



Food Fuels Learning:

Third Quarterly Presentation

September 16, 2019



Background

Food Fuels Learning is an initiative started by a parent who saw children coming to school hungry. With the support of the Cumberland County Food Security Council and the Portland Public Schools (PPS) superintendent, a community-driven effort was born. To truly understand our school food system, we needed to assess the school food system landscape before taking action. This led to a year-long process of gathering information, that we called “Phase 1”.

The Food Fuels Learning leadership team assembled a research team who met with over 200 members of the Portland, Maine community to discuss their greatest successes and struggles within the school food system. We focused our research on five main categories that we identified as making up the school food system: charitable food programs, federal nutrition programs, school gardens, nutrition education, and sustainable food practices.

After many interviews, focus groups, and surveys, we published our Food Fuels Learning Needs Assessment and presented to the full School Board in August, 2018. This report outlines our findings as pertaining to the five categories within the PPS food system, followed by a series of recommendations identified by community stakeholders on how to improve school food security within each of the five categories.

Since completion of the needs assessment, we have embarked on “Phase 2,” which is the implementation phase of the initiative. In Phase 2, we have invited the Portland community to participate in five action-oriented groups (based off of the five categories). These groups convene regularly to carry out the recommendations outlined in the report through building networks and sharing ideas and resources.

In order to keep the community updated on our work and to celebrate the progress we continue to make, we hold quarterly report events. This has also been our opportunity to make direct asks of the superintendent and broader school community.

It is our goal to have this process be as community-led as possible, in order to create sustainable and institutionalized structures within our school system.



Goals and Objectives

Food Fuels Learning began the project by articulating goals in five program areas:

1. *Charitable food*

- Ensure that all children at risk of food insecurity have access to adequate, culturally relevant, nutritious food both at school and to supplement their diet beyond school.

2. *Federal nutrition program*

- Increase overall school meal participation and reduce challenges for food service staff.

3. *School gardens*

- Assist every school in developing and maintaining a successful school garden and school garden programming.

4. *Nutrition education*

- Provide schools with the tools they need to coordinate staff and organizational partners working to provide nutrition education to students.

5. *Sustainable practices*

- Support schools in creating procurement, waste management, and other practices that minimize their environmental impact and encourage their investment in local communities.

In pursuit of these goals, Food Fuels Learning conducted a needs assessment to explore the presence and impact of activities within each of these five areas throughout the PPS district.



Action Group Updates

Leadership Team

To increase avenues of stakeholder participation, we also founded an Advisory Team, which is comprised of influential members of the school food community who provide additional credibility and support of this initiative. Outreach is also forming a district-wide “Food Fuels Learning Listserv.” This platform is designed for school food security champions, partner organizations, and invested community members to **learn, share, and collaborate** with one another about strategies to address food insecurity in the Portland Public Schools. It is our hope that this network will allow us to create efficiencies (by working smarter not harder) in our school food system and help us work toward sustainable and lasting change.

The Development Committee wrote and submitted applications to the [Gamechangers Laboratory](#) and THRIVE 2020 of United Way to further support the work and recommendations of Food Fuels Learning. Additionally, this committee developed a request for proposals, application, application evaluation form, and grant reporting form to ensure an intentional process for the PPS Food Fund, which will act as a way to fund seed grants for school community-based projects that bolster food security.

The Toolkit Committee published the resource, *Food Fuels Learning Toolkit: Conducting an Assessment of School System Food Security*. It was presented and shared with participants at the Universities Fighting World Hunger Summit and Farm to Institution New England Summit. It will also be presented at the Maine Farm to School Conference in October. The Toolkit is available at foodfuelslearning.org/toolkit.

The Policy Committee has presented testimony in Augusta multiple times in support of relevant child nutrition policies.

Charitable Food Programs

The Charitable Foods Action Group continues to prioritize implementing and maintaining charitable food programs at all schools. Two new charitable food programs are in development at Casco Bay High School and Ocean Avenue with the Locker Project. Casco Bay High School is expanding their peanut butter and jelly sandwich weekly distribution to include a pantry model and produce table. Ocean Avenue will no longer be able to participate in the Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB) funded backpack program as GSFB phases out of the backpack model.



The draft of expectations for school charitable food programs involvement with the Locker Project have been completed which will allow for greater efficiencies at each school.

This document will be distributed to all school food pantry liaisons and principals after it has been finalized. The Summer Food Resource Guide was completed and distributed before the end of the school year. A Resource Guide will be distributed at the beginning of the new school year.

Request for GSFB to change its eligibility requirements was granted. Now the entire PPS District will be eligible for free and reduced fresh produce and food items instead of individual schools. This change will allow for more students to access food and for greater efficiencies in food distribution.

Communication and outreach platforms to charitable food liaisons, school champions, parents, and community are being developed. The Food Fuels Learning website and Facebook page are two platforms that are being utilized. A PPS Food Security listserv that includes all action groups is in development.

Table 1. Charitable Food Programs Action Group Updates

Recommendation	Action	Deadline
1.1 Circulate Portland Community Food Resource Guide and Portland Summer Food Resource Guide to families and all school staff at the beginning and end of the year, respectively	1) Portland Community Summer Food Resource Guide is completed. Circulation will occur in paper form to all elementary schools and will be available on school and district websites	1) Completed & Ongoing
1.5 Strengthen communication and collaboration among organizational partners and liaisons managing charitable food programs	1) Use Food Fuels Learning website and Facebook page as a platform to increase charitable food program communication 2) PPS Food Security listserv in development	1) Ongoing 2) September 2019
2.1 Ensure that there are adequate school liaisons (staff, volunteers) to manage the charitable food programs at the schools and to maintain	1) Complete school site visits to identify what each school charitable food program needs for support 2) Draft of expectations for school	1) Two schools completed; June 2019 2) Completed April 2019



adequate food supply	involvement has been developed 3) Designate charitable food program liaison staff position so that there is a point of contact within each school to ensure charitable food program sustainability	3) Ongoing
3.1 Partner organizations collaborate with schools that do not have an existing charitable food program to prioritize what would serve their school bes	1) Two schools identified and charitable food programs in development	1) Ongoing

Table 2. Charitable Food Programs Asks/Requests

Benchmark	Ask
2.1 Ensure that there are adequate school liaisons (e.g., staff, volunteers) to manage the food programs at the schools and to maintain adequate food supply	Designate charitable food program liaison staff position so that there is a point of contact within each school to ensure charitable food program sustainability.

Federal Nutrition Program

Since our last Quarterly Report on April 29th, the Federal Nutrition Programs Action Group has met on three occasions; May 29th, July 22nd, and August 20th. We maintain our focus on the priority of increasing participation of students from families with limited resources. Our meetings have continued to focus on discussing the realities of feeding thousands of students every day and integrating parent requests for menu changes within this context. The Food Service Department has worked hard to make some of these changes a reality.

Central Kitchen has made great strides on introducing a plant based option into the lunch menu. In September, a vegan option will be served nearly every day at elementary schools across the district. The roll out of the vegan menu will be complemented with in-cafeteria taste tests to encourage students to try the new items. Over the next several months, the Federal Nutrition



Action Group will continue to focus on how to best market, support and monitor these menu changes.

The Federal Nutrition Action Group has also worked to meet with outside School Nutrition Experts. The Action Group met with former PPS Food Service Director Ron Adams to understand the vision, limitations and benefits of Central Kitchen. Additionally we met with Windham/Raymond Chef extraordinaire, Samantha Gasbarro. Chef Sam discussed how she helped to increase meal quality in her district through staff training and increasing kitchen efficiencies.

With the additional capacity of Summer Interns and VISTAs we have begun to analyze meal preference data. This data is critical to understanding what students like and where to focus our efforts in menu development. This staff capacity has also allowed us to convene monthly Summer Meals meetings with great community participation and develop a new Summer Meals Map that has helped families across Portland locate meal sites.

Central kitchen was implemented with an incomplete set of equipment as designed. Through Food Fuels Learning, we have identified other equipment that would create efficiencies in scratch cooking and processing whole foods. Parents involved with our Action Group have taken initiative to support fundraising to purchase equipment. Food Service Director McLucas has put together a central kitchen equipment wish list that identifies the items needed in order of priority. We expect to begin raising money through the Food Fund for these items this Fall.

We have been looking outside the school budget to build additional capacity to increase meals participation. This includes funding proposals, AmeriCorps/VISTA, interns and support from parents and the community. For example, we submitted a proposal to United Way of Greater Portland to create a position we are calling School Food Ambassador. This person would promote school food throughout the community while also providing additional support at Central Kitchen to integrate more whole foods into the menu. Additionally we are developing a partnership with USM food studies Professor Jamie Pacardie surrounding the research question of “How do you get community buy in for school meals?”

Table 2. Federal Nutrition Programs Action Group Updates

Recommendation	Action	Deadline
1.1 Launch a professional school meals marketing campaign to attract more students and families	1) Educate ‘student influencers’ about the importance of school meals 2) Update Food Service Facebook page	1) Ongoing 2) Ongoing 3) Completed July 2019



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3) Updated food service 101 document 4) Create School Food Ambassador position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Initial funding application not awarded. Will continue to seek resources to support this position.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2 Collect, analyze, and incorporate student feedback on menu options through districtwide taste tests and response forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cultivating Community taste tests 2) Analyzing production sheet data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Taste testing vegan menu 2) September 2019 (Data aggregation began July 2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.4 Support and evaluate CACFP meal program and maximize this program throughout district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Program in place 2) Staff training 3) Evaluation plan in process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ongoing 2) Ongoing 3) Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.5 Develop a summer meals strategic plan that includes monthly stakeholder meetings beginning in February 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Monthly meetings with great community participation 2) Developed a new summer meals map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) June -August 2019 2) Completed June 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Continue to encourage registration of all eligible families for free and reduced-price meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue with current procedures and identify additional best practices 2) Plan to sign folks up at community events 3) New online F&R app 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Summer-September 2019 2) September 2019 3) October 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.2 Continue to support families completing eligibility paperwork and implement additional best practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue with current procedures and identify additional best practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Summer-September 2019



<p>3.4 Exceed federal nutritional requirements by focusing on nutrient dense, minimally processed foods</p>	<p>1) Scratch made: chili, marinara sauce, mashed potatoes, hummus 2) Testing overnight oatmeal 3) Harvest of the Month Program 4) Daily hot vegan lunch option</p>	<p>1) Currently Serving 2) Ongoing 3) Fall 2019 4) September roll out</p>
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Table 4. Federal Nutrition Programs Asks/Requests

Benchmark	Ask
3.3 Prepare more scratch meals	Increase staff capacity at central kitchen to meet the goal of increased scratch cooking
1.4 Support CACFP meal program and maximize this program throughout district	Continue to support implementation of after school food programs - especially during pilot phase
2.4 Support breakfast best practice models	Continue to support implementation of best practices (e.g., breakfast after bell, breakfast in classrooms)
1.0 Increase participation in school meals	Access to school staff (agenda time at administrator and other staff meetings) to promote school meals
1.0 Increase participation in school meals	Ask community to participate in school meals!

School Gardens

At the end of last school year, the School Garden Action Group continued to meet monthly and strengthen our network. Reiche Elementary School hosted in May and Lincoln Middle School in June. Both hosts gave wonderful insight into how their garden program functions, it's challenges, and the impact it has on their students and school environment. We had a summer July meeting and mini-school garden tour out on Peaks Island. We learned about the unique challenges of an island garden and school program with a lot of teacher turn over.



Our big agenda item throughout all of these meetings has been to plan the PPS School Garden Tour. The goal of the tour was to educate about the impacts school gardens have on student health, confidence, openness to growth, learning ability, behavior, food security, and stewardship to nature and their community. We also aimed to gain visibility, include more community members, and celebrate all of our accomplishments to date. The event happened on a beautiful day, and 40 adults and children came out to tour different gardens and enjoy the school garden harvest and pizza party at PATHs to celebrate.

Overall this summer, school gardens around the district have produced abundant food for families and food pantries. REC and Learning Works have continued to use the gardens for education spaces all summer long. Cultivating Community summer high school Youth Growers program took care of two school gardens and engaged preschool students and kids from the Boys & Girls Club. The gardens are abundant and ready for students and teachers to enjoy their bounty in these first months back at school!

We are working towards a district where support for school gardens is internal schools and to the district, which will greatly affect the ability for a flourishing program and integration into culture, education, and students meals. We have compiled multiple documents to outline the academic and health impact school gardens have on students to help teachers, staff, and school board understand the importance of school gardens.

Table 5. School Gardens Action Group Updates

Recommendation	Action	Deadline
2.2 Convene in person quarterly meetings	1) Hold monthly School Garden Network Meetings with rotating host program: May - Reiche June - Lincoln July - Peaks August - School Garden Tour (EECS, Rowe, Lincoln, PATHs)	1) Occurring and Ongoing; Rotating schools, presentations from each school on their model and site
2.3 Maintain online presence to promote school gardens in the district and recruit interested volunteers from the community	1) Crowdfsource consistent content on the Facebook page	1) Occurring and Ongoing



	2) Create PPS School Garden Network tour flyer and event and promote widely	
2.4 Increase efficiency of produce distribution between school garden coordinators and liaisons managing charitable food programs	1) EECS and Riverton garden produce was donated regularly to Locker Project cooler in North Street Community Garden this summer 2) Families and students connected directly at most schools to direct harvesting	1) Summer 2019
2.5 Raise Awareness of and fully utilize garden-based education resources in the state	1) Hosted PPS School Garden Tour Event in partnership with Maine School Garden Network	1) August 2019

Table 6. School Gardens Asks/Requests

Benchmark	Ask
3.3 Created School Garden Coach Model framework	Create a budget in the school district to fund \$32,500 for the 13 schools with active school gardens to have garden coach stipends for the 2019-2020 school year; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve SGAG in budget and advocacy process to be considered for 2020-2021 budget cycle
1.2 Institute teacher training on garden-based education as CEU credit	With the beginning of the new school year, help facilitate access to support teachers district wide to use the garden through curriculum resources and trainings.

Nutrition Education

The Nutrition Education Action Group is passionate about ensuring that all students have access to quality nutrition and cooking education that inspires them to make healthy choices to support their learning and growth. Our largest undertaking is the creation of a comprehensive [Nutrition Education Map](#) that compiles all of the nutrition education content, curriculum, and activity happening in the district by both partner organizations and school staff. We developed a survey



and performed targeted outreach to school nurses, social workers, health, and physical education teachers to better understand the curriculum that educators are using and the barriers they are facing. With support from the Portland’s Department of Public Health, we were able to award \$25 Amazon gift cards to every educator that completed the survey. We created a [report](#) of our survey findings, which represent nine schools, and will continue to do outreach in the hopes of having feedback from every school in the district.

By mapping where nutrition education is, and is not, happening we have been able to determine ways to increase access to information that is the least burdensome to teachers as possible. Thanks to this action group EFNEP educators from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension were able to meet with principals from Casco Bay and Deering High Schools and are moving forward with plans on how to integrate their curriculum with students in health classes this year. Additionally, we were able to convene partners from Cultivating Community, FoodCorps, SNAP-Ed, Cooking Matters, EFNEP, and NEAT to strategize on the most effective ways to provide nutrition education to all eligible elementary schools while also respecting grant restrictions and teacher capacity.

Before the school year begins, we will create individual nutrition education school reports to bring to principals. We hope this will be a tool that encourages principals to support teachers opting in to whichever type of nutrition education would best suit their needs.

Table 4. Nutrition Education Action Group Updates

Recommendation	Action	Deadline
2.1 Coordinate existing nutrition education efforts by partner organizations, eliminating redundancies and increasing reach	1) Creating comprehensive Nutrition Education Map with partner organizations and school staff teaching nutrition ed 2) Creating and administered school staff survey 3) Generated Nutrition Survey Report 3) Strategize around how to encourage eligible elementary school teachers to opt-in to free nutrition education from nonprofit service providers	1) Began March 2019, ongoing 2) May 2019 3) July 2019 4) July 2019
3.1 Equip schools with the basic infrastructure to teach nutrition	1) Group explores option of “nutrition education carts” with cooking resources that teachers or program staff could check	1) May 7th 2) May 7th



education	<p>out of the library</p> <p>2) Partner organizations share out what they bring with them for classes and approximate costs</p> <p>3) Draft estimate of how much one “nutrition education cart” will cost</p>	3) June 2019
3.3 Foster greater awareness of available nutrition programs, and strengthen student and family participation	<p>1) Partner organizations share about what they offer and which schools they are eligible to work in</p> <p>2) Connecting high school principals with EFNEP service providers</p>	<p>1) March 2019</p> <p>2) June 2019</p>

Table 8. Nutrition Education Asks/Requests

Benchmark	Ask
Contact list of all PPS Staff who teach nutrition in the district.	Ask administrators or principals to provide contact list of the staff who teach nutrition at each school by responding the 2019 School Reports.
100% response rate for the questionnaire among the PPS Staff who teach nutrition in the district	Encourage nutrition educators to complete the electronic questionnaire (emailed out to all health, physical education, and nurses).
100% participation of eligible elementary school teachers in nutrition education programming.	Encourage all eligible elementary school teachers to opt-in to free SNAP-Ed nutrition education. Information on how to do so available in 2019 School Reports.

Sustainable Practices

The Sustainable Practices Action Group has continued to focus our efforts on institutionalizing best practices around cafeteria waste separation. We have conducted a site visit to almost every school in the district to ask about challenges and successes around the waste system. We also joined a head custodian meeting to explain what we’re doing and to gain input and feedback about what they see in the cafeteria every day. We are now working on a PPS best practices



guide to cafeteria waste separation from what we’ve learned. We hope the guide will clarify district wide standards for waste separation and engage the whole school community in the composting and recycling program. The guide will include education and training materials for students, teachers, and staff.

We have also worked to ensure that PPS is purchasing sustainable materials when possible. We are working with Rowe Elementary School to replace plastic cutlery with reusable cutlery. We have received funding from the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM), for silverware and all other necessary materials. We Compost It, PPS compost service and a member of the action group, is also donating silverware to Rowe’s collection. We will now implement the silverware pilot at the start of the school year. PPS Food Service and Ocean Ave Elementary School are working on a similar project to implement silverware at Ocean. Additionally, we are researching alternative options for materials that are not compostable or recyclable.

Table 9. Sustainable Practices Action Group Updates

Recommendation	Action	Deadline
2.1 Involve custodial and lunchroom staff in trainings and discussions	1) Completed site visits at each school to understand the barriers with each composting and recycling program. 2) Met with head custodians at their monthly meeting and received feedback on cafeteria waste separation.	1) June 2019 2) August 2019
2.3 Incorporate composting into education goals, and involve students in composting	1) Completed site visits at each school to understand the barriers with each composting and recycling program. 2) Creating a PPS composting / recycling guide to inform schools about best practices and the successes of other schools in the district.	1) June 2019 2) Ongoing
3.3 Reduce use of single-use plastic by decreasing use of plastic straws and packaged cutlery	1) Working with Rowe Elementary School to eliminate plastic cutlery in their cafeteria and replace it with reusable cutlery. 2) Received a grant from NRCM to fund the materials for the silverware project.	1) September 2019 2) Received grant on 4/27/19



Table 10. Sustainable Practices Asks/Requests

Benchmark	Ask
2.3 Incorporate composting into education goals, and involve students in composting.	Support the development and distribution of our PPS composting and recycling best practices guide.
2.3 Incorporate composting into education goals, and involve students in composting.	Encourage monitoring of cafeteria waste separation stations in each school.



Appendix A: Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with the overall goal of ending food insecurity within the PPS district:

District

District Recommendation 1: Develop and implement district-wide and school-specific strategic plans based on the PPS Food Security Needs Assessment:

1.1 Develop and implement food security strategic plans that align with the PPS District Wellness Plan and Portland Promise through collaboration with PPS District Wellness Committee, schools, and partner organizations

1.2 Use the Portland Education Foundation; Full Plates, Full Potential; Farm to School grants; and other funding opportunities to support the implementation of PPS Food Security Needs Assessment recommendations

District Recommendation 2: Develop a yearly monitoring and evaluation plan to track progress implementing the district-wide and school-specific strategic plans:

2.1 Develop shared indicators for schools and partner organizations for data collection and tracking

2.2 Institutionalize data collection and data sharing practices

2.3 Report on yearly findings at the end of each school year

2.4 Build upon PPS food system successes in subsequent years' strategic, monitoring and evaluation plans

District Recommendation 3: Institutionalize and maintain a PPS Wellness Coordinator position whose responsibilities include acting as food security advocate on the PPS District Wellness Committee, as follows:



3.1 Coordinate food security efforts by partner organizations and schools; eliminate redundancies, increase reach, oversee networks and resource sharing, and ensure equitable access to food security resources across the district

3.2 Participate on the PPS District Wellness Committee and in development and implementation of district-wide and school-specific strategic plans

3.3 Participate in development of school-based wellness teams

3.4 Identify and research potential funding sources for the implementation of district-wide and school-specific strategic plans

3.5 Provide professional development training and learning opportunities for school staff on poverty and food security

3.6 Create and implement an outreach plan to increase awareness of student food insecurity and promote available food security resources through district-organized events

District Recommendation 4: Designate one or more “food security champions” on each school Wellness Team, with responsibilities as follows:

4.1 Serve as liaison between the appropriate school staff members and partner organizations with regards to food security programming

4.2 Participate in development and implementation of district-wide and school-specific food security strategic plan

4.3 Oversee monitoring and evaluation of food security programming at their school

4.4 Report to PPS Wellness Coordinator on District Wellness Committee

Charitable Foods

Charitable Foods Recommendation 1 - Enhance consistent resource-sharing within, and among, school communities:



1.1 Circulate Portland Community Food Resource Guide (Appendix A) and Portland Community Summer Food Resource Guide (Appendix B) to families and all school staff at the beginning and end of the school year, respectively

1.2 Incorporate charitable food program information into trainings for school staff. All staff should be informed on what resources are available, trauma-informed ways to help families access services, and the appropriate contact people

1.3 Distribute a general information packet and food security survey at the beginning of each school year to determine wants and needs and enable families to opt in to programs

1.4 Send home feedback forms through backpack programs to improve communication with families receiving this service

1.5 Strengthen communication and collaboration among organizational partners and liaisons managing charitable food programs

1.6 Form charitable foods provider PPS network to share resources and best-practices developed at each school

Charitable Foods Recommendation 2 - Improve the reliability, efficiency, and sustainability of charitable food programs:

2.1 Ensure that there are adequate school liaisons (e.g., staff, volunteers) to manage the food programs at the schools and to maintain adequate food supply

2.2 Guarantee stipends for the school liaisons managing charitable food programs

2.3 Invest in necessary infrastructure (e.g., cold storage and equipment)

Charitable Foods Recommendation 3- Encourage low-barrier access and high availability of school pantries and food options:

3.1 Partner organizations collaborate with schools that do not have an existing charitable food program to prioritize what would serve their school best

3.2 Increase communication about charitable food opportunities at each school to students and families

3.3 Require no paperwork or eligibility checks for access

3.4 Work with partner organizations to offer free, nutritious food in more places (e.g., bowls of fruit in the classroom, Adult Ed, multicultural office)



3.5 Engage with partner organizations to increase the availability of fresh produce and of culturally appropriate foods such as labeled halal options

Federal Nutrition Programs

Federal Nutrition Programs Recommendation 1 - Increase overall student participation in federal nutrition programs:

1.1 Launch a professional school meals marketing campaign to attract more students and families

1.2 Collect, analyze, and incorporate student feedback on menu options through district-wide taste tests and response forms

1.3 Maximize cafeteria and lunch period efficiency to ensure students have sufficient time to enjoy and digest their food

1.4 Support and evaluate Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP) 2018 meal pilot and maximize this program throughout district

1.5 Develop a summer meals strategic plan that includes monthly stakeholder meetings beginning in January

Federal Nutrition Programs Recommendation 2 - Encourage full participation of all eligible students in free and reduced-price meals:

2.1 Continue to encourage and incentivize registration of all eligible families for free and reduced-price meals

2.2 Continue to support families completing eligibility paperwork and implement additional best practices

2.3 Fully implement the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in every eligible school

2.4 Train staff on how to manage breakfast in the classroom to ensure maximum reimbursement

Federal Nutrition Programs Recommendation 3 - Cultivate a school culture of healthy and inclusive food practices:

3.1 Serve more meals, snacks, and taste tests that represent and celebrate the cultural diversity of the student body



- 3.2 Restore school budget line item that subsidizes food service, especially local food procurement
- 3.3 Increase capacity for food preparation to include more scratch cooking
- 3.4 Exceed federal nutritional requirements by focusing on nutrient dense, minimally processed foods
- 3.5 Limit access to unhealthy food options outside reimbursable school meals as specified in the District Wellness Policy and Smart Snacks regulations

School Gardens

School Gardens Recommendation 1 - Develop and implement school garden-based learning goals integrated with Common Core State Standards:

- 1.1 Establish a school garden at every school
- 1.2 Institute teacher training on garden-based education as Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credit
- 1.3 Provide all teachers with a garden curriculum formulated from existing Maine-based lessons connected to Common Core State Standards
- 1.4 Maintain a resource list of existing curricula for teachers to draw from to connect to their learning goals
- 1.5 Increase garden-related summer programming for students that includes hands-on learning and maintenance

School Gardens Recommendation 2 - Create a district-wide School Garden Network:

- 2.1 Establish a platform to share resources, grants, tips, and ask questions
- 2.2 Convene in-person quarterly meetings
- 2.3 Maintain an online presence to promote school gardens in the district and recruit interested volunteers from the community
- 2.4 Increase efficiency of produce distribution between school garden coordinators and liaisons managing charitable food programs during the growing season
- 2.5 Raise awareness of and fully utilize garden-based education resources in the state



School Gardens Recommendation 3 - Increase funding and infrastructure for school garden programs:

- 3.1 Identify and utilize sources of funding for school garden maintenance and programming for all schools
- 3.2 Designate budget line in Parks & Recreation Department to support outdoor learning spaces on school property
- 3.3 Provide stipends to school garden coordinators
- 3.4 Create school garden committees at each school with representatives from the school administration, each grade, and the parent community to institutionalize gardening into school culture
- 3.5 Organize more and more-sustained support for summer maintenance

Nutrition Education

Nutrition Education Recommendation 1 - Develop a district-wide comprehensive and equitable approach to nutrition education:

- 1.1 Establish nutrition education goals for each grade that build upon the previous year's lessons
- 1.2 Create and implement a nutrition education curriculum aligned with Common Core State Standards through collaboration with the academic departments and organizational partners

Nutrition Education Recommendation 2 - Designate one person to oversee nutrition education in the district, with responsibilities as follows:

- 2.1 Coordinate existing nutrition education efforts by partner organizations, eliminating redundancies and increasing reach
- 2.2 Provide resources and training to teachers on how to teach basic nutrition education
- 2.3 Leverage funding opportunities among the district and partner organizations by collaborating on grant proposals
- 2.4 Convene bi-annual meetings among partner organizations

Nutrition Education Recommendation 3 - Prioritize and implement nutrition education in schools:



- 3.1 Equip schools with the basic infrastructure to teach nutrition education
- 3.2 Provide a stipend to teachers who provide after-school nutrition programming
- 3.3 Foster greater awareness of available nutrition programs, and strengthen student and family participation

Sustainable Practices

Sustainable Practices Recommendation 1 - Develop measurable local food procurement goals for Food Services:

- 1.1 Set local food purchasing goal to at least 20-25% of total food budget
- 1.2 Launch a marketing campaign to promote local food among the school community
- 1.3 Prioritize local food procurement from small Maine farms

Sustainable Practices Recommendation 2 - Follow New England Environmental Finance Center's (Sheils, M., & Webster, S. n.d.) best management practices for district-wide composting:

- 2.1 Involve custodial and lunchroom staff in trainings and discussions
- 2.2 Supply school cafeterias with additional composting and waste sorting stations
- 2.3 Incorporate composting into education goals, and involve students in composting

Sustainable Practices Recommendation 3 - Institute sustainable practices in cafeteria purchases and operations:

- 3.1 Clarify and institutionalize consistent share table practices
- 3.2 Purchase compostable or reusable utensils
- 3.3 Reduce use of single-use plastic by decreasing use of plastic straws and packaged cutlery
- 3.4 Use pump dispensers instead of individual packets for condiments