much of key nutrients. We did this for three age and grade groups which were consistent with the most common types of school configurations across the country: K through five, six through eight, and nine through 12. And for the first time, we also established the concept of minimum and maximum calories. The current standards do define a minimum number of calories, but are silent about a maximum number of calories, and we know that many school meals go well above that minimum number of calories. The second part of this first recommendation is that we did encourage USDA not to take this elaborate system of nutrient targets that we put together and use that as the framework for menu planning and monitoring in the field. Rather, we recommended that they take on a simple single approach that's a food-based pattern which includes four nutrient based standards, and those would be the minimum and maximum calories that I mentioned, a maximum value for saturated fat, a requirement that commercially purchased foods would have zero trans fat per serving, and then a maximum level for sodium content. First of all, our recommended standards include more fruit overall. We also differentiate between fruits and vegetables. In the current requirements, fruits and vegetables are

interchangeable. For example, at lunch, you are supposed to offer a certain amount, three quarters of a cup of fruits and/or vegetables. We have removed -- or have suggested that USDA remove that interchangeability and have a separate standard for fruits and a separate standard for vegetables. And in addition, we have drilled down a bit in terms of making recommendations for vegetables. As we all know, all vegetables are not created equal. There are some folks in this room, who I am sure at one point or another, have had a debate about whether a French fry in a school meal should even be counted as a vegetable. So, we have tried to provide some guidance on varying the types of vegetables, both for nutritional considerations as well as the opportunity to expose children to eating different types of fruits and vegetables, and over time grow those healthy eating habits.

In addition, for whole grain foods, we established a definition for whole grains, and we are calling them "whole grain rich." Again, as many of you in the room may know, there is not at this time a universally accepted definition of a whole grain food. So, we defined a whole grain rich food as one that has a whole grain as the first ingredient or that has eight grams of whole grain per serving. And we've recommended that at least 50 percent -- more is better, but at least 50 percent of the grains offered at breakfast and lunch be whole grain rich foods. As far as milk, we have recommended that all milk be either one percent or fat free skim. Many schools are already doing this, but many of them are also offering skim milk and whole milk as options. What we are doing as our recommendations suggest is to get rid of the whole milk and the two percent milk and limit it to one percent and skim. You will see that we have allowed for the possibility that the milk can be either plain or flavored. And, finally, again going back to the calorie guidelines, that the selections from food groups across a week should fall within that minimum and maximum calorie range. Not every single day. Some days may be higher. Some days may be lower. That's the way we all eat. We don't eat the same number of calories every single day. But over the course of the week, the average calorie value should fall within that minimum and maximum range. And so, at breakfast, implementing our recommendations would result in about two-and-a-half cups -- an additional two-and-a-half cups of fruit per week. So, that's on top of the fruit that's already required in the traditional food-based pattern or about an additional half a cup of fruit per day. And we also recommend that not more than half of the fruit come as juice. So, all of the fruit can't be a 10-ounce glass of juice. Only half of the fruit would come as juice. For grains, there is an increase of about 3.5 to 4-ounce equivalence across the week. That's about .7 to .8-ounce per day, depending on what the current menu is like. There is no change in milk, just in the type of milk that we mentioned earlier, but the amount of milk remains the same. And then for meat and meat

alternates -- and this includes yogurt, cheese, eggs. Yogurt and cheese some may think belongs in the milk group, but it's been considered a protein source in school meals for years, and we left it there because that's the way that it's been used in the program and children are used to that. And yogurt is a great source of protein. So a protein source at breakfast -- and depending on where the school is at -- that could be an increase of anywhere from zero to 10-ounce equivalence of meat over the course of the week.

For lunch, it's a little bit less traumatic. For lunch it's an increase of one to four cups of fruit per week, about a fifth to four quarters of a cup a day. For vegetables, it's an increase of about one to three cups of vegetables per week. A fifth to about three-fifths a day, again, depending on where their menus are at. And many school food service programs are already offering more than the minimum amount that's required in that traditional food base. But this is just the minimum that we would recommend they have. And then you can see the pluses and minuses that fall below underneath vegetables. This is where we get into what I mentioned earlier, the recommendations about types of vegetables. So, there is pluses for dark green, orange and legumes, basically because we are recommending that there be a standard that at least that orange vegetables be offered at least once a week, that a dark green vegetable -- broccoli, romaine lettuce -- be offered at least once a week. And the starchy vegetables are French fries, potatoes, corn, peas, which make up a really large proportion of the vegetables that are currently being offered in the program. So, that's going to be a change in the opposite direction, and then in general, we recommend about a cup of starchy vegetables maximum a week. And then the remainder can be made up from other vegetables, things like mushrooms, cucumbers, tomatoes, other vegetables that fall into one of the other groups. And then there is no change in grains. The total amount of grains, but, again, we are looking for that switch from fewer refined grains to at least 50 percent of the grains being whole grains.

So, all this additional food costs money. And that was one of the things that USDA asked us to evaluate. We were only able to do a relative limited analysis, but we did look at the cost of what we considered traditional, a one-week representative menu. It was sort of in the middle of the pack. It wasn't the best menu. It wasn't the worse menu. We did a scientific selection process to identify representative menus for breakfast and lunch, elementary, middle and high, and then we went through and used USDA information from a national study that they do of school lunch and breakfast costs. We used data from that study linked to our representative menus to figure out the food costs. The food costs per meal. And then we had our food service experts go in and take those traditional menus and not do a wholesale overhaul, but basically say, if this is the menu that

you were starting with and you had this new set of recommendations, what would the things that you need to do to tweak this menu in a reasonable way to get it to be in compliance with these new recommendations. And then we costed thought-modified base-line menus. And one of the things that also influences the cost of the menu is how the students are going to respond to it, so there is a lot of extra fruits and vegetables and whole grains being offered. The students may or may not take them. They may or may not eat them. So, we did two versions of the cost analysis: One with modest assumption about children's take-up of the additional fruits and vegetables, and one with a more optimistic assumption. And the assumed increase in food cost at breakfast was 18 to 23 percent, and it was lower at lunch because there wasn't quite as drastic a change, and that was from four to nine percent. So, these numbers are obviously pretty rough. They were done on a very limited set of menus, but the bottom line is that these recommendations do have costs associated with them. And if the expectation is that schools will be implementing them, money has to come from somewhere to back that up. F and S is in the process now of doing a more elaborate cost analysis, and I am very anxious to see the results of that analysis to see how well it compares to this.

But, again, the bottom line is, we should be cognizant of the fact that changes like this have implications for food costs, which doesn't even get into labor costs. I don't have time to go through all the other recommendations, but I do want to make one point about recommendation number three. And this is recommendations about foods as selected. As many of you know, the programs have a provision that allows students to refuse a certain number of items that they are offered. But the one point that we did push is that we would like to see the OVS rule say that at breakfast a child has to take at least one fruit serving, and at lunch a child has to take at least one fruit and one vegetable serving.

You can get information on this report at the IOM website and the National Academy of Press website. The executive summary is available for free download, the full report is available for purchase. Thank you.

Janey Thornton, MS, PhD
Deputy Under Secretary, Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
U.S. Department of Agriculture

We are also excited to be a part of an administration that's leading a major new role to solve the problem of childhood obesity in one generation. The President and the First Lady have taken action to address this major public health issue notably by sponsoring and encouraging collaboration across and within public and private sectors. I want to focus my remarks today on a

key opportunity to promote good nutrition and eliminate obesity among our children. The food environment in our nation's schools. In the next few minutes, I will share what we are doing at USDA to change the scene in the nation's schools to make healthy choices more achievable through policy, programs and promotion.

USDA administers the child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs, our Child and Adult Care Food programs, Afterschool Snack programs, summer program -- the Supper Program and the Summer Food Service Program. The largest of these is our National School Lunch Program. We serve about 331 million children and about 101,000 schools and residential child care facilities on a daily basis. School meals certainly play a signature role in the overall nutrition of school-aged children. In fact, on school days, children that participate in both breakfast and lunch programs will consume as much as half their calories at school. Child nutrition programs began back in 1946 when President Harry Truman, as a measure of national security, realized that many of the young recruits could not pass the health and physical activity tests that were required to enter World War II, started this program. Many of the issues are still there today and we have almost come full circle. We are now facing a similar problem but really for a different reason. Today, obesity and issues related to obesity are the most common disqualifiers for military service. But I know that we can and we must meet this looming nutrition related health crisis head on. We have one in three children that are overweight or obese putting them at a risk for diabetes and other chronic diseases. We literally spend billions of dollars on health care issues related to obesity. But an equally disturbing issue that we see in schools is childhood hunger. In 2008, we had 16.7 million children that lived in food insecure households. One or more in over 500,000 families or more than one million children didn't get enough to eat. They had to cut their size of their meals or they may even go whole days without food. Ask people that you associate with, and they probably would be surprised that this factor is there. For many children, the school lunch and school breakfast food that they get is almost the only food that they do get during a school day. So, we must work hard to assure that the gaps between such as holidays, summers, even nighttime, to see that children have food in those times as well. Improving the nutrition and health of all Americans is certainly a top priority of the Obama administration. That's why we are committed to ensuring that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious and balanced meals.

As Secretary Vilsack mentioned, we have proposed an historic investment over the next ten years in the upcoming reauthorization of our child nutrition programs to improve their ability to make sure that children get the nutritious food, that they need to develop healthy eating habits that

will promote lifestyles that will last a life time. While improved school meals are critical to our school nutrition and our obesity prevention goals, the challenge of helping kids stay healthy extends far beyond the reimbursable school meals. We have got a lot of things going on in schools right now that are very positive, regardless of what you might hear in the media. And we have got to stop pointing fingers and start looking at those positive things. I laugh and say, you know, in a way we are all like five year-olds. We love to hear about good things. So, if you see a district in one county that gets recognition, I guarantee you the superintendent and the director and the adjoining county will be jumping at the gun to see what they can do to equal the positive publicity that those districts get. So, I can't stress enough how we really need to start focusing on the positive. It is so essential that we do all we can do to create a healthier school food and nutrition environment, because truly a healthier lifestyle starts with children, and that is certainly an investment in the future of our country as well as the children that will be our future. This is one of the primary reasons that we are seeking authority to set national standards for all food sold and served in our schools as well as recommending steps to ensure that appropriate wellness policies are not only developed but are also enforced in all schools.

You have heard about the IOM study. I am not going to spend a whole lot of time on that but would like to say that many, many schools are already serving many meals that meet these standards, but there are some real challenges. Obviously increasing the fruits, vegetables and whole grains will increase the cost of these programs. Reducing the sodium levels will require changes, and we will have to work with industry to see that those standards are met. And it will obviously take kids time to get used to these new foods that they will be having. Generally schools will be challenged to serve these meals, and you might be a little surprised to know that even though schools get about \$2.68 for a free meal in a school, only about \$1 dollar to \$1.25 of that is actually spent on food. The remainder is spent on labor, equipment, indirect costs and other issues that they are required to pay. So this is definitely a great, great challenge. But we see those challenges as opportunities: Opportunities for schools, opportunities for industry, and opportunities for USDA, for all of those that think about the welfare of our kids, to apply the energies that we have to solve the issues and to see how we can do a better job for our children.

One of the most exciting efforts we have under way was a subject of a recent USDA conference to explore the ways that we can harness the power of behavior economics to make healthy school choices easy and compelling for students. Anyone who has ever worked in schools knows that putting a better meal on the lunch line is not enough. Anybody could do that if they had the money. The challenge is to put healthy food on the lunch line that children will choose and that

children will eat. Well, we are hoping through our behavior economics that we will be able to do that. In response to our recommendations from the IOM, we are working right now on drafting our proposed rule. Hopefully by the end of the year, this will be put forward for public comment. There will be a notice sent out. We will gather and review an analysis of those comments, and then a final rule will be put forward. So, we are very excited about the possibilities and the opportunities that we are going to have as we see school meals improve. But we are not going to wait until the final rule comes out. We really are working right now through our HealthierUS School Challenge. We are working to improve the health of school environments, and we are recognizing those schools that have taken those steps. First of all, the food closely resembles the IOM recommendations. And let me say it's not just within the cafeteria but other places in the schools as well. It's not good enough that we have certain standards set, but we have to have participation. So, certain participation needs to be met for school meals.

We need nutrition and physical activity -- physical education. There needs to be school wellness policies, not only in place, but actually implemented. I come from the grassroots level, and I laugh and tell people that think that we always have to give monetary rewards. Trust me, when someone receives the HealthierUS School Challenge, and they get positive press not only from their local area but from the state and from the federal government, people are thrilled to death. We are, though, however, giving some small monetary awards that will go along with that. But the most important thing for a director or for those that work in the industry is for somebody just to see all of the good things that are happening within the school and being recognized for that. We do have many resources that we generate through USDA, through our F and S, and our CMPP programs. One that has been especially popular is "Grow it, try it, like it." It's a garden theme, nutrition education kit. It really zeros in on the young audience. And it has lesson plans. It has parent child activities, recipes piece that go home with children. It's one that has been, as I said, very popular. The First Lady has really pushed the garden aspect trying to help people understand where food really comes from. So, we are doing that in schools as well. So, our Farm-to-School Program and our Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food, has been something that has been around for awhile but is something now that is really being encouraged in schools. We are seeing more school gardens. It's exciting to visit schools when you see the children that have planted the little seeds, and they are so excited when they come to you and show you, see, this is my seed that's grown into this plant, and I am going to get to pick whatever it is off of it. So, it's very rewarding to see that with children. For the programs that facilitate education about nutrition, food and agriculture both in and out of the classroom, these gardens are really used by many, many

different curriculums. Our Farm-to-School Programs have also been very popular. We are making great strides in connecting those local farmers to local schools so that we can utilize more foods from the local areas in the local schools.

We are also encouraging and supporting wellness grants in our childcare settings. Our child care settings really play a significant role in preparing our kids for school. Recently, we had a call for applications for our CACFP and our wellness grants, and we will be providing about \$8 million in competitive grants to implement programs that will promote the health and nutrition improvement in our child care settings. Another area that I can't stress enough that has made great strides that often gets really wrongly bashed and that's our USDA foods, more commonly to some of you referred to as our commodity program. We have made so many improvements and changes in these foods. They are now leaner meats. There's been reduction in the salt and the sodium. More whole grain foods. Lower fats in our cheeses and milks and reductions of fats, including trans fats and saturated fats. These are continuing. And recognizing the fact that the general public is not aware of these changes, we are really working on a marketing campaign as well. The issues that you are working on are also important to the future of our nation. In signing the law creating the National School Lunch Program in 1946, President Truman declared, "In the long view, no nation is healthier than its children." And just think about it. I think that is so true. Since that time, the meals served in America's schools have certainly played a critical role in promoting a healthy start for our children supporting their growth, their development and their learning. It's essential that we continue to work together to plant seeds of change that will harvest and yield to fruits that will make our nation stronger. This meeting I think is certainly the beginning, and the seeds that we are planting today will be germinated, I hope, to work to promote a healthier and more productive future generation. Working together, I am sure that we can make it happen. Thank you.

Jean Ronnei, BS

Director, Nutrition and Commercial Services, St. Paul Public Schools

I am just a lunch lady from Saint Paul, Minnesota. And I have to tell you it has been just a life. I've been a school food service director for 20 years, and I've never seen such incredible support for our programs. I was going to be a food scientist when I went to college. I was going to save the world from hunger. And then I took biochemistry and decided I would go into hotel and restaurant management instead. And, you know, when I went into career changes, I ended up being the lunch lady in Saint Paul, I really didn't think many people had an interest in our program. And I am so surprised there are TV shows now and it's just -- I guess we are the place to be. So, all of you ought to be applying for the job.

A little bit about Saint Paul. We have 38,000 kids. We have a very diverse population. We get a lot of revenue because we have a high free-and-reduced price meal program. And that makes a difference when you start looking at suburban districts or rural districts and urban districts. We happen to have great participation. We have closed campuses. We end up serving a lot of our kids breakfast through the classroom. We have a budget of \$21 million. It is big business, and we are a business. We have to operate like one. We happen to have a fund balance, and that's a good thing because, if I didn't, I probably wouldn't be the lunch lady in Saint Paul. We have a low food cost. And the reason for that, why it's important that we have a low food cost, is the flip side is I have a high labor cost. So, if we happen to have equipment, we can run our kitchens like a scratch environment which means low food costs, but we need people to do that. We are not real dedicated to á la carte. We have a few items that we sell across the district. We sell some extra items, but 20 years ago we made the decision to move away from á la carte. We have a central production facility that's a cook-chill operation. Once a day, our trucks deliver tomorrow's meals, so we have this big cow we named Wally, and Wally has 350-gallon capacity. Wally makes all of our sauces, gravies, we cook our own lasagna. We make our own pizza sauce. We can control a lot of the ingredients, and that has allowed us to get where we are as fast as we have gotten. We partnered with ConAgra years ago to have them provide us with a baker to learn how to incorporate whole grains into our products. We do breakfast to go - we will have 35 of our schools up and running by the end of this year and all of our division two schools by next year. The only way to do that is with administrative support. We are excited, thrilled with the fresh fruit and vegetable grant program that has been made available. 300 classrooms in our district are getting those extra servings of quality fresh fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. Kids go through the regular line and then access a choice bar. And it's unlimited. The kids can take whatever they want off of it, and come the first day of May this year they will have legumes. There will always be a protein choice -- cottage cheese or diced eggs or legume salads - we are introducing to offer kids more choice.

I want to walk you through what we are doing right and what we are not doing so well at. The milk, we have got that down pat. The fruit and vegetable story, we are now required to offer two servings of fruit at breakfast, but we did that two years ago in an effort to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables. We are doing very, very well with the quantity of fruits and vegetables that we are offering our kids, especially because of that unlimited choice bar. We really find kids when they are allowed to pick and choose: I want to try a carrot or I want to try a jicama stick. It's a great way to introduce kids to things. Now, we are doing fine with legumes. We are

doing fine with orange and dark green vegetables. Grains, as I mentioned, we had ConAgra work with us. We make most of our breakfast breads from scratch. We make French bread daily. We shouldn't call it "French." The French don't bake with whole grains, but we call it French anyway. So, we are doing really well. Sarah Lee is going to be having whole grain hamburger and hotdog buns available this fall, which will have us virtually a hundred percent whole grain at lunch as well.

And here's where we are having some struggles. You know, we Minnesotans, Midwesterners, love our potatoes and corn and peas, and it's like a standard, right? Meat, potatoes and a vegetable, which is usually peas and corn. So, we are going to have some struggles with that. We are going to start easing into that recommendation. We are going to end up having to increase our breakfast component somewhat to have the two grains and protein. And then sodium, we are struggling like everyone. We are -- all of our homemade products we are starting to work on reducing them just because we can cook them. But the ingredients that go in, like the tomato products, aren't there in the industry, so that we are having a hard time getting there.

Somebody brings us a recipe for something. Julie suggests a triple bacon, American Velveeta cheese, casserole made with sausage. And we really like Julie, but we don't want to hurt her feelings. So we go ahead and we try it. Well, this process eliminates our need to cow-tow to her bacon casserole. And so we say a recipe can come to us and it's got to meet these criteria. First and foremost, we ask the question: Is this healthy? And sometimes it isn't perceived as healthy. That's also -- what are parents are going to say? What are the staff going to say? And do we think kids are going to like it? Can we afford it? And in our case an entree -- I just use an entree as an example -- we have just so much money to work with and we like the sound of \$.60. And in this case the teriyaki edamame casserole was \$.28. Well, then, okay. We can afford it. It doesn't meet our nutritional standards. Let's go ahead and drill down and see what it means. Well, can we produce it? So, we have decided it's good but can we make it in our nutrition center and can we finish it in our schools. And if the answer is, yes, we move on, and we have the kids tell us if it's really something that they would eat. If that's a, yes, we pilot it at a school. We take one elementary or one middle or one high school, put that menu item on and let the kids tell us truly how it was and let our cooks, our chefs, our managers tell us if it's going to work. We have a three-strikes-you're-out rule. We put it on our district wide menu three times. And if -- you know, getting feedback all the way along the process and we have -- we have here in this case a success. The kids really like this. They don't really know what edamame is. They think it's a pea. We had a veggie loaf. You can imagine what it looked like. That was one of those -- we really like

Jackie and she brought this recipe in, so we went ahead and made it: Water melon soup, Chinese mustard greens, not so good. Smart cookies, we started using flack seed that we grind from a local grower and our energy bar is actually made with beans. So, we do like to have a little fun and trick the kids.

We have a program that we participate in. It's a W. K. Kellogg founded program called School Food Focus, and briefly there are four -- we were a learning website. We were interested in accomplishing four goals that we had had no success accomplishing on our own. One was lowering the sugar in flavored milk. And through their support and pressure and attention to the detail, we got our suppliers to reduce that. We had been working on Sarah Lee for years. I didn't know anything about the bread business. I now know more than I ever want to know, and I now understand why it was such a big deal for them to change their whole production module. They had to see the marketing benefit. They needed to see the sales benefit of making this change. And with 21 large urban districts behind our effort, they saw the light and they are making the product change. Golden Plump is a local poultry company, and we wanted to find a chicken nugget replacement. Not that chicken nuggets are bad, but won't go in there. We don't have enough time for that. But I wanted fresh chicken. I wanted a bone. I wanted kids to have real chicken. And we approached them. They have lots of interest in the breasts. They have an interest in wings. They could care less about the others. So, we are getting that for about \$.20 a portion which is extremely inexpensive for us. And our last effort with them was implementing the Farm-to-School Program, and really that has been just a delight of a program and extremely energizing for our kids and our programs.

So, kind of in how we get it done in Saint Paul Public Schools, we have leveraged our ability to do scratch cooking. We feel that partnerships are incredibly important and have made a huge difference in how we've been able to do things. We really have some fun with our flaps, and we have marketed our program extensively. And pizza is an example of why we market our program. School lunch is bashed all the time for serving burgers, pizza and chicken nuggets. But pizza in school is not like pizza you have at home. You purchase a big gigantic pizza and you bring probably a 2-liter bottle of soda home and that's dinner. There are no fruits and vegetables along side of it. It's not necessarily mozzarella, low fat cheese, whole grain crust. Our kids come through and they get a slice of healthy pizza along with fresh fruits and vegetables and milk. And that's just not how people perceive pizza.

So, we have to market our program. We need to tell the good stories because there are so many people saying what's not important. We have passion for our program. I wanted to just mention from our perspective what's next on Saint Paul's plate is getting to where we need to be with IOM, but it's also applying for the HealthierUS challenge. We have many schools we think can apply, but we have hurdles outside of our program. And this wasn't in my district but I wouldn't tell you if it was. A teacher carrying in four big grocery bags brimming with flaming hot Cheetos into an elementary school. And it is not only our job in the cafeteria to make a difference, that's where we need parents. We need educators to back us and recognize at every opportunity for people to eat is an opportunity to do it right or do it wrong. Minnesota is moving towards IOM standards, and I am really excited that I can actually say this today because I know there are people in the audience that probably know about this. We have CDC communities putting prevention to work grant in Minnesota. We will be administered by the Department of Health. And the effort is -- it's a two-plus-million-dollar, two-year project. And the Minnesota School Food Service Association are a state wide buying group, our MDE Extension Service, on and on, are participating with this with three goals: Increased schools access to healthy affordable foods using our buying group to leverage that power; provides skills training to school food service professionals, which is critical to the work that we would want to have accomplished in the schools; and, third, develop certification standards for school nutrition directors so that there is accountability that the training has occurred and folks know what they need to do. So, I think over the next couple of years we are going to see Minnesota, nutrition services staff raise the bar, get closer to IOM because they are going to get the tools that they need to do the job that they need to do. Thank you.

Mark Bishop, MBAS
Deputy Director, Healthy Schools Campaign

We are a not for profit agency located in Chicago, Illinois working on both federal and local and state initiatives. Everything that we do is based on a very simple common-sense notion that a healthy child is going to be a better learner. So, we want to be implementing programs and working on policies that are going to help students achieve -- help students learn more. And we have our guiding principles of empowering stakeholders, focusing on policy solutions that are really based on the work that we do in the school. And then there are the health disparities that exist today in our society.

The Chicago Public Schools is in our backyard. The school district has over 650 schools, over 400,000 students. They serve 64 million meals every year, and it's 86 percent free and reduced lunch. So, the magnitude of the school and making a change in its system that size is pretty massive. So, what I have been asked today is to share a story about how one organization attempted to make change in one school district. And for us it's exciting not just because we were invited to this fabulous conference, but because about three hours ago the Chicago Board of Education met; and at that meeting, they approved a new school food service contract that is going to allow Chicago Public Schools to not only achieve but to exceed the nutrition requirements of a HealthierUS challenge standards -- gold standard.

And this change couldn't have happened without an engagement strategy of the entire community, from parents, teachers, nurses, school food service, working with leaders in the community, and it's been a long process. So, I want to just walk through a little bit of this. I am going to talk about some of the different stakeholders and what's happened in Chicago. So, when we were working in Chicago, we started our food programs about seven years ago. We were a young organization. We didn't have a Rolodex where we could call up the mayor or the head of the school -- head of Chicago schools. So, you know, from our theory, we had to create school-base change in Chicago. We -- when I say "school-base change," I mean school change in Chicago. Because if you have demonstrated success in California, in Madison, in New York, that doesn't apply in Chicago. And we all think we are unique. So, we had to demonstrate success in Chicago.

The second thing we realized, we had to build community support. We needed to get support from parents. But not just parents, from teachers, from administrators, from civic leaders. And finally we had to engage school leadership. So, how do we go about this? We started by looking at parents. So, why parents? We had to go with what we knew and what we had worked with. We knew the schools -- or parents had a very important role in Chicago because there is a system in Chicago called the local school council where parents could actually get -- become part of -- what is essentially a mini-school board for the school, not the district, but the individual school. And they had specific authority over how the school runs. So, we knew we could get involvement from parents, and they could actually be part of the system of change. The other thing is we were very fortunate to receive funding from the National Institute of Environmental Health, the Environmental Justice Program. They gave us a four-year grant to create a base line of organizing in the community. And specifically it was a program to organize Latino and African/ American parents around the issues of asthma and obesity in trying to come up with community-based

strategies for change. So, we were able to reach out and really have the resources to have organizing in the community. And when we met with Chicago Public Schools five years ago, they said to us, parents don't care. To which what we said to them is, okay, come to a rally and learn what parents care about, and we pulled out 750 parents who all came together to ask Chicago Public Schools to improve the school food, to have greater access to recess, to have more physical education in the schools. The changes that have happened have been really dramatic since our organizing of parents started about six years ago. You know, since the last reauthorization, we have the establishment of wellness teams and, of course, 2006 Chicago Public Schools had an official wellness policy that every school is supposed to have a wellness policy team. So the parents that we worked with have organized over 50 wellness teams in their specific schools. Last fall when we realized that there was this need to get more recess, I believe it's 80 percent of Chicago Public Schools don't have recess. Unbelievable. So, we were able to deliver 4,000 petitions to the Chicago Board of Education to tell them let's get recess reinstated. Last week we got five parents -- these numbers aren't huge. But we got five parents who ran for local school council and won. What's interesting about that, these five parents ran after being trained through our programs, but they ran on the platform of "let's improve health." It's really exciting to see the engagement and the opportunity when you get parents involved. This was organized in predominantly Latino and African/American communities. So, we are looking at predominantly under-served communities in Chicago.

A few lessons learned. One of the things that was really important is setting a framework for making change. What really resonated with the parents was working under a framework of social justice. They understood that. They were able to realize the disparities in the communities, the asthma and obesity rates have doubled or tripled the national average and that's something they really got. Secondly, we understood providing opportunities to engage in healthy behaviors. We did cooking classes and learning lessons how to make your dishes in healthier ways. Let's do walking clubs. It was an opportunity to start modeling behaviors at home, and many of the parents that we work with have reported back to us: I am losing weight. My family is healthier. We are a healthier family because of our work and engaging in school. Finally, it's really important to create opportunities for knowledge and skill training. We do summits for the parents. We do trainings for the parents. Engaging other stakeholders such as school nurses. We recognize the school nurses as an important health leader within a school. There are not enough of them. But they can be a leader in writing grants, engaging with the wellness committee, becoming a technical expert. And we engage with school nurses to make sure that they are not just case managers, but they are

public health advocates in the school. We work with principals. We have done quarterly meetings with principals now. We want to make sure that there are opportunities to share best practices between schools. We are trying to arrange workshops and field trips between schools to share when there are schools that are doing it well; we want to make sure that other Chicago schools are learning from those success stories. And, finally, another one is teachers. We have a program called our advocates for healthy change. It's about engaging leaders in schools that teacher/leader is the advocates of people who really take the issues to heart and who can become those advocates in the schools and practice strategies within the classroom to make changes in their schools, and strategies that include classroom rewards. Classroom rewards, celebrations snacking strategies and how to incorporate things in the classroom to reinforce healthy behaviors and healthy options.

The one issue that I want to bring up a little more is our student engagement because that is what we call our Cooking Up Change Program. Cooking Up Change is a culinary petition that started in Chicago. We challenged culinary students -- yes, in Chicago there are 17 culinary schools where students learn real life skills. We challenge these students to come up with a healthy school lunch that incorporates regionally produced agriculture -- regionally produced vegetables that has very stringent nutrition standards that exceed the USDA requirements. And that also they are limited to approximately \$1 dollar in food costs. And we challenge them to make something that's healthy and tasty. And we have an event to celebrate this activity. This is not just an activity for the 17 schools or so. But it's also an opportunity for us to provide professional education, nutrition education, and get these students to become advocates and train them to be the next generation of culinary leaders. It is for them to then reach out to their students. Because all these kids -- They are all doing taste testing and telling their peers about what they are doing and why they're working on these issues and trying to figure out what healthy food tastes good, and what can we do to kind of encourage more of healthy food consumption. It's about engagement in civic leaders because we have an event where we have judging panels, and we have mentors from the community come and help the students prepare these meals. So, something becomes more than just a simple competition, but it's an engagement strategy for a whole host of individuals.

I should also say that in May, we are actually doing a national version of our competition. We are doing it in partnership of the National Farm To School Coalition, and we are excited on May 17th to have our first ever-national Cooking Up Change competition. And it also becomes an exciting platform for talking about policy and the challenges of school lunch but doing it all in a very

positive way. Change couldn't happen without a variety of partners who we work with on an ongoing basis. You know, locally we work with organizations named such as Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago, Children in the American Heart Association, the Public Health Association, just to name a few. We also work very closely with the Chicago Public Schools and their leadership and their Food Service Program. Louise Esaian has been a great partner. We work with Chartwell Thompson. I have to give a call-out to Chartwell Thompson, the Food Service Program, because they have been a leader in trying to make changes. They have implemented -- and they have figured out how to do this. What we believe to be the largest Farm-To-School Program in the country, and it is a Farm-To-School Program that purchases carrots from Wisconsin, peaches and apples from Michigan, corn from Illinois. And it does pick, process and flash freeze within 24 hours in such a way that we have locally procured vegetables in Chicago Public Schools every day of the year. And for the most part, it's usually four varieties of fruits and vegetables that are local because of this system that's been set up.

Now, I mentioned that there are changes in the Food Service Program and that next year there will be new standards. I want to really quickly go over what we are seeing, what those new standards are going to look like. Four basic things I want to point to: They use the IOM as a guide for the standards. It doesn't achieve all of IOM. That was a little bit expensive. But the new standards will exceed the HealthierUS Challenge gold standard. This means more fruits and veggies, more whole grains, limited starchy vegetables. Two, they looked at best practices. So they particularly looked at the harvest school public health best practices for breakfast. So, now we are going to be adding protein to breakfast. We are getting rid of the doughnuts and the pastries. We are getting rid of any of the dessert flavoring and dessert-flavored options, and we are also limiting Nachos. They will be offered once a month in grade schools and once a week in high schools, and we weren't able to get rid of them completely, but they are limited. We are also going to be limiting desserts. Three -- We are looking at how food is procured. They are putting a preference on local or I should say regional procurement. They are going to be requiring milk with no artificial hormones. Four, we are also looking to the future, looking to changes in the marketplace and looking to use the leverage of serving 64 million meals a year and how that can change the marketplace, changing putting out requests for saying this is the chicken product we want to buy. We want to buy milk that's lower in sugar, the flavored milk that's lower in sugar. We want to look at cheese that has lower sodium content. We are considering fed beef. And I will tell you something, three years ago I didn't know the CPS would be able to do a local procurement

program, so I am not going to put it past them that they are able to do a grass fed beef as well. We will see what happens.

And, you know, because we have a campaign that is going for the gold, we are trying to get Chicago Public Schools to adopt a HealthierUS Gold Challenge. And we have a two-year program that we are going to make sure this happens. The food is going in that direction, and next year it's going to be there. But now we have to follow up on making sure that there is nutrition, education, physical activity, physical education included. You know what's so interesting, is we look at what happens at the federal government. And I'll tell you that it really makes a difference at the local level. When Michelle Obama announced her "Let's Move" campaign, I've got to tell you something, within two days, we had a conversation with the chief of staff from the Governor of Illinois. His comment was, "So, this obesity policy thing is for real, right?" That's a fundamental shift of how people are thinking. Within two weeks of the "Let's Move" campaign being announced, we were able to get our obesity programs. What we are doing in Chicago Public Schools onto the Mayor's docket which ultimately was approved. And that led to us being able to make this change in the nutrition standards for next year. So, federal policy really has been the moral compass for the programs that we are running, and it really has opened up doors.

So, it is really an exciting time for us. As I mentioned, it's a milestone. It's not the end because we still have a lot of work. But what you can do -- here I am going to tell you a URL to go to. goforthegoldCPS.org. And then you can hit forward slash April 28th. Today is April 28th, and you can download this for yourself, and you can have a copy of this. I don't think I can talk about our programs in Chicago without talking about federal policy because federal policy makes a big difference because Chicago Public Schools, schools across the country, we all know their budgets are in crisis. Chicago Public Schools is a school district, and they are almost \$1 billion in deficit right now. \$1 billion. So, now \$2.68 for a meal from the federal government, add to that the State reimbursement, add to that commodities program. Chicago is still losing \$.70 to \$.80 per meal served, 64 million meals a year. You can do the math. It's a big number. So, there is money coming out of the general revenue from the CPS budget going into foods service programs, and we need that money. But it's at risk because of how tight budgets are happening, how tight budgets are. They have proposed increasing school class sizes to 37 people per classroom. They have proposed cutting 200 food service workers. They have proposed cutting all of pre-K programs. With a four-year-old, I'm terrified. And you know, it's scary. But if we want to make sure that we can maintain the success in what we have accomplished in Chicago nutrition programs, we need the federal government to support these programs by providing adequate funding for school

meals. And one more plug, we need to make sure that the Department of Education is on board as well. We need to make sure that we are measuring in the same way that we have to measure math and science and reading and writing. We have to report it - do the same thing for health outcomes and nutrition. Because if we don't report it, it's not going to get to the top of the line for our principals and our superintendents, and that's ultimately what we are about. It's about making sure that kids can perform because healthy kids are going to be better learners. Thank you.