

## **Farm to School Connections Team 3.20.08**

WSU King County Extension Office

**Attending:** Tiana Colovos (parent/PTA, Orca School), Patricia Stambor (parent/PTA, Nova School), Debbie Graham (parent/PTA, Nova School), Tricia Sexton (WSU KCE), Rebecca Sayre (WSU KCE), Sylvia Kantor (WSU KCE), Jennifer Langston (Seattle P-I), Jaime Baird (Baird Orchards), Gail Gensler (King County Hazardous Waste), Ann McMonigle (EcoMetro), Ben Lee (FareStart), Steve Evans (King County Ag Program), Miranda Taylor (Gesundheit Acupuncture and parent, Sealth High School), Barbara Rose-Leigh (parent)

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### **UPDATES:**

**School Garden Symposium** yesterday: Will ask Erin or others who participated to let us know how it went. Hopefully we can hear about it next meeting.

**Seattle City Council: Local Food Action Initiative** as proposed by Richard Conlin  
The initiative is a broad policy framework that looks at the needs of vulnerable populations, emergency preparedness, sustainability and social justice. This is a great thing for the Acting Food Policy Council to become an ordained Food Policy Council. Tricia will send out link to most current version, once received in electronic form.

The Initiative sets up a framework for infrastructure and to aid in interdepartmental coordination. There are some specific goals around creating permanent locations for farmer's markets and other things and some requests of various departments, but not a lot of detailed projects. Those will come later.

The resolution does not create a Food Policy Council. That will require an ordinance. Seattle is working closely with King County and Julia Patterson on the policy council issue.

**Action: Please attend the public hearing to support the Local Food Action Initiative to make food policy a primary consideration in all of the City of Seattle's decisions and to support this step toward an official Food Policy Council.**

When: Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 pm

Location: Seattle City Hall, Council Chambers, 600 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, Seattle, WA 98124

Sign-up sheets for public comment will be made available by 5 pm.

Francis Moore Lappe will also be speaking on the value of a Local Food Action Initiative at a brown bag lunch at the same location on April 11<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 to 1:30 and again that evening from 5-7 in the Bertha Knight Landes Room of City Hall.

**Local Farms Healthy Kids legislation** has passed!

\$290,000 (full-funding) for the farm to school program, to be housed in WSDA

\$600,000 (high water mark) for the WA grown school grant program, to be administered by OSPI

\$350,000 for Farm to Foodbank

\$50,000 for the Farmer's Market Technology Program

\$200,000 for FMNP (divided between WIC and Senior)

This is a significant allotment for new programs during a tough budget year, which bodes well for the legislative support behind the campaign and for future efforts. The number of schools funded will depend on the structure of the program. OSPI will decide how much to fund each school, and how many schools. It will be a grant program, for schools that meet the low income requirement. Mo McBroom from Washington Environmental Council will attend next meeting to discuss the policy process, outcomes and implementation.

**Update: The bill was signed into law by Governor Gregoire on Thursday, March 27<sup>th</sup>!**

**Action: Please think about and share ideas on what you would like to see in the state Farm to School Program. Now is the time. Next month's Farm to School meeting will be dedicated to the policy possibilities and implications from this funding.**

### **PANEL DISCUSSION: Successes and Challenges for Parents and PTA**

Panelists:

**Tiana Colovos, Orca School.**

**Debbie Graham, Seattle PTSA**

**Patricia Stambor, Nova School**

#### Nova Nutrition Club

Nova Alternative High School is a democratically governed school where food is served via the Nutrition Club. Nova opted out of the Seattle school district lunch program. Students can go to Garfield High School nearby if they want the school district lunches. They can also go off-campus to get their own lunch. The Nutrition Club provides a very popular hearty mid-day snack that is not considered a lunch program. The popular program has a long tradition (at least ten years) of providing vegetarian food to students. The PTA funds part of program (about \$20,000?) and the students pay \$2.50, which helps fund the program. According to the democratic system at Nova, students and staff decide how PTA money is spent. For the nutrition club, they pay a cook to buy and prepare the food and students are active participants. We don't know the number of students participating—somewhere between 60 and 200. The program honors the Free and Reduced Lunch program by providing discounts to qualified students.

The club does not currently have classes built around it. But kids are involved and learn by being there. The cook really helps them and works with them.

In the past a new principal tried to bring in the regular school lunch program and the students rebelled. They love the Nutrition Club and are interested and engaged in decisions about their food. They are also looking at the possibility of getting the students food handling permits to help with the food preparation and make it more of an education program.

The parents and PTA wonder if there is a path to making the Nova program a funded model or pilot lunch program or for it to get partial funding through the school district. Maybe it has potential as a pilot Farm to School project. The kids are likely eating whole grains, and from an economic standpoint, it sounds like the program is relatively cheap. This is an example of strong democratic process, the kids are making this choice. Tracking the record of the Nutrition Club could help transition it into a lunch program model to make school more eligible for funding, etc.

Suggestion: Might want to keep track of successes. This is an interesting model.

### Orca School Programs

Orca School does participate in the Seattle Public School lunch program. They recently moved to a new location, so they are transitioning from a pre-pack model to the bulk lunch model. Currently it is cost prohibitive to have a salad bar. Three years ago Orca got a grant for a “garden bar.” They took data to Seattle Public Schools—consumption was high and waste low. The program was nixed because the district could not only fund one school (and not others) and they felt that due to the degree of preparation required that labor costs were high. They also said the pilot was too limited to yield reliable results.

Another project at Orca is the Snack Program and Food Garden. We are not allowed to serve the produce in the lunchroom due to risk and liability. Lettuces from school garden are harvested and served annually, at a spring event, sprinkled with balsamic vinaigrette. “Kids are ravenous for this.” Our snack program is unique. It is completely funded by parent donations and offers snacks to

1. K-5
2. Middle School After School Sports
3. Powerful School after school academic program

They ask parents for \$45 at the beginning of the year.

Orca has also started collaborating with Community Fruit Tree Harvest (Solid Ground). In season, they will get deliveries of plums etc. (once to 3 times a week) and will dry some of these. The PTA and school raise money for programs. It costs about \$8,000 to fully fund the K-5 and Powerful Schools snack program for 350 kids at Orca school. It would cost approximately \$10,000 to fund all three programs at Orca, as they add the other programs.

We run the risk of losing our bulk lunch program at Orca unless we can prove that kids are eating what is offered. Ironically, we need to get more kids purchasing lunch to get a salad bar, but parents don't want to buy until things are improved.

I like to begin the year with a "barometer" reading of what parents care about. How does this issue really fit as a priority? The same questions need to be asked of the teachers and principle.

Recent development at Orca: Lets get back to innovation, get a round the table to discuss how to use an integrated curriculum to support better lunches and nutrition education. An example we have is the food garden etc. This link makes a difference for a principal with different priorities. “The lunch room as a living, learning laboratory.”

Tricia: Has Orca written up their experience? I would love to have that kind of material or case study on our website.

Not really, yet. We're in the third year of a 3 year grant cycle.

### General School Food Program notes:

There are three different models of lunches in the Seattle School District: 1) Prepack lunch; 2) Bulk hot lunch, brought to school; and 3) meals cooked on-site.

Question: Do schools that cook on-site (like Stevens Elementary) follow the same menus as the rest of the district?

No one at the meeting could speak to that for sure, but it seems likely, as it would likely be hard for an on-site school to deal with the menu design, nutrition standards, procurement and ordering independently from the rest of the district.

**If you have information on this and would like to share with the group, please answer via the listserv or talk to Tricia. Thanks!**

- Can parents cook on-site at schools? (It seems some models include a lot of parent involvement in school food, if not lunches)
- Per an email from Anita Finch and it is my understanding that due to legal restrictions parents cannot access kitchen that with out paying a fee to Seattle Schools.
- For all school food programs, it is important to consider food safety, risk and liability, food handling permits and adequacy of available kitchen facilities. These can be difficult to address when funding is limited and the program is outside the lunch program, which is more likely to be highly monitored.

#### Discussion of school lunch programs in Seattle Public Schools and their quality.

- There is a disparity between schools in Seattle. The quality of food is representative of the parent population, and their ability and interest in advocating for healthy food. Good food programs are somewhat limited to wealthy schools.
- TT Minor has salad bar. There are some that are engaging in getting better food.
- AS-1 has tried non-traditional lunches.
- There is one school in the Seattle School District that is involved in the federal Fresh Fruits and Vegetables currently. (25 in the State)
- According to Anita Finch kids get 3 to 4 offerings of fresh fruits and vegetables a day. I really think the Seattle School District is trying to make a difference.
- The problem is that many schools fall through the cracks.
- I have an exchange student who attends Chief Sealth High School. Here is a note that she wrote about the food served. "The fish is all bread, the milk is w/o fat but 100% sugar [chocolate milk], lots of kids eat pizza all the time, there is also no organic food anywhere."
- My daughter has Prader-Willi syndrome which leads to morbid obesity. We deal with this by creating an "optimal health environment" All kids should have this level of an environment. There would be no obesity.

Note: There is a Youth Advisory Board on health that was sent out on the listserv recently. It is a project started by Bill Clinton and Arnold Schwarzenegger:

**<http://www.healthiergeneration.org/teens>**

How is it that some schools in WA can have salad bars, with organic food? Mount Vernon and Olympia, for example? How can we learn from them?

Tricia: I have spoken with Paul Flock of the Olympia School District and folks from the Seattle Public Schools. The size of the district does matter. It is an issue of volume. It is also about activist school directors and parents. In smaller districts they have more opportunity to put money towards fresh fruits and vegetables and then adjust expenses throughout the program. Seattle is a large district, but they are making strides.

- Marketing to kids: A lot of it has to do with what the kids want. We need to market to kids.—you will look better, feel better, perform better when you eat healthy. Kids don't want to eat poor produce that tastes and looks bad. Kids eat junk all day. Marketing is targeted to them and it works.

Tricia: Much has to do with food culture. Length of lunch time, food environment, quality and feel of lunch room. PTA's can make a difference here, and posters and nutrition materials can be incorporated

- To hear over and over that the issue is the size of the district tells me that we need to join forces to shift things, to align with motivation, priorities. We could use Title 1 funds, perhaps?

Is there a Seattle-wide PTA? What about a united message to the school district? A proposal?

- Yes, we want to bring funding food to the state PTA level.
- Seattle Schools does have a Nutrition Advisory Committee with many activist parents and community members involved.
- This issue has not been at the forefront of the Seattle PTSA. There are so many issues in Seattle public schools such as school closures, etc. We hear more about these issues than food.
- It would be hard to get salad bars etc. in such a centralized district, such as Seattle.
- We are dealing with the fact that there is a big push under current district administration toward centralization.
- Small schools, esp. those without many federal dollars are struggling this year. Schools in South Seattle are struggling with even having a working PTA.

Will Local Farms Healthy Kids make it easier for schools to get fresh food?

- Procurement requirements will be relaxed to provide flexibility for schools. The Governor has yet to sign the bill, but it should be signed April 1<sup>st</sup>. **[DONE!]** Geographic preferencing will be relaxed. The only sticking point is that it may not align with USDA guidelines as they are frequently interpreted. But, USDA has not challenged this type of law in other states, and the Farm Bill, if it's ever passed, will clarify the rules.

Are we talking only about Fresh Fruits and Vegetables? What about meat and dairy? I have not heard good things about USDA meats. Is this group focused only on produce?

- We have had meat producers attend and have talked about it, but it's another set of issues and isn't most people's priority at the meetings.
- Fruits and vegetables is "low hanging fruit."
- Meat processing is an issue. There are many, Seattle Schools, Snohomish and Whatcom Counties etc. looking into the issue of how to process local meat and some discussion has included talk of getting healthy meat more readily available to schools.

- There is a study that shows that potatoes, peanuts, apples, milk are what kids are likely to consume, and these have high levels of pesticides. Would like to see a program to incorporate organic or pesticide free foods.

**Action: Gail will send link to study. Tricia will distribute to listserv.**

- There is such an issue surrounding the need of just getting food to children. They need to eat, protein, breakfast, etc. Any food, any quality is needed in many situations.

- Affordability is usually the issue. In this larger effort, as we are working on these, we should document where we hit walls so that we can strategize around it to make our case when the opportunities present themselves.

- Gail: Has anyone heard of organic vending machines? I have contact information for a guy in Snohomish County.

- We need to keep the 10,000 foot view in mind. Pesticides and contamination, on popular food such as potatoes cause ADHD, this create a spike in Special Ed programs which are very costly. I recommend the book *Fateful Harvest* to learn more.

NOTE: Seattle Council PTA has a Resource Fair Monday Night, March 24<sup>th</sup> from 7 to 9, at the John Stanford Center, if anyone has materials to contribute.

What would like to see in a State Farm to School Program?

**Action: Please attend the next Farm to School meeting to engage in this discussion.**