



Food Fuels Learning:

A Portland Public Schools Food Security Needs Assessment

August 2018

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Letter from the Superintendent and Executive Director

In the summer of 2017, Portland Public Schools (PPS), Cumberland County Food Security Council (CCFSC) and the Portland Food Council launched the Portland Public Schools Food Security Task Force. This coalition of organizations is united in the beliefs that food fuels learning and that all students have the right to the nutritious food that will enable them to attain their full potential.

Many children and families in our school district struggle with access to nutritious food. Of the 6,796 students enrolled in Portland Public Schools in the 2017-18 school year, more than half, 3,560 students, were from families whose low income qualified them for free school meals. For a family of four, this designation means they lived on less than \$32,000 a year.

Educators observe daily how inadequate food affects student behavior, readiness to learn, and educational outcomes. The Task Force worked with district staff and stakeholders to collect information on what is currently happening to build food security in the schools, identify gaps, and determine how we can collectively address this concern.

We recognize that PPS is not utilizing all the opportunities available to feed students. Fewer students participate in school-based federal nutrition programs (breakfast and lunch) than meet the income guidelines. Portland currently serves only about 20% of students eligible for the summer meals program. Additional opportunities offered by community organizations focused on food security are underutilized as well.

We are making strides to improve this. Among other things, PPS will pilot a program to provide better nutrition to students in after-school settings. Food pantries and other partnerships are helping to improve food access for students on weekends and long breaks.

The Portland Public Schools Food Security Task Force has mapped out which schools have food access programs, as well as where they could be implemented and where they can be improved. This assessment is reflected in this report. It includes recommendations for sustainable solutions to end student hunger. It suggests opportunities for anyone in the community who wants to help to join us in ensuring all Portland students have adequate, nutritious food to fuel our shared future.

As we work to build food security with students and their families, PPS and CCFSC are grateful for the community interest and involvement in programs and policies to reduce hunger in our City. Thank you for reading this report.

Sincerely,

Xavier Botana, Superintendent, Portland Public Schools

Jim Hanna, Executive Director, Cumberland County Food Security Council

Abstract

Introduction: More than half of the 6,796 students in the Portland Public School District were eligible for free meals during the 2017-18 school year, meaning that 3,560 students were living in a household with income at or below 130% of the poverty line adjusted for family size. Studies have shown that food insecurity has negative impacts on a child's ability to learn and increases the risk of serious mental and physical health problems, threatening their ability to thrive.

By conducting the needs assessment presented in this report, the Portland Public Schools Food Security Task Force sought to explore the presence and impact of activities in five program areas: charitable food, federal nutrition programs, school gardens, nutrition education, and sustainable practices.

Methods: The Task Force developed an assessment map and individual school reports, providing at-a-glance representations of the resources available in each school. The Task Force also developed three surveys: the Food Security Information Survey for school principals, the General Support Survey to raise awareness and enable school staff to support the Task Force's process, and the Parent Survey to generate feedback on the Task Force's research topics.

In addition, the Task Force planned and conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with various members of the school community.

Demographics and Supporting Data: The Task Force collected data from a total of 212 members of the school community through surveys and interviews, including 57 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with students, social workers, school garden affiliates, principals and assistant principals, nutrition educators, program directors, food service workers, nurses, teachers, school staff, coordinators and parent-teacher organization members.

Analysis: The Task Force used the data collected from the Food Security Information Survey to inform the assessment map and the individual school reports and included the open-response data from the General Support Survey in the thematic analysis. Because collection of Parent Survey data is ongoing, the Task Force did not present it in this report.

The Task Force conducted a thematic analysis on the qualitative interview and open-response General Support Survey data. During interviews, trained Task Force members or volunteers took detailed notes, which were coded and analyzed by the team. The team organized and presented the results in the five program areas and developed a set of recommendations.

Conclusions and Recommendations: There is a demonstrated need for increased access to and availability of nutritious food. This needs assessment has shown that opportunities are available to the community to increase access to more nutritious food for Portland Public Schools students and families. Based on these findings, several overall and district-wide recommendations as

well as recommendations specific to the five categories were developed. Adopting these recommended strategies and practices will enable institutionalization of existing programs and services and support consistent student access to the healthy food that will enable them to thrive and succeed.

Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
ASSP	After School Snack Program
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CCFSC	Cumberland County Food Security Council
CEP	Community Eligibility Provision
CHAMPS	Cities Combating Hunger through the Afterschool and Summer Meal Programs
CNR	Child Nutrition Reauthorization
EFNEP	Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program
FFVP	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
GSFB	Good Shepherd Food Bank
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
PABS	Pick a Better Snack Program
PATHS	Portland Arts and Technology High School
PPS	Portland Public Schools
PTO	Parent-Teacher Organization
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
US	United States
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Goals and Objectives

The PPS Food Security Task Force (hereafter referred to as the Task Force) 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, the Task Force conducted a needs assessment to explore the presence and impact of activities within each of these five areas throughout the PPS district.

Introduction

Food Insecurity and Portland Public Schools

During the 2017-18 school year, the Portland Public School District provided education to 6,796 students in 17 schools located in Cumberland County, Maine. More than half of these students (3,560) were eligible for free meals (Maine Department of Education, 2018a), which means that they live in a household with income at or below 130% of the poverty line adjusted for family size. The number of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals (family income up to 185% of the federal poverty line) is a commonly used proxy for childhood food insecurity that relies on a specific, income-based definition rather than household survey data.

In 2016, 17.2% of the children in Cumberland County were deemed food insecure based on survey data (“Food Insecurity in Cumberland County,” 2016). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (USDA, 2017a). For many of the food insecure students, the meals they eat at school comprise a crucial portion of the food they consume daily. Researchers have found that eating school breakfast and lunch provides half or more of students' daily energy intake, making school meals a vital access point for those without sufficient access to food at home (Cullen & Chen, 2017). In recognition of the integral role of school food systems in ensuring the well-being of students, the Task Force was convened to promote food security among the students in Portland.

How Hunger Affects Children and Learning

Hunger makes it difficult to concentrate, learn, and behave well in the school environment. Food insecure students have been found to receive lower grades and report higher absences, leading to increased likelihood of negative repercussions, including poor academic outcomes (Alaimo, K., Olson, C. M., & Frongillo, E. A., 2001; Faught, E. L., Williams, P. L., Willows, N. D., Asbridge, M., & Veugelers, P. J., 2017). Alaimo et al. (2001) found that food insecure students were several times more likely to be suspended or to repeat a grade than their food secure peers. Lack of academic success can result in fewer opportunities, perpetuating food insecurity and poverty in succeeding generations (Faught et al., 2017).

Food insecurity also influences children’s psychosocial development. Many of the students experiencing food insecurity have more behavioral and emotional issues than their peers, including trouble making friends and maintaining self-control in classrooms, and were much more likely to have consulted a psychologist (Alaimo et al., 2001; Faught et al., 2017; Kimbro & Denney, 2015). These difficulties further affect the children’s academic performance.

Food insecurity impairs students' physical well-being, with lasting consequences for their academic performance and health. Food insecurity often leads to consumption of cheap foods that contain high levels of saturated fats and sugar but lack the nutritional content necessary for proper brain and body development (Alaimo et al., 2001; Faught et al., 2017). Poor nutrition increases risk of diet-related diseases. Studies have found an association between food insecurity and risk of obesity among school-aged children (Kaur et al., 2015). According to FoodCorps, a national leader in school-based healthy food programs, children with diet-related diseases are less likely to achieve success in their school lives and their careers. In a country where one in three children are on track to be overweight and develop type 2 diabetes, or are at risk for other diet-related disease, FoodCorps emphasizes the importance of considering the role of food insecurity on children's health and ability to succeed in school ("The Problem", n.d.).

For a child experiencing poverty, a number of factors in their living and learning environments may prevent them from reaching their full potential. Food insecurity must be seriously considered as one of these negative factors; the research cited above makes clear the connection between food insecurity and children's physical, academic, and behavioral development. While recognizing that food insecurity is only one of the challenges resulting from systemic poverty, the Task Force believes that it is necessary to address the basic human need for food in order to ensure the well-being of students. In addition, the Task Force aims to demonstrate dedication to the promise of PPS: *equity for the whole student to achieve* their full potential with support from a strong network of *people*.¹

Task Force Process

The Task Force first convened in July of 2017 as a community-driven effort to address the problem of food insecurity for students in the school district. This diverse group of stakeholders decided that addressing food insecurity required assessing the overall food environment. Large group meetings were held monthly and were open to anyone interested. In between large group meetings, the Leadership Team convened to implement and carry forward the suggestions put forth by the stakeholders. Out of this process, three action groups were developed and began holding independent meetings:

- The Assessment Action Group goal was to map, evaluate, and report on food security programming in PPS. After collecting and analyzing the data, the group would craft a report based on their findings that includes recommendations for each program area.
- The Outreach & Organizing Action Group goal was to engender widespread community engagement around food security in PPS, with the aim of centering and uplifting those who are most directly affected by food insecurity. This group sought to identify

¹ See the Portland Public Schools Promise (www.portlandschoolspromise.org/).

champions, individuals already doing this work, as well as community members interested in getting involved within the schools.

- The Resource Development Action Group goal was to seek out various forms of support (monetary, in-kind, volunteer, etc.) to bolster food security programming in PPS.

The Task Force developed the Community Food Resource Guide (Appendix A) and the Summer Meals Food Resource Guide (Appendix B). The Multilingual Office at PPS translated the community guide into seven languages to ensure that all students and families would have access to comprehensive, up-to-date information about the charitable food resources available to them. The Task Force continues to be an inclusive, community-driven group of passionate stakeholders interested in supporting, bolstering, and addressing gaps in food security work happening in PPS.

The Five Program Areas

The Task Force identified five program categories to map and research how to increase food security holistically within our district: *charitable food programs*, *federal nutrition programs*, *school gardens*, *nutrition education*, and *sustainable practices*.

Charitable food programs donate food to students and families through the school for use within and outside of the school environment. Unfortunately, these programs have become a necessity in many schools nationwide over the past 10 years. Although they are sometimes referred to as emergency food programs, they are addressing an ongoing need rather than serving as a temporary aid, as the word “emergency” implies. Charitable food programs in PPS employ various models: Backpack programs send pre-packed bags of food home with students. In-school food pantries store meal items and snacks that are accessible to parents, teachers, the school nurse, or students as needed. Distribution tables offer fresh produce and other foods during high traffic times such as end-of-day release or school events, when parents and students can choose the items they wish to take home. Support for charitable food capacity comes from local organizations, community fundraisers, and funds donated by teachers and parents. Charitable food programs are almost 100% volunteer run and are usually organized by a social worker, nurse, or parent.

Federal nutrition programs include all food served through schools’ nationally regulated meal programs that are prepared and overseen by Portland’s Food Service Department. Students who eat both breakfast and lunch through the federal nutrition programs can receive more than 50% of their nutrition and calories in school (Cullen & Chen, 2017). In Portland, nutrition services available to all schools include breakfast, lunch, and the After School Snack Program (ASSP). Elementary schools in which more than 50% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch are eligible for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) and universal free lunch and breakfast programs, through the Community Eligibility Provision. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), or summer meals program, provides free meals to kids and teens at 15 sites. At

peak participation, summer meals have only reached 20% of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

School gardens support students' familiarity with vegetables, increase access to fresh produce, and connect students to food systems through hands-on learning to help them make educated decisions about the food they consume. Involvement with school gardens can lead to healthier diets; seven out of 10 kids who receive 10 or more hours of hands-on garden and cooking education increase their preference for and willingness to eat vegetables (Ratcliffe et al., 2011). Research also shows that outdoor education can positively influence mood and behavior, which directly supports students' ability to contribute positively to the indoor learning environment (Blair, 2009). School gardens also increase connection to and stewardship of the natural world.

Nutrition education teaches students about healthy eating, motivates students to adopt healthy eating practices, and teaches positive skills so students can accomplish their nutrition goals (Collins et al., 1995). These skills and goals are developed through multiple strategies including taste tests and cooking classes. Food security is more than just sufficient calorie intake; it encompasses the ability to meet nutritional needs that support healthy development and avoid diet-related disease. Supplying healthy food is a critical first step, but then students need to be willing to choose and eat healthy foods that support their development. Nutrition education exposes students to healthy foods in a positive, fun, learning environment.

Sustainable practices include responsible food procurement and food waste management. Encouraging schools to purchase food locally can promote sustainability. Local food supports nutritious diets, stimulates regional economies, sustains healthy environments and creates strong social connections. This means that increasing local production, processing, and access can alleviate hunger through a variety of strategies while building a resilient and equitable food system (CCFSC, n.d.). Currently, approximately 40% of the food produced in the U.S. is wasted (USDA, n.d.). Food waste constitutes 21.6% of the U.S. landfills, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and preventing nutrients from reentering the soil (EPA, n.d.). Composting and recycling practices can curb landfill use, reduce methane emissions, and build soil for future farming (Gunders & Bloom, 2017). Unwanted items that are still safe to eat can be redistributed to students through methods such as share tables. Sustainable practices can also include the organization of the food system within the school, such as cafeteria environment, time, and set-up, and communication to students regarding how to access food and proper disposal.

Methodology

Assessment map and school reports

Assessment map

The Task Force developed the assessment map (Appendix C) through a collaborative process between schools, organizational partners, and task force members. The assessment map presents the data collected regarding the five program categories specific to each school in the district.

School reports

The Task Force developed individual school reports (Appendix D) based on the information in the assessment maps. During interviews, interviewers and participants used these reports as a resource. An example of the information collected can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Example school report

% Free and Reduced	
Provisions	
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	
Nutrition & Cooking Education	
Charitable Food Programs	
Sustainable Practices	

Surveys

The Task Force developed three surveys to inform the assessment map (Appendix C), compile statistics related to support of the Task Force’s initiative, and generate feedback on the Task Force’s research topics.

In order to collect the data needed for the assessment map (Appendix C), the Task Force developed and sent the Food Security Information Survey (Appendix E) to all of the school principals. Specifically, the survey asked principals to identify any food-related programs, as well as appropriate contact people in their respective schools.

The Task Force developed the General Support Survey (Appendix F) to raise awareness and provide a low-barrier way to show support and give feedback for the Task Force's process. The Task Force asked school staff members to complete the survey as an alternative to attending Task Force meetings. The General Support Survey was disseminated through the district's monthly staff newsletter and then further disseminated by asking teachers to send the survey out to their own staff mailing lists and through social media outlets.

The Task Force developed the Parent Survey (Appendix G) to generate feedback on the Task Force's research topics from parents of students in the district. The language and ideas were geared toward parents whose first language may not be English. The parent surveys were distributed at Locker Project food distribution tables and events held at the Learning Works after-school program, with the hope of reaching families who may be experiencing food insecurity or other symptoms of poverty. Parent surveys were also distributed at two Parent U events put on by the district and via email.

Interviews

The Task Force conducted qualitative interviews with teachers, principals, organizational partners, and other community stakeholders with the goal of collecting data on PPS programs in the five program areas: charitable food; federal nutrition programs; school gardens; nutrition education; and sustainable practices.

Ahead of the qualitative interviews, the Task Force developed semi-structured interview guides for each planned interview, and all interviewers underwent training in best practices. For an example of a semi-structured interview guide, please see Appendix H. Jane McLucas, Food Service Director, provided a Food Service 101 document (Appendix I) for reference as part of interviewer training.

Interview participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix J) and provided both written and verbal consent to be audio recorded. Interviews were scheduled for approximately 60 minutes and were conducted in a private, quiet space, when possible. In addition to the primary interviewer, a "note-taker" was present to assist when scheduling allowed. Following the interview, participants were thanked for their time and input, and both the audio recording and detailed notes from the interview were uploaded to a secure online platform.

Analysis

Surveys

The open-ended responses from the General Support Survey underwent thematic analysis using the same procedure as the interview data, as described below.

Data collection for the parent surveys is still ongoing and not included in the analysis conducted for this report.

Interviews

Primary interviewers and/or note takers took detailed notes, which were uploaded with the audio recording to the team’s online platform. Each set of notes then underwent thematic analysis. A set of codes (i.e., themes) was decided upon ahead of coding, along with the option to create a new code, and all coders were trained to ensure alignment of coding practices. The codes can be found in Table 2. Following the initial coding of a set of interview notes, each coded set was reviewed by at least one other member of the team. Following coding, data were organized by theme and reviewed to ensure accurate and appropriate capture of data. Findings were organized by the five program areas within PPS (i.e., charitable food, school meal participation, school gardens, nutrition and cooking curriculum, and sustainable food practices).

Table 2. Theme Codes

Theme codes
Logistics
Infrastructure
Capacity
Stigma
Awareness
Curriculum

Table 2. Theme Codes

Food quality
Food access
Budgets/finances
Dietary
Sustainability/local foods
Policy
Institutionalizing
Culture/leadership change
School gardens misc.
Food ownership/connection/appreciation
Challenges
Recommendations
Off the record

Recommendations

Recommendations were generated based on full analysis of survey and interview data. Following analysis, the Leadership Team went over the findings and developed concrete recommendations that accurately encompassed the feedback received and best practices.

Demographics and Supporting Data

Food Security in Portland and the State of Maine

According to the USDA definitions and survey data, Maine has the seventh highest rate of food insecurity and the third highest rate of "very low food security" in the nation (Coleman-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M. P., Gregory, C. A., & Singh, A., 2017; USDA, 2017a). Very low food security, formerly referred to as "hunger," occurs when the eating patterns of one or more household members are disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacks resources for food (USDA, 2017b). In 2016, 183,310 Mainers struggled with hunger across the state, including 50,520 children ("Food Insecurity in Maine," 2016).

Of the 6,796 students enrolled in the Portland Public School District for the 2017-18 school year, 3,811 were eligible for free or reduced-price meals, or 56.08% of all registered students, most of whom (52%) were eligible for free lunch (Maine Department of Education, 2018a). Thus, more than half of PPS students live in a household with an annual income below 130% of the federal poverty line (Food and Nutrition Service, 2017a).

Although low-income families may utilize Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly known as food stamps) and the federal school meals program, students are still struggling with food insecurity. According to research done by Preble Street and Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB) in 2017, almost 60% of the individuals surveyed at area food pantries received SNAP benefits. Of those who received benefits, 83% noted that their monthly benefits only last for two weeks or less. Even with the maximum allotment of SNAP dollars, a family of four would need to survive on \$1.77 per person per meal ("Maine Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP]," n.d.). Feeding America estimates indicate the average cost per meal in Cumberland County is \$3.34 (Turkle, 2016). Feeding America also reports that of the more than 40,000 food insecure individuals in Cumberland County, 46% are not eligible for SNAP due to regulations surrounding eligibility. These gaps in nutrition benefit programs result in student hunger in the PPS district.

Data Collection

The Task Force collected data from 212 members of the school community through interviews and surveys.

A total of 57 interviews were conducted; participants included 12 youth leaders, 10 social workers, eight school garden affiliates, six principals and assistant principals, five nutrition educators, four program directors, three food service workers, three nurses, three teachers, three staff, two coordinators, and one parent-teacher organization (PTO) member. Of these

participants, 39 are currently employed or working in PPS, and five are former employees with relevant institutional knowledge.

Interviews were conducted by members of the Leadership Team and by volunteers from the Assessment Action Group. Interviewer training provided background and context on the Task Force, the PPS system, and best practices for semi-structured interviews.

There were 155 people surveyed electronically. King Middle School organized a study of 70 7th graders. The remaining surveys were collected during the initial mapping phase and through the Support Pledge and Parent Survey. Respondents self-identified in the following categories: 33 parents, 16 principals, 12 teachers, 11 staff, eight community members, two administrators, one school board member, one professor, one clinical nutritionist.

Results

Charitable Food Programs

“Schools are becoming a site for food distribution, a social service agency. If that is the direction we are going in, we need to start looking at it more critically and from a systems point of view: how to we resource it, replenish, function so that we are truly meeting needs.”

- School Staff Member

Background

Charitable food programs have emerged as a response to food insecurity in PPS and now occupy an essential place in the PPS food system. Food pantries were introduced to schools in Maine in 2013 (Gallagher, 2013), and since then, increasing numbers of school pantries, backpack programs, and fresh produce distributions attempt to address the food insecurity visible both in and out of school. Twelve out of the 15 schools where staff were interviewed have school pantries. Staff members at the remaining three schools offered a variety of reasons for the absence of a pantry; one cited lack of capacity, while another stated that there was not sufficient need. The Task Force interviewed staff at GSFB and the Locker Project, two of the most active partner organizations offering charitable food programs at PPS. Some schools raise funds for charitable food programs through the school community and private donations.

Several themes surfaced during the interviews as major challenges for charitable food programs in schools: addressing need, providing nutritious and diverse food options, and developing sustainable models. The different forms of charitable food programs and their varied methods of operation reflect the ways in which organizations and schools respond to these challenges.

A summary of existing charitable food programs in the PPS can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of Charitable Food Programs in Portland Public Schools

Charitable Food Program:	Food pantry	Backpack program	Wayside Community Meals	Produce/fresh food tables
Elementary Schools				
East End Community School	✓		✓	✓
Hall Elementary School	✓		✓	
Longfellow Elementary School				
Lyseth Elementary School	✓	✓		
Ocean Ave Elementary School	✓	✓		
Peaks Elementary School				
Presumpscot Elementary School	✓	✓		✓
Reiche Elementary School	✓	✓	✓	
Riverton Elementary School	✓		✓	✓
Middle Schools				
King Middle School	✓			✓
Lincoln Middle School	✓			✓
Lyman Moore Middle School	✓			✓
High School				
Casco Bay High School**				
Deering High School	✓			
Portland High School	✓	✓		

Table 3. Summary of Charitable Food Programs in Portland Public Schools

PATHS*				
K-12				
Bayside Learning Center**	✓			

*School has none of the four charitable foods programs

**School has only one of the four charitable foods programs

Good Shepherd Food Bank

Good Shepherd Food Bank is a statewide organization whose mission is to eliminate hunger in Maine (GSFB, n.d.). The majority of charitable food programs in schools begin as grassroots efforts that later turn to GSFB as a way to help formalize and institutionalize the work they started. Among its various programs, GSFB sponsors approximately 70 school food pantries across the state. In the Portland Public Schools, GSFB supports both school pantries and backpack programs. Good Shepherd Food Bank supports these school-based programs in one of two ways. The first is through partnership with an eligible 501(c) 3 nonprofit, which is then responsible for the distribution of food in schools with a 50% or higher level of eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. In Portland, the Locker Project often acts as the intermediary nonprofit. Second, a school official can request that GSFB serve as its direct fiscal-legal sponsor. This is a competitive process, and schools must be at a 70% or higher level of eligibility for free or reduced-price meals to apply. The main difference between the two forms of management is the source of funding; GSFB raises the money for the food that goes to schools it sponsors directly, while the local community partner that serves as liaison between the school and GSFB raises the money itself. Good Shepherd Food Bank also offers a wide variety of resources — including a YouTube channel, an online resource hub, and a Facebook group that all help answer questions about how to partner with local organizations to start and run charitable food programs.

Once sponsorship is established, GSFB requires that schools provide a designated on-site liaison. This is one of the ways in which GSFB monitors food quality and ensures that appropriate food safety measures are in place. Most of GSFB’s on-site contacts are school staff, who volunteer to take on the responsibility for the school pantries and backpack programs in addition to their other work. While this oversight is essential, the level of work required by both the school staff and GSFB often exhausts their capacity and poses a challenge to the sustainability and possible expansion of the programs. One participant from GSFB noted that programs run through community partners were more likely to expand from just one school to the district than those run directly by GSFB. The participant mentioned expansion as one of the greatest benefits of working with a local nonprofit, acknowledging that it is more difficult for GSFB to extend their programming given that they are working in 16 counties. Despite the importance of funding to

establish partnerships with new schools, GSFB has never had a pantry shut down due to funding issues. Instead, GSFB staff stated that the primary reason for school pantries shutting down is the departure or lack of a dedicated manager at the school. Although the food bank does not currently have the funds to support it, GSFB hopes to establish stipends to support the work done for school food programs in order to increase sustainability.

Resources are still available even if the school does not qualify to apply for GSFB's direct or indirect sponsorship. In order to reach more schools, GSFB is piloting a program called the Buying Club that enables partners to purchase product at wholesale cost. The Buying Club does not require monitoring for food quality in the same way that other backpack programs or school pantries do because it only uses products sourced directly from GSFB, rather than donated or fresh products. This enables GSFB to partner with schools without significantly impacting the food bank's capacity. Even for schools that do not partner with GSFB in any way, the food bank offers pantry grants, start-up grants, matching grants, and other financial resources for schools and shares information on best practices in its quarterly newsletter.

Locker Project

The Locker Project formed in 2014 in partnership with GSFB. Focusing on Southern Maine, the Locker Project works with over a dozen schools in Portland to address child hunger (Locker Project, n.d.). The Locker Project established school pantries and fresh produce distributions at these schools to increase food security both in school and at home. Unlike GSFB, the Locker Project does not have any eligibility requirements based on the school's rate of free or reduced-price meals eligibility, but under the terms of the partnership, GSFB guidelines do influence the programs the Locker Project can offer at each school.

The Locker Project funds and maintains pantries at its partner schools. School fundraisers and PTO involvement can aid in expansion and deepening of these programs, and a few schools raise money and collect food independently to supplement the Locker Project's efforts. A participant from the organization emphasized that none of the schools are required to supplement the program budget, and interviews revealed that most of the schools (four of five) supported by the Locker Project depend on the nonprofit as their sole source of funding.

Financial and food donations are crucial to enabling the Locker Project to offer full financial coverage for its programs. The organization relies on food donations from Hannaford and Shaw's to supply fresh food distribution programs, with volunteers picking up produce, eggs, and meat up to five times a week. The Locker Project also partners with local organizations such as the South Portland Food Cupboard, Cultivating Community, Wayside Food Programs, Portland Farmers Market, Portland Housing Authority, Root Cellar, and Standard Baking Company and hopes to increase local procurement in the future.

The Locker Project stocks the school pantries with a variety of snacks and meal items and also provides pre-cooked meals for the Center for Grieving Children's Intercultural Peer Support Program. Like GSFB, the Locker Project requires a liaison or key staff contact who can monitor the pantry. Because of limited school staff capacity, the organization now matches each school with a volunteer liaison to take pantry inventory. These inventories inform dry goods deliveries, which generally occur bi-weekly. The Locker Project does not have specific guidelines for the pantries' operations, only requiring that the schools make information about food resources available to the students.

The Locker Project is increasingly focused on providing access to fresh food through the school-site distributions, collecting from local farmers and gardeners in addition to Hannaford and Shaw's markets. Gardeners with community plots through Cultivating Community can donate their extra produce to the Locker Project by placing it in Locker Project coolers, located at each of the community gardens in Portland. Volunteers collect from these coolers twice a week in addition to gleaning from the Portland Farmers' Market at Deering Oaks Park on Saturdays, recovering local produce to contribute to Locker Project's fresh food distributions. If produce expires beyond its shelf life, which happens to only about 4% of donations, it is composted with Garbage to Garden. The fresh food program boasts high levels of participation, and the Locker Project distributes more than 12,000 pounds of fresh food a month, which eases pressure on community and in-school food pantries. To provide access for parents, the distribution often takes place at the end of the school day.

Addressing Need

Identifying Need

One of the key challenges in creating effective charitable food programs, especially for younger populations, is identifying and targeting those in need. Although schools may have charitable food programs in place, they might not reach all of the students who could benefit from them.

Selection and Outreach

In the PPS district, systems for identifying and selecting students as recipients for charitable food programs are often incomplete. When asked how students are selected to participate, one school reported that the process is unofficial and cited institutionalization as something that would require significant effort and is thus unlikely to occur. In unofficial systems of identification, the selection of students to receive charitable food hinges on the ability of staff to perceive student need. This was a recurring theme throughout interviews, with educators, social workers, nurses, and school administrators claiming responsibility for identifying students struggling with food insecurity. Even after receiving educational materials from GSFB on warning signs of chronic childhood hunger, those responsible for referrals emphasized the difficulty of identifying who needs, wants, or could benefit from charitable food. Multiple participants cited language barriers

as a challenge in determining student need for charitable food resources. One school reported that self-identification was occurring, with older students and occasionally parents requesting access to their pantry. Many participants stated interest in having a dedicated staff member to administer charitable food programs within the school. Even if staff have a deep understanding of food insecurity, they often do not have the capacity to comprehensively identify and distribute charitable food resources to students in need at their schools.

Providing adequate information about charitable food programs to food insecure students is critical to addressing need. One participant reported that many students are unaware of their school's charitable food programs and that staff are responsible for first determining those students "in need" before information is provided. Students are sent home with a letter to their parents detailing available resources only after this initial identification. Through further interviews with schools, the Task Force found that procedures for making information available to students concerning charitable food are inconsistent. Daily announcements serve as the most consistent and wide-reaching form of communication to students, but only two schools reported that their daily announcements contain food pantry information. Even when daily announcements are used, it was reported that students remain relatively unaware of charitable food resources, such as the Locker Project. In addition to poor outreach to students, schools often reported a lack of awareness among parents and staff. Staff from multiple schools discussed how any student who asks for food gets food, yet these vital resources are being underutilized because of the lack of awareness.

Students involved with various school programs were reported more likely to be exposed to outreach efforts related to charitable food. English Language Learner programming and meetings with school social workers were cited as opportunities to learn about charitable food resources. It was also reported that parents participating in one school's multilingual intake were provided with resources detailing the availability of not only school-provided food resources but also community resources. Staff at one school noted that accessing food after school was critical for students experiencing food insecurity and that those involved with after-school recreation were likely to be better informed about charitable food resources. With these reported inconsistencies, it is clear that the presence of charitable food programs does not guarantee complete participation. Focus groups showed that students are aware of this shortcoming, as they overwhelmingly emphasized the need for more comprehensive and accessible information concerning the availability of food pantries. Increased outreach regarding these programs would signify deeper institutional support and increase participation.

Multiple participants reported issues communicating with students and families about the charitable food programs the schools offer. One school reported that it was difficult to reach students with information about the availability of food they can bring home. Staff at another school stated that families do not reach out, but they were unsure if that was due to adequate community resources or a lack of awareness surrounding available school resources. Another interview participant suggested that families may be wrongly assuming that the breakfasts and

lunches available to students at school provide sufficient food for their children.

Overwhelmingly, school staff mentioned improving the education of both staff and families regarding school-provided charitable food resources as a positive step toward improving food access.

In 2014, one middle school registered new families in the Student Services office, where the food pantry is housed. This ensured that all of those newly enrolled were aware of that resource available to them. A participant noted that this model would greatly help new families in need, if they were to continue the practice. In the same year, PPS Food Service hosted a FoodCorps member who was able to create flyers, morning announcements, and logos. This work resulted in a set of materials that the director would not have had time to make and greatly strengthened communications and outreach to students. After the FoodCorps member left, the School Health Coordinator took over some of these responsibilities. Neither of these positions was renewed after 2015.

Distribution and Participation

Staff at three schools, one charitable food program director, and one survey respondent mentioned that access to reliable transportation is a barrier for many families, which makes it difficult to get food home. Staff at the three schools brought up the example that some of the children, especially the younger ones, have difficulty carrying the food home from the backpack program. They are often bringing home food for large families, and it is physically challenging to carry that much bulk and weight. At the three schools, teachers or administrators deliver food to families if that is requested or identified as a need. Deliveries often happen around school breaks, reflecting concern about providing enough food for students during weekends and/or school vacations. In some cases, GSFb supplies volunteers who drive food to families with gas cards to help cover this additional expense.

Cooking skills and access to kitchen space are also challenges. Two participants acknowledged that it is difficult to serve homeless families as they do not have a way to cook or prepare food. Families living in transitional housing or a shelter may not have access to a kitchen, and therefore do not have appliances beyond a microwave to cook for their family. In a similar vein, families may not have the tools to cook, like can openers, pots, and pans or places to store the food for long periods of time, like a freezer. Some students will not take backpacks because they are staying at a warming shelter and know they will not be able to cook. Some families may not know how to cook the food they are given because of cultural differences, inadequate cooking skills, or lack of familiarity with the ingredient. If a family is given dry pasta in a box, it is inedible to them if they do not understand how to prepare it. One school staff member said including recipes with the food provided in the backpacks was a successful model.

While some pantries are open and accessible to all students, others have limited hours, and/or require a staff member to accompany the students. Pantries are run differently in each school, but

multiple schools reported difficulties keeping their pantry stocked. Participants said this could be due to the frequency of Locker Project deliveries or the monthly spacing of GSFb distribution. In the meantime, school staff reach out to churches and other community members for food donations.

Participants stated that consistent delivery days would allow them to better communicate to their school community when fresh produce would arrive. To alleviate the fresh food gap, the Locker Project would like to acquire more vans and drivers to distribute food. When they have this capacity, they want to partner with more grocery stores to increase their access to fresh produce donations.

Participants noted that older children, starting in middle school, prefer choosing food at a pantry rather than taking a pre-packed backpack with items they may not eat. At the high schools, students already choose pantry items themselves. Several participants reported that students often choose foods that are not necessarily the most nutritious, but are easy to eat. One participant noted that students and parents are likely to select different items from pantries based on disparities in knowledge of a food's caloric density and familial need. To include parents in the choices, the Locker Project has found success in wrapping events, like produce distributions, with school events that are already happening, so parents can be involved. In addition, one participant mentioned the school would like to be able to open the pantry to parents on a weekly basis to better accommodate schedules.

Stigma: A Barrier to Entry

Stigma is a significant barrier to students' accessing charitable food (Fram, M. S., Frongillo, E. A., Draper, C. L., & Fishbein, E. M., 2013). In a school environment, negative social pressure can deter students from seeking out the resources they desperately need. Some school food pantries attempt to reduce stigma by making food available to all students at all times, while other schools address stigma by having more discreet pantry locations and distribution logistics.

During the school staff interviews, five participants stated that stigma does not have a major presence at their school. Among these five schools, four of them are elementary, which may reflect the relative impact of age in the prevalence of stigma. One participant stated that it is easier to eliminate stigma in elementary schools and schools with high rates of free or reduced-price meals eligibility. Several participants in the interviews mentioned that stigma is a more significant problem and more difficult to address when students reach middle school. In a survey conducted at a middle school, 34 students responded that they did not feel comfortable taking food from the school's food bank or tables. While half of them did not feel comfortable because they did not need the food, 17 of them either gave no reason or specified stigma as the cause of their discomfort. Five students out of 70 surveyed at a middle school mentioned that many students who are food insecure do not reveal this fact because they are embarrassed. Having to push past the stigma and ask for food creates a barrier for younger teens; some students will only

go to the school food pantry after school in order to hide their need from others. Changing perceptions of charitable food programs is a major challenge for program coordinators because shame and stigma around taking this sort of assistance is embedded in American culture.

Stigma affects providers of charitable food services as well as program participants. One school chose not to have food drives in order to avoid the negative perceptions that may come from the association between charitable food and poverty. Stigma surrounding food insecurity also affects distribution of information about available resources; in order to remain discreet, some schools choose to inform students and parents about their programs by word of mouth rather than through public announcements or sign-up sheets, as was noted above.

According to a manager of charitable food programs in schools across Maine, issues with stigma are more severe in urban areas like Portland than in rural areas since there are often larger socioeconomic differences in the community. Staff at five schools expressed concern that students do not participate in charitable food programs, such as backpack programs, because they are uncomfortable appearing food insecure. This reluctance exists even at schools where staff do not consider stigma a major issue and makes it difficult for school staff to identify need among the students.

Available Foods

The type and quality of food provided is a major consideration for charitable food programs. Because organizations face financial constraints and are often dependent on donated products, it can be difficult to supply food that is fresh and mindful of all diets. In the interviews, dietary needs or preferences surfaced as a common concern, particularly the availability of halal, vegetarian, and nut-free foods. Only one charitable food organizer said that it is able to easily ensure that offerings meet the dietary needs of the families served. There was some inconsistency in school staff responses regarding whether or not school pantries are providing adequate food options. Some schools indicated that the food that the Locker Project or GSFBS supplies for the school pantries is not always the most nutritious or diverse, while other schools said that a good variety of food is provided for their students. In general, school staff focused on the lack of fresh food, culturally appropriate food, and snacks.

Fresh Food

Staff interviewed at six schools stated that they would like to have more fresh produce in their pantries or backpack programs. Although school staff often want to receive more snack food, GSFBS reported that parents always ask for more produce. This poses a challenge, as many schools do not have the infrastructure to keep fresh produce. Some school staff specifically mentioned that they do not have access to the equipment to provide perishable foods. Items that staff want to see more of included frozen meat, eggs, vegetarian options, nut-free options, and frozen meals, which would also require refrigeration. Due to the current lack of cold storage, the

majority of the food in school pantries is dried or canned goods. Two students mentioned that they did not feel comfortable taking food from the food bank or the Locker Project tables because some of the food offered was nearing or past its expiration date.

Culturally Appropriate Foods

The demand for fresh produce is linked to culturally appropriate food; several participants mentioned that families from Africa and South America are accustomed to eating more fresh food than they are now unable to access. Some kinds of produce, such as plantain and cassava, are entirely unavailable, and one participant hypothesized that this may be due to the fact that much of the produce is from Hannaford. Staff at four schools reported a lack of culturally relevant foods in their charitable food programs, focusing on the importance of having labeled halal foods as well as mentioning the lack of options.

Two of the participants noted that the food provided in the pantries can be unfamiliar and unappealing to new immigrant families, who are accustomed to less-processed food. Fresh produce is a lot more appealing to them but is only sporadically available.

Snack Time

School staff are aware of the challenges of food security as it relates to snack time. Staff at one school explained that a trauma-aware best practice is to have snack time be at the same time every day, so that food insecure children are assured that food is consistently available. The importance of and need for snacks to be made available was mentioned in four school interviews and two support survey responses. Snacks are valued for their ease of consumption by children, and one support survey response highlighted the importance of after-school snacks for those students who participate in after-school sports. Although students would love more snacks, charitable food programs are often financially unable to supply enough snacks to satisfy the demand. Despite receiving constant requests for them, GSFB does not supply single-serve packaged snacks because they are not cost-effective. Instead, GSFB encourages site coordinators and schools to serve fresh produce as a viable, healthier alternative. Schools reported that snacks are still donated and distributed by the nurse or teachers directly to students. Three interviewees mentioned that teachers are buying snacks themselves because of the scarcity of snacks available through charitable food programs and the federal nutrition program. Other schools fundraise or ask community donors for snacks for students.

Building Sustainable Models

While charitable food programs now occupy a central role in PPS food systems, their resilience remains dependent on voluntary support. Two interviewees reported school staff distributing Hannaford gift cards to families in need before holidays and school breaks. Some social workers have found greater success in giving out these gift cards than with other charitable food

programs because they are more easily accepted by students. Though loosely organized and privately funded, the social workers viewed gift cards as easier to manage than the Backpack Program. While only a small proportion of the school staff interviewed reported this practice, it raises questions about the sustainability of current charitable food practices present throughout the PPS system. This section will further explore this concern and look at shortcomings in staffing and institutional support as areas in need of attention when crafting a more comprehensive and sustainable charitable food network.

Staffing

The most significant barrier to the sustainability of charitable food programs is the work required to manage them. Many of the school staff interviewed acknowledged that charitable food programs are necessary to keep their students healthy, but felt that the school staff lacks capacity to properly implement them. Seven of the schools reported that they did not have the time, did not have the staff, or had neither of these necessary components to operate the programs at their full potential. Because the responsibility for charitable food programs is not included in work plans, a school needs to have an interested and dedicated staff member to sustain the program. Five interview subjects noted that it would take a dedicated staff or volunteer to run a school pantry, but they have no one to take charge at this time. Lack of staff and dedicated volunteer power can inhibit the success of charitable food programs. Portland Public Schools staff members reported that pantries and initiatives like the Backpack Program often do not have a designated staff member that oversees them. It was noted that programs that develop from resting on one champion to a broader range of support are more successful than others. Respondents from charitable food organizations also expressed concern that the programs could fail without continuous support.

The beginning stages of planning and implementing pantries are particularly time consuming, but pantries run well once backed by a dedicated person. Good Shepherd Food Bank noted that when school pantries fail it is often due to a dedicated champion or staff member leaving. Three schools reported that they experienced difficulties continuing their charitable food programs once the champion left.

Conclusion

The prevalence of charitable food programs in PPS demonstrates the schools' need for and reliance on these programs to alleviate food insecurity among their students. While the two primary providers of charitable food in PPS, GSF and Locker Project, differ in their modes of operation, the challenges they face in establishing effective and sustainable models are the same. Both schools and the organizational partners often struggle to ensure that the food is reaching the families in need, expand the diversity of food options, and maintain dedicated managers for the programs. Overall, participants emphasized the need to lower barriers to entry, increase awareness of resources, and develop stipends or new positions to encourage program growth and

stability. The diverse ways in which schools respond to these difficulties present the opportunity to enable the success of charitable food in the school. Interviews illustrated the importance of dynamic programs tailored to each school and of support from leaders in the school community.

Federal Nutrition Programs

“You have them at school, you’ve got to feed them every meal you can. That will support the family the rest of the evening and through the weekend.... That’s the way you get the pressure off the food pantries and the parents.”

- Food service staff

Background

The federal nutrition programs provide funding, guidelines, and support to enable schools to provide nutritious food to students throughout the day.

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) reimburses schools so students, regardless of their family income, can receive a nutritious lunch every school day. Nearly every school in the nation (public schools, nonprofit private schools, and residential child care institutions all qualify) participates in the program.

The School Breakfast Program provides children a nutritious morning meal each school day. School breakfast is a critical support for families trying to stretch limited resources. It can provide children a significant portion of the nutrition they need to learn and be healthy.

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) is intended to introduce fresh fruits and vegetables to students as a healthy snack option. Even though it is often just a taste, it increases the child’s consumption of fresh foods and exposes them to a variety of new fruits and vegetables. By introducing more healthful eating habits it is seen as a strategy to decrease childhood obesity.

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a meal service option for schools in low-income areas. Community Eligibility Provision provides schools and districts with large low-income populations the opportunity to serve breakfast and lunch to every student at no student. Instead of collecting household applications, schools are reimbursed based on the Department of Health and Human Services determining the school population’s participation in other means-tested programs like SNAP. Four Portland schools currently qualify for and participate in this “universal” meals option. The 2018-19 school year is the final year of a four-year cycle before eligibility comes up again for review for the 2019-20 school year.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides federal funding to serve nutritious meals and snacks to children and teens at schools, community and recreation centers, Boys and

Girls Clubs, Young Men’s Christian Associations (YMCAs), and other sites that offer educational and enrichment activities after school, on weekends, and during school holidays. After-school meals and snacks are available through the CACFP and the NSLP.

When summer vacation begins, low-income children lose access to the school meals they receive during the academic year. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is intended to fill this gap by providing free meals to children up to age 18 during summer break.

These five federal nutrition programs are administered at the federal level by the USDA, and in Maine through the Department of Education. Reimbursable meals cover a significant portion of the school food service budget.

Portland Public Schools Food Service procures and prepares the meals and snacks these programs subsidize. It uses the tagline “making the healthy choice the easiest choice” and intentionally encourages students to build healthy eating habits. These are some facts about Food Service from its website (n.d.):

- At Least One Vegetarian Option Every Day
- All Grains are Whole Grains
- All Meats are Lean
- Zero Trans Fats
- Limited Saturated Fat & Sodium
- Dairy is Low Fat or Fat Free
- Nothing Fried

In Portland, not all eligible students participate in these nutrition programs even when the food is available and convenient. Competitive foods in school settings include “a la carte” food items sold in the cafeteria, food sold from vending machines, and food sold at school fundraisers. The nutrition standards for competitive foods are not as high as those for reimbursable meals. In Portland, open high school campuses mean students can leave school to purchase food at local businesses which is a popular choice.

When eligible students do not participate in these programs, federal resources that could be invested in providing healthy meals to students go unused. For example, despite all students at Reiche School being eligible to receive free reimbursable breakfast, in January 2018, only 54% of students participated (Maine Department of Education, 2018b). This means that 200 out of 435 students did not access a nutritious school breakfast. At the \$1.75 per meal reimbursement rate, this amounts to \$350 a day or \$61,250 a year in federal funds that could be invested in food

security and good nutrition at Reiche School for breakfast alone (Food and Nutrition Service, 2017b).

This research identified some of the reasons students and families do not access school meals. Some of these are consistent with challenges identified at other schools across the country. Other challenges are specific to Portland.

A summary of some of the federal nutrition programs in the PPS can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Federal Nutrition Programs in Portland Public Schools

	CEP & Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)	% of Free/Reduced Eligible Participation in Breakfast*	% of Free/Reduced Eligible Participation in Lunch*	School Participation Rate Lunch*
Elementary Schools				
East End Community School	✓	83.07%	84.15%	83.91%
Hall Elementary School		71.28%	68.28%	42.98%
Longfellow Elementary School		15.72%	60.83%	26.88%
Lyseth Elementary School		31.33%	74.69%	44.38%
Ocean Ave Elementary School		28.6%	71.22%	46.71%
Peaks Elementary School		15.68%	54.52%	40.79%
Presumpscot Elementary School	✓	82.72%	74%	72.83%
Reiche Elementary School	✓	55.98%	65.82%	65.76%
Riverton Elementary School	✓	59.71%	78.52%	78.61%
Middle Schools				
King Middle School		27.63%	76.93%	59.41%
Lincoln Middle School		42.64%	65.38%	43.69%
Lyman Moore Middle School		91.92%	75.56%	52.28%
High School				

Table 4. Summary of Federal Nutrition Programs in Portland Public Schools

Casco Bay High School		26.03%	51.13%	25.72%
Deering High School		44.67%	54.06%	36.15%
Portland High School		54.46%	57.46%	28.54%
PATHS				
K-12				
Bayside Learning Center				

*Yearly average from 2017-2018 school year

Community Partners

Portland Public Schools Food Service Program provides all the meals and snacks during the school day and at after-school programs. Portland Public Schools and Opportunity Alliance collaborate to provide food for the Summer Meals Program in Portland.

During the interviews, themes that emerged as obstacles to effective school meals programming included participation, stigma, quality, environment, and convenience.

Participation

To qualify for subsidized meals, families have to return an application that is distributed at the beginning of each school year. Not all eligible families return this paperwork, however, and some families do not understand the importance of returning the forms. Others prefer not to participate in school meals despite being income-eligible. School officials recognize and accept that not everyone who can benefit will return the application. Unfortunately, this can have an impact on the school's and the district's eligibility for other resources.

Elementary schools generally have the highest eligibility rates (Maine Department of Education, 2018a). This may be attributable to elementary students' families being more diligent about returning paperwork. As students get older, school meals are less appealing, so families are less likely to return forms. Also, families of older students may have been in the workforce longer and have higher incomes.

Providing universal meals through CEP is effective in addressing food insecurity, but works best when students who do not qualify for free or reduced-price meals also eat. According to one participant, it takes about 60% participation to receive enough federal reimbursement to break even.

Breakfast can be served in the cafeteria or in the classroom. Breakfast in the classroom is a proven strategy to increase student participation in that meal (School Nutrition Association, n.d.; Wixom, N., Walther, C., Urbach, K., & Yussman, S.M., 2018). Logistical challenges have created resistance to this practice, including impacts on instructional time and messes resulting from food in the classroom. Teachers are required to track meals distributed and fill out specific paperwork. When this accounting is not done correctly, food service can lose a significant amount of financial reimbursements. It was suggested that one annual training for teachers could improve student participation and the reimbursement received.

One participant cited online payment options for school lunch programs as an easy way to encourage participation and claimed that this idea had encountered administrative pushback in the past.

Stigma

One participant noted that in many schools, students can choose to either socialize or eat breakfast, leading to the stigma that school meals are for children who do not have food to eat at home. Students with food from outside of school might ridicule those eating school meals. The cost of food also came up as an issue. One of the students surveyed at a middle school was aware of other students not being able to afford school lunch.

There is often a lack of connection for immigrant students with the food that is being served and the groups represented among the staff who serve it.

One of the challenges to increasing participation in school meals among paying students is that their parents may be unwilling to pay for school meals due to their own negative experiences with school food. The students' perception of school food poses a challenge to participation as well. Students reported that school meals were considered dirty or of low quality.

Food Quality

Many of the research participants had thoughts about the quality of school meals. Congress conducts the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) every five years in order to review and improve the school meal programs. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 expired on September 30, 2015, but the programs will continue to operate under the provisions of that bill until Congress passes a new CNR.

This last CNR was implemented with some controversy, as it required significant improvements in nutritional requirements, including reductions in saturated fats, sodium and sugar and increases in whole grains (Confessore, N., 2014). The food industry and school food service staff challenged these changes for a variety of reasons. One concern was that students would not eat the new, healthier foods as their tastes and bodies were conditioned to prefer processed foods.

Schools are still adjusting to this transition, which has been implemented in stages. This context should be kept in mind as we consider the comments from the research participants. Districts have the opportunity to go above the federal and state requirements and establish nutrition standards that are more stringent.

The 2010 CNR requires all school districts to create formal wellness policies that include goals for student health as well as general guidelines and action steps to accomplish these goals. Student nutrition is central in the development and implementation of each wellness policy. Portland Public Schools began reinvigorating Wellness Teams at each school during the 2017-18 school year.

Another important consideration is that PPS Central Kitchen moved to a new location and was updated in 2015 with equipment and design elements to allow for more processing of fresh ingredients. Elementary schools do not have their own production kitchens, and all of the food is prepared at Central Kitchen. Distribution is very efficient. This drives production and the menus. To some, this means school meals have less of a ‘home-cooked’ feeling. This “pre-pack” method of delivering meals to schools results in some meals not reheating well and/or looking less appealing. Portland Public Schools is committed to that method after purchasing the equipment. While the cost of food is consistently rising, the capacity of Central Kitchen to process large amount of vegetables makes it easier to procure food at lower costs. Central Kitchen saves money on facilities and labor because it would be more expensive to have production kitchens at every school.

Student survey results demonstrated that students cared about the quality of food, which was apparent in the demand for better-tasting food. Surveyed students from several schools criticized the quality, taste, and freshness of the food served. Students also mentioned a lack of variety and cultural diversity in school meals. Some observed that meals do not reflect the preferences of the changing student demographic, including dietary needs and alternatives for those with allergies. In the survey, 33 students suggested that making lunch more culturally diverse, tasty, and healthy would increase student participation.

Students reported seeing food insecurity during school and mentioned that the quality of the food deterred some students from eating despite not having packed meals. Students noticed other students eating unhealthy food. One hypothesized that students eat unhealthy food because they are not able to afford healthier options. One participant observed the low-quality food, or lack of food, some students brought from home and speculated that school lunches were the best meal of the day for these students. Concern was also expressed about quantity, with some students not getting enough food with lunch. Students need more access to fresh fruits and vegetables, especially in winter.

Participants from one school criticized the lack of nutritional value of school breakfasts, mentioning that there was a lack of protein, excess sugar, and lower quality of food than in the

past. Food Service expressed a desire to do hot breakfast in the classroom but has limited capacity to implement a program. There are not enough staff members to safely serve hot breakfast and a lack of equipment. Deering and Portland High both have universal breakfast in the cafeteria.

Though the FFVP provides a small amount of additional nutrients to each student's diet, its most significant impact is to introduce new fruits and vegetables in the classroom. By eating these foods alongside students in a more intimate setting, teachers help students to feel more comfortable and encouraged to try new foods. "Let's Go" was reported to provide educational materials to teachers, enabling them to better fill this role for their students.

Environment and Convenience

A common complaint is that lunch periods are too short and students do not have enough time to eat. Simultaneously, teachers and others accountable for student educational outcomes are not able to compromise the limited instruction time in the school day to extend meal periods. Participants in a student focus group expressed a desire for a longer lunch period. Others suggested that instead of simply lengthening the lunch period, schools could extend the amount of time that food is available during that period to increase access for students.

Students expressed general frustration at the disorganization typical of lunch lines. One student said that it was impossible to know what food was being served without waiting in line. There were requests for a posted menu, better communication, and better signage regarding what food was being served and where. One school sets up the salad bar in the hallway, which is also where the food line is, which discourages many students from standing in line to eat the fresh vegetables. One student requested more space and more tables for eating lunch.

Students can leave meal items they do not want to eat at share tables. Different schools manage this leftover collection process in different ways. Regulations related to these tables can be unclear to staff and students and may appear arbitrary.

Closed, rather than open, high school campuses would result in more students participating in school food service.

A student focus group with respondents from both Portland High School and Casco Bay High School detailed racial segregation in the cafeterias.

Beyond the School Day

All Portland Schools except for Longfellow, Lyseth, and Peaks Island Elementary provide after-school snacks.

In 2015, Portland Schools piloted an after-school hot supper program reimbursed by CACFP. Meals were served at East End, Presumpscot, Reiche, and Riverton Schools, as well as the YMCA and Riverton Boys and Girls Club. The reimbursements did not cover the costs at the time. More participation is one strategy to cover costs for after-school meals. In September 2018, PPS food service will institute a CACFP super snack program at Rowe (formerly Hall) and Ocean Avenue schools, followed by East End, Presumpscot, Reiche, and Riverton schools in October in collaboration with the Learning Works program. The Portland Recreation Division has declined participation in after-school meals.

When school lets out for summer vacation, Portland students can access breakfast and lunch at numerous sites around the community through the SFSP. Portland Public Schools and Opportunity Alliance sponsor 15 open meal sites, where any child through 18 years of age can receive a meal. They also serve students enrolled in summer school, camps, and recreation programs. During the summer of 2017, SFSP served the equivalent of 20% of the children eligible for free or reduced-price meals during the school year, an increase from 15% served in 2012. One interviewee noted that the SFSP in Portland currently costs slightly more than the reimbursement income. Higher participation levels are required for the program to receive enough meal reimbursement to break even.

It was also noted that any site that serves as an SFSP site qualifies to serve food after school and be reimbursed by CACFP. These meals can also be served during weekends, school vacations, snow days, etc.

Local Food

Procurement of fresh food from local sources has been a priority for past school boards and administrations. The Portland School Board has allocated as much as \$600,000 in recent budgets toward subsidizing purchase of locally grown and processed foods. Portland Public Schools peaked at about 37% local of the food procured during the 2014-15 school year.

Scratch cooking, or making food from non-commercially processed products, is a major challenge for food services. It takes more time, equipment, and buy-in from staff. It can also decrease food costs and increase nutritional content compared to more processed foods. Local procurement of fresh food means working with numerous small and medium-scale farmers, rather than one centralized distributor. This is a challenge because it adds significantly more administrative labor to complete paperwork from the additional vendors. As local food is generally more expensive than similar products grown elsewhere, some people see local food procurement as conflicting with being fiscally responsible.

School Gardens

“[Garden class] gave real life experience in a local garden that they can access anytime. Children take more away when learning about these topics, when they then get to get their hands dirty and practice what they are learning.”

-Teacher

Background

School gardens are vibrant, outdoor educational spaces that can connect to any curriculum topic, engage students in nutrition education, expose them to the natural world, teach them how to grow their own food, and provide fresh produce for school communities to eat. In Portland, 11 schools have a garden on site. These gardens function in a variety of ways; some are incorporated into the curriculum for the whole school, while others are used inconsistently by a teacher and small group of students when there is interest. Of the surveyed schools, eight of the 10 elementary schools, two of the three middle schools, and one of the four high schools have a garden.

Portland Arts and Technical High School (PATHS) has a unique model and incorporates the only district-funded teaching position focused on garden for the Landscapes and Garden program. This program is open for all high school students in the district but is designated as a “supportive program,” which seems to discourage participation from more higher functioning students in the district.

Thirteen respondents electronically reported on the garden program structure at their school. Eight schools have an active food-producing garden in which at least some students are involved. Eight participants representing six gardens were interviewed about school gardens: four school staff/teachers, three parents, and three community partners (some fulfill multiple roles).

Each school garden is unique in its engagement and operations. Students in different grades engage in different ways. Some garden programs are directly related to education during the school day, while others operate as extracurricular opportunities, such as a club. At least six schools employ harvest celebrations to engage the whole student body in their gardens. Five programs reported that students see the garden produce cooked and served in school at least once during the year.

Out of the 11 schools that have some sort of garden space, six incorporate the garden into in-school education. Four of the schools hire help through parent fundraising, typically employing a FoodCorps member at a subsidized rate that does not reflect the true cost of garden-based education. One school reported that teachers in all grades effectively incorporated the garden into their lessons. One school established a program with dedicated staff funded by the district. Expeditionary schools, such as King Middle School, sometimes base their expedition on food.

This year King incorporated school gardens and other food-based learning resources, even though the school does not have its own garden, by utilizing community partner resources and public garden space with Cultivating Community.

A summary of school gardens in the PPS can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of School Gardens in Portland Public Schools

	School Staff Led (Salary)	Cultivating Community/ FoodCorps Led (Stipend)	Parent/ Teacher Led (Volunteer)	In school curriculum integration
Elementary Schools				
East End Community School		✓**		✓
Hall Elementary School		✓**		✓
Longfellow Elementary School			✓	✓
Lyseth Elementary School			✓**	✓
Ocean Ave Elementary School			✓	
Peaks Elementary School			✓	
Presumpscot Elementary School				
Reiche Elementary School			✓**	✓
Riverton Elementary School		✓**		✓
Middle Schools				
King Middle School				
Lincoln Middle School			✓***	✓
Lyman Moore Middle School			✓***	
High School				
Casco Bay High School		✓*		

Table 5. Summary of School Gardens in Portland Public Schools

Deering High School		✓*		
Portland High School		✓*		
PATHS	✓	✓*		✓
K-12				
Bayside Learning Center		✓*		

*Out-of-school opportunity

**Full vegetable garden that supports in-class tasting, cafeteria, and school pantries

*** One-teacher initiative

Organizational Partners

Most school gardens are run by parent and teacher volunteers. Cultivating Community is the main organizational partner for school garden education in Portland. Cultivating Community is a local nonprofit food access organization that hosts two FoodCorps members and teaches cooking, nutrition, and gardening classes (Cultivating Community, n.d.). FoodCorps and Cultivating Community work closely to provide garden-based education to certain grades in three elementary schools. Cultivating Community collects teacher feedback on school garden programming in the district. An analysis of data from a survey of 20 teachers conducted during the 2017-18 school year has been incorporated into our results and identified as Cultivating Community data.

Portland Trails and the School Ground Greening Coalition have also supported schools in establishing outdoor learning spaces and school garden programs. Portland Trails is a nonprofit urban land trust that assists schools in building outdoor educational greenspaces. The School Ground Greening Coalition no longer exists for local school garden support but is cited as the reason so many schools were able to establish programs run by parents and teachers. Since 2003 the School Ground Greening Coalition provided design, construction and logistical support for schools to bring nature to their campuses, including school gardens. They also offered mini-grants, coordinated site leaders, hosted community design charrettes, teacher workshops and trainings, and supported school garden networks and curriculum development in Portland. By requiring a school "team" of staff, students, parents and administrators to participate in projects, they encouraged many schools to establish ongoing programs run by parents and teachers.

Recognized Educational Successes

The Portland Art and Technology High School garden program reported great success in inspiring students to learn about how food is grown. Throughout the district, teachers see the outdoor classroom as a tool for leveling the educational playing field for kids of many different abilities and increasing confidence in school. Many teachers work to connect garden lessons to state learning standards. One vice principal noted that five out of 20 questions on a standardized test contained content about plants and observed that students who had received in-depth garden education two years before were able to reason effectively from their past experiences to answer the questions.

The Cultivating Community data provide evidence that the outdoor, hands-on model bolsters education. Fourteen teachers said that having a hands-on outdoor learning space is one of the most valuable assets of garden-based education, while two explained that students more consistently retain content absorbed through experiential learning in the garden. Multiple interview participants stated that year-round programming is the most rewarding for students because they see that delicious food is the result of their hard work.

Teachers also credit hands-on garden education for improvements in student behavior. Specifically, teachers note that a garden classroom has a positive impact on students' ability to focus and on the engagement of students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). School garden programs provide socially and academically beneficial learning experiences for kids with a wide range of special needs.

Recognized Health and Environment Successes

Participants credit hands-on garden education with influencing kids to eat more vegetables. Teachers reported that students gain a greater appreciation of produce and are more likely to eat new vegetables in school. Staff noted that students are "good vegetable eaters" during lunch at schools that incorporate in-depth garden and nutrition education. Parents said their children are more likely to ask them to buy a vegetable at the grocery store. One teacher reported that her students were increasingly willing to try snacks provided by the FFVP when they engaged with a garden and cooking curriculum all year. Locker Project distributors reported that students were more excited to take produce home if it came from their school garden. Four participants mentioned that garden-based education increased students' understanding and appreciation for the natural environment and where food comes from.

In the Cultivating Community data, teachers found the garden to be an important opportunity for students who do not get to experience the outdoors or eat healthy foods, often due to lack of resources. Fourteen teachers noted how valuable it is for students to learn outside. Eleven teachers said that trying new foods is a very positive experience, and two noted a particular impact on students who had not had the opportunity to try many fresh foods before. Teachers

also saw importance in educating all students about how food is grown and what grows in Maine. Five teachers thought it was valuable that school gardens provided fresh food in the summer for families to harvest. Nine teachers stated that garden-based education created a valuable connection between their students and a larger community.

Curriculum and Teaching Challenges

Participants noted that school gardens do not feel sustainable; teachers often lack support for integrating it into the curriculum because of competition with testing and other busy parts of the school day. In the absence of this support, it is often too overwhelming for teachers to take on the responsibility of linking school to garden content to their educational goals. In this context, asking teachers to use the garden for teaching is an additional burden.

Two participants said that teachers would be more accepting of garden-based education if it were part of the curriculum. Four participants in the garden focus group mentioned that their school is trying to integrate gardening into the curriculum. Some are working to connect the garden to other subjects such as science, math, and art. If provided by the school or district, a garden curriculum could offer teachers an opportunity for professional development credit. Participants expressed a desire for deeper integration between schools and their gardens, which would require a commitment from parents, teachers, and the administration alike.

Cultivating Community's research shows that a curriculum connection is essential to ensuring that garden-based education is sustainable and ingrained in the district. Teachers who incorporate garden-based education into their school day said the curriculum connection is one of the greatest values. When asked, teachers who did not participate in garden-based education said it was because it did not fit into their curriculum or that they would first need to establish curriculum connections. Multiple teachers reported that time constraints kept them from using the garden or from connecting it to their curriculum.

Funding Challenges

One participant stated that raising funds is the biggest challenge to starting and running a garden program. School gardens struggle with funding because the district does not support them as core programming, and therefore there is no sustainable funding from taxpayers. School garden programs rely on grants or fundraisers and may end up competing for resources with other school gardens. Because there is a finite amount of money in the community, advocates worry that they are competing against each other for financial sustainability.

Funding is most needed to pay for staff to manage and integrate garden-based education. Supplies are also needed and often paid for through small fundraisers and donations. One respondent mentioned that schools do not pay for any of the gardens despite wanting and asking

for more robust programming. Seed sales bring in some money, but the proceeds are small, and it usually falls on parent volunteers or teachers putting in extra time to coordinate the sales.

The Portland Arts and Technology High School garden is an example of a high-resource program that works well: it has a budget, a heated greenhouse, ample outdoor space, a productive orchard, and dedicated staff to teach and maintain grounds.

Garden Care Challenges

Summer garden maintenance is another major challenge. Many people are unavailable during the summer, so it can be difficult to find someone to water, harvest, and care for the gardens.

Summer is an excellent time for learning and harvesting. Gardens that were successful in engaging families and students all summer long required a coordinator to contact families, orient them to the garden, manage volunteers, and to communicate with any summer schools or camps that are in the school building over the summer. Only two schools reported having this capacity, which was provided by Cultivating Community and FoodCorps. Two schools with active parent groups dedicated to the school garden reported capacity to care for vegetables throughout the summer.

Three school garden programs offered best practices for summer care: assign small sections of garden to parents to care for or provide a schedule to parents for the 12 weeks of summer; sign families up for a whole week at a time; meet on Mondays to orient parents for their assigned week; host an end-of-summer potluck for summer volunteers; and talk about school gardens in a newsletter leading up to summer.

Other challenges to maintaining a garden space include a lack of adequate sunlight, an absence of convenient outdoor water sources, vandalism, and dog waste.

School Garden Culture

Many participants believe garden-based education is undervalued. There is a general desire for the district to explicitly support garden-based education and for Portland's Parks and Recreation Department to support these spaces by designating a budget line for school gardens.

Garden programs rely heavily on parent volunteer involvement. It is difficult to get enough families involved, particularly after elementary school. When students graduate, the school loses those champions and organizers. Since these programs are not institutionalized and are reliant on individuals for support, administrators and teachers cycling through cause considerable instability.

A major challenge for partner organizations that provide garden programming is effectively interacting with the schools, gaining commitment, and ensuring adequate student and staff

involvement. One participant framed institutionalizing as a means for programs to improve their efficiency and consistency year-to-year. Paid positions were cited frequently as a way for school gardens to be further institutionalized. School garden interview participants agreed that there should be a statewide policy that every school have a garden.

Schools with strong school garden culture have teachers, parents, and the administration on board. Across the district, parent-teacher organizations fundraise specifically for garden programs, and in some cases have a group such as a Green Team dedicated to garden funding. A few schools hired an educator who can specialize in garden-based education. Some schools have teachers who are garden enthusiasts and are able to work this into their teaching methods. This is not always equitable for students in the school as a whole, however, as other students in the same grade may not get to share this experience. School newsletters and local communications efforts were reported as effective outreach options for school gardening programs.

Food Security and School Gardens

School gardens often produce a surplus of fresh vegetables that can support food security when proper distribution systems are in place. Three of the school gardens grow food for their school's meals and pantries. In middle schools, there is student interest in donating the produce grown to the Locker Project. Some school gardens donate a portion of their produce to the school salad bar when available.

Some school garden volunteers are uncertain how to get food-insecure families involved in the school gardens to receive the food. It was noted that many low-income families live near schools, but it is a challenge to know how to connect them with the garden over the summer, which could benefit both the gardens and families. Immigrant families in particular were identified as desiring more fresh produce, and a school garden is a great way to meet that need.

Most PPS campuses are already using some amount of green space for learning objectives. The main obstacles are the inconsistency in programming and lack of compensation and support for leaders at each school to truly integrate, tend to, and engage all students in how food grows, how this affects their lives and well-being, and how it is a concrete application of all the subject matter they are learning inside the classroom. PPS schools are far along with needed infrastructure to have effective school gardens in at least 50% of the schools. To move forward, we need to expand these resources to all schools, and put more value on and support toward trained educational integration and paid staff to adequately manage garden space and direct fresh, healthy vegetables that are produced to the most vulnerable in our school communities.

Nutrition Education

“[Nutrition education] is fun. When kids see our faces, they feel happy and excited. That is a positive relationship that they are building to healthy foods.”

- Nutrition Educator

Background

Based on the initial mapping, survey responses from principals, and interviews with five nutrition educators, the Task Force learned that organizational partners are performing most of the nutrition education occurring at PPS. A staff member explained that this content used to be taught in Family and Consumer Science classes, but is now typically viewed as supplementary or enrichment programming. The organizational partners performing this work are mainly nonprofits and must fulfill certain grant requirements. This accountability dictates the schools and grades that receive services. Most nutrition programming in the district targets kindergarten through second grade in schools in which at least 40% of students come from low-income families. Additionally, nutrition education is often linked to a “champion,” or motivated individual who coordinates with the organizational partners to bring these resources to the school. Therefore, these educational opportunities are unique to each school environment and are shaped by the capacity of the champion taking on this additional labor. Availability is limited by both individual capacity and by the capacity of outside partners whose commitment fluctuates based on their funding and grant requirements.

A summary of nutrition education in the PPS can be found in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of Nutrition Education in Portland Public Schools

Responsible for Nutrition Education in School:	School-run	FoodCorps/ Cultivating Community	SNAP-Ed	Cooking Matters	EFNEP
Elementary Schools					
East End Community School		✓	✓		
Hall Elementary School	✓	✓	✓		
Longfellow Elementary					
Lyseth Elementary School		✓*			

Table 6. Summary of Nutrition Education in Portland Public Schools

Ocean Ave Elementary School	✓		✓		
Peaks Elementary School	✓				
Presumpscot Elementary School			✓		
Reiche Elementary School			✓		
Riverton Elementary School	✓	✓	✓		
Middle Schools					
King Middle School	✓			✓	
Lincoln Middle School				✓	
Lyman Moore Middle School	✓				
High School					
Casco Bay High School	✓	✓			✓
Deering High School		✓		✓	
Portland High School		✓			
PATHS	✓				
K-12					
Bayside Learning Center					

*Taste test only

Organizational Partners

FoodCorps, a national nonprofit that focuses on connecting kids to healthy food in schools, receives grant funding from Americorps to place corps members in high-need schools.

Cultivating Community is a local nonprofit food access organization that hosts two FoodCorps

members each year and offers cooking, nutrition, and gardening classes (Cultivating Community, n.d.). FoodCorps and Cultivating Community work closely to provide nutrition education to certain grades in three Portland elementary schools and offer taste tests at the same three plus an additional fourth elementary school. Taste tests were reported to be an effective strategy for generating school-wide interest in trying new and healthy foods. Cultivating Community also convenes students from four high schools for its Culinary Crew and Youth Leadership Intensive afterschool programming.

SNAP-Ed is a USDA program that teaches people who are using or eligible for SNAP about good nutrition and how to stretch their food dollars. Respondents reported that SNAP-Ed is teaching the PABS (Pick a Better Snack) curriculum to 21 classrooms in four elementary schools, providing the Nutrition to Grow On program at one Rise and Shine site, and partnering with LearningWorks in four after-school programs. The University of New England identifies curricula that SNAP-Ed approved for use in its classrooms.

Share our Strength's Cooking Matters is a national program hosted in Maine by Good Shepherd Food Bank and is active at two middle schools and one high school. When requested, Cooking Matters assists schools in teaching the curriculum with their own staff rather than through outside providers.

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension oversees the federal Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) through its Eat Well curriculum, which is active in one high school and offers nutrition education at some summer meal (SFSP) sites. Its 4-H Youth Development Program offers robust Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics content at many SFSP locations. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension also offers support to many school gardens through the Master Gardeners program.

Participants noted that Portland has more resources and nutrition education available than many other parts of the state. For more detailed reporting on nutrition education at each school, refer to the Summary of Nutrition Education in PPS (Table 6), the PPS assessment map (Appendix C), or the individual school reports (Appendix D).

Eligibility

Each of the partner organizations working in PPS has different policies regarding which students and demographic groups they target. All prioritize “high-needs” areas, which often leaves vulnerable populations that are below the 50% income eligibility cut-off without access to the same resources. FoodCorps and SNAP-Ed serve schools where at least 50% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program offered through the University of Maine Cooperative Extension serves schools where at least 40% of students are eligible. Other partner organizations have slightly more flexibility in who they are able to serve. Cultivating Community's full-time staff members prioritize serving low-

and middle-resource schools and dedicate up to 25% of their time to high-resource schools, as needed. Cooking Matters serves low-income people, and participation at schools is entirely driven by interest from the school or after-school program champion.

Curriculum

The district currently does not have a standard nutrition education curriculum. Less than half of schools surveyed, seven out of 16, reported that nutrition education is part of the curriculum to some extent. Across these schools, the amount of content varied from one unit in one class to a comprehensive cross-disciplinary approach to learning about food, nutrition, and cooking.

The nutrition education curriculum taught in PPS derives from a number of sources including textbooks, the University of New England, content from other school districts or service networks, and content created by partner organizations. The curriculum offered by partners varies in scope and content based on grant requirements and each nonprofit's policy.

Nutrition educators described the students' excitement to participate in this type of interactive learning. It was noted that the sensory engagement helps build confidence and skills such as teamwork, especially when many students are initially unable to identify fruits and vegetables. One instructor mentioned that many high school students have never touched a knife, opened a can, and are unable to identify pantry staples like garlic. Nutrition education programming can foster behavior change related to food, encourage children to try new foods, and demonstrate inspiring ways that they could incorporate more healthy foods into their diet.

Budgets and Finance

In order to fulfill grant requirements, nutrition programs need to reach a certain number of children from the same demographic pool. This raised concerns that some students might be hearing the same information repeatedly while others are not hearing the information at all. Organizational partners reported that the concentration of resources in kindergarten through second grade is due to third through fifth grade being testing years, with school staff arguing that the higher grades lack time for enrichment programs such as nutrition education. One participant noted that children start to become autonomous consumers in middle school, making this a powerful time to influence their decision-making regarding food. Currently, nutrition education for middle schoolers in the district is limited.

In discussions about charging schools a fee for nutrition education, it was argued that fees keep schools more accountable but can also make programming less accessible. FoodCorps requires schools to pay a fee for its nutrition education programs, which participants noted encourages teachers to maintain a strong commitment to the partner organization. When school budgets are tight, however, if supplementary activities that cost money are not identified as a main priority, they often fall to the wayside.

Food Access

Cooking Matters was cited as a good opportunity to provide nutrition education in tandem with the support students receive through charitable food programs. Students can use the recipes they learn during Cooking Matters to make food that they receive in the backpack programs or from a school pantry. Additionally, students are sometimes given groceries to take home so they can replicate recipes made in class. It was noted that in most nutrition programming, food is made available to all students to take home, not just those experiencing food insecurity. As a result, students in need receive food without being targeted, which helps to reduce stigma. Students develop greater skills and knowledge about what they might do to maximize the nutritional value of the charitable food they receive.

Capacity

Cooking Matters reported that its class is open to any student who expresses interest and quickly reaches capacity. This high demand leaves out many of those who could benefit most. With enough interested “champions,” Cooking Matters would be able to provide materials and curriculum to meet demand in each school. The largest barrier is that “champions” and other educators are often tasked beyond their capacity as it is, and do not have the time or energy to run an additional program. Cooking Matters is often successful because it offers incentives such as food and money to participants. The curriculum is free and comes with a stipend to cover grocery expenses. As previously stated in the charitable foods section, program sponsor Good Shepherd Food Bank said it would benefit from the ability to provide a stipend to the instructors implementing the programming, which it currently cannot supply.

Two nutrition educators said they had difficulty contacting schools. Issues included not knowing who to talk to, staff turnover, and contacts not responding in a timely manner (which would often cause them to be behind schedule). Finding the correct person to talk to within the school is often challenging for partner organizations that may not be familiar with the capacity and interest of teachers and administrators. Within the schools, it can be hard for teachers to access nutrition education resources. It was noted that some teachers believe they are not ‘allowed’ to bring these resources into their classrooms, while others might be unaware of which service providers to contact. Multiple participants brought up the idea of having one person who would oversee all of the nutrition education in the district. This coordinator could serve as the main contact person and facilitate communication between school champions and partner organizations.

Infrastructure

Staff at one school identified a need to update and expand the kitchen facilities to improve teaching and serve more students. Nutrition educators also identified a functioning kitchen as an important element for nutrition education programs. In particular, they identified basic needs as running water, a stove-top and oven, and adequate counter space for a class of eight to 23 people.

Participants asked that if schools have community kitchen spaces, that those be prioritized for nutrition education classes. If they have to travel elsewhere for these amenities, students often leave the class and do not complete the programming. Inadequate infrastructure was repeatedly noted as a barrier to teaching nutrition education effectively.

Transportation arose as a major reason that students do not attend after-school nutrition education, such as Cooking Matters. Students are unable to participate if they have no way to get home after the class. A similar issue arose during our conversations regarding charitable food programs. To address that issue, some schools were using volunteers to deliver food to students' homes and then GSFNB would reimburse the volunteers with gas cards. A volunteer-based system might be one solution to the transportation barrier for after-school nutrition education as well.

Two nutrition educators described the cafeteria as a great place for food education experiences. They highlighted how the cafeteria can expose all of the students in the school to new, healthy foods through activities like taste tests. Positive public displays encourage children to try new foods at the salad bar and in the lunch line. Multiple participants noted that this strategy is even more effective when adults model healthy choices and demonstrate excitement when trying new foods.

There is tremendous diversity in the content and accessibility of nutrition education in the PPS district. Primarily the domain of outside organizational partners, what critical information the students receive is often determined by the capacity of these partners and the champions that work closely with them to bring in these resources. While there is excellent nutrition education occurring in the district, it is often limited to certain grades and schools as dictated by grant requirements from the partner organizations. Amid calls for someone to oversee and coordinate nutrition education in the district, there was also strong recommendations to encourage a culture of promoting it in the schools through explicit connections to curriculum and vocal support by leaders.

Sustainable Practices

“King Middle School went from 14 to two bags [of trash] each day. An 80% decrease. That’s what’s possible.”

-Sustainability Advocate

Background

During the 2017-18 school year, PPS Food Services used 21% of its budget to purchase locally from Bracketts, Oakhurst, Amato's, Fairwinds Farm, Crown of Maine, and Liberation Farms. In 2015, when Central Kitchen employed a Local Food Specialist, local food purchasing peaked at over 35% of the budget.

The benefits of buying local food are plentiful. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the global food system accounts for one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, in part due to extensive shipping and travel (Shindelar, 2015). In the industrial food system, produce travels an average of 1,518 miles before reaching its destination. In a local food system, travel averages 44.6 miles. Low mileage from local farms to local plates reduces the amount of carbon emissions from transport by more than 400% (Shindelar, 2015). Furthermore, due to the shorter transport times, local food is typically more nutrient dense. According to Food and Technology Specialist Diane M. Barrett, PhD, “Most fruits and vegetables... once separated from their source of nutrients (tree, plant, or vine) undergo higher rates of respiration, resulting in moisture loss, quality and nutrient degradation, and potential microbial spoilage” (2007). Because it does not travel as far, local food can be utilized soon after picking and as a result retains more of its nutritional benefits than produce from further away.

Aside from the health benefits to both our bodies and the environment, local food purchasing benefits the local economy, and community members see the direct benefit of their spending. A 2011 study by the Maine Center for Economic Policy (MECEP) found that “every \$100 spent at locally owned businesses generates an additional \$58 in local impact. By comparison, \$100 spent at a representative national chain store generates \$33 in local impact. Stated differently, MECEP found that money spent at local businesses generates as much as a 76% greater return to the local economy than money spent at national chains” (Martin & Patel, 2011). Furthermore, the continuous cash flow in the local economy creates more jobs. Maine Center for Economic Policy estimates that “shifting 10% of consumer spending in Cumberland County from national chains to locally owned businesses would result in an additional \$127 million in economic activity with 874 new jobs generating over \$35 million in wages” (Martin & Patel, 2011).

There is much debate about what “local” really means. Portland Public Schools Food Service defines local food as any food product produced, manufactured, or grown within a 275-mile radius of Portland. The 275-mile limit was a specific choice that ensures Aroostook potatoes can be purchased. The choice means that muffins baked in Boston, Massachusetts, also count as local food purchases.

All Portland public schools have in-cafeteria composting, and all schools utilize share tables and baskets to reduce food waste. Portland Public Schools recycling programs have varied greatly in recent history. In the 1990s, some schools had plastic recycling campaigns that gradually faded out, to return in the last few years when a Sustainability Policy was adopted. The policy states that one of the goals of PPS’ environmental impact is to “minimize the amount of waste sent to landfills and maximize the amount of waste, including food waste, that gets recycled while striving for zero waste” (“Sustainability Policy,” 2012). There was no organic matter recycling at PPS until 2012 when We Compost It! partnered with a coalition of stakeholders to introduce student composting districtwide following the adoption of the policy. Composting and the introduction of compostable paper trays instead of the traditional styrofoam reduced the amount of non-recyclable waste leaving each school each day by at least 80%. Currently, each school is

supplied with three composting totes. Ten schools were reported to have “good to very good participation” with little contamination and full totes ready for pick up. Three schools were categorized as having “average participation,” meaning they typically have one full tote ready for pickup. Finally, two schools had very little participation this school year; both were high schools, and low participation may reflect the open campus lunch policy more than a lack of interest in composting.

A summary of sustainable practices in the PPS can be found in Table 7.

Table 7. Summary of Sustainable Practices in Portland Public Schools

	In-Cafeteria Composting Participation	Share Tables
Elementary Schools		
East End Community School	Average	✓
Hall Elementary School	Very Good	✓
Longfellow Elementary School	Average	✓
Lyseth Elementary School	Good	✓
Ocean Ave Elementary School	Very Good	✓
Peaks Elementary School	Good	✓
Presumpscot Elementary School	Very good	✓
Reiche Elementary School	Very Good	✓
Riverton Elementary School	Good	✓
Middle Schools		
King Middle School	Good	✓
Lincoln Middle School	Good	✓
Lyman Moore Middle School	Average	✓
High School		

Table 7. Summary of Sustainable Practices in Portland Public Schools

Casco Bay High School	Below Average	✓
Deering High School	Good	✓
Portland High School	None	✓
PATHS	None	<i>Not reported</i>
K-12		
Bayside Learning Center	<i>Not reported</i>	<i>Not reported</i>

Local Foods

Participants involved with food procurement note that sourcing up to 5% locally is an easy goal, as Oakhurst milk is a cost-efficient product to source locally. One participant noted difficulty in increasing that percentage unless the district generates revenue or the school budget provides a separate line item. The state of Maine provides a very small subsidy for schools to purchase local food. Federal reimbursements are a straight per meal cost no matter the labor, ingredient and other expenses. In 2014-15, a ‘Farm to School’ grant funded a Local Foods Manager that operated out of Central Kitchen. He managed local food procurement, handling and processing, which made it much easier to integrate local food into student meals.

Although serving local food has many benefits, it is often costlier than buying the same item and quantity from a large supplier. For many years, the School Board had provided an operating subsidy intended for local procurement. It became difficult to maintain that line item, as Central Office wanted the department to be more self-sustaining. In the absence of clear demand for local foods from the board or from the students, the 2017-18 local food purchasing dropped to 21% of the budget after peaking at 37% in 2015.

Aside from the increased cost associated with purchasing from smaller farmers, there can be unforeseen challenges associated with local purchases. For example, the menu is developed months in advance. If a local farmer experiences crop failure and cannot supply the product to PPS on time, the menu has to change, which is a logistical challenge for both preparing the food and communicating with families about the change. Another major challenge is managing the farm-to-school relationships. Portland Public Schools Food Service can order everything from one supplier if not buying locally, and the increased number of invoices and work necessary to source locally can exceed the staff’s capacity.

Furthermore, each local ingredient requires its own standard operating procedure (SOP). Central Kitchen successfully partnered with University of Maine Cooperative Extension to determine

safe ways to make and store large batches for the freezer. Staff worked with a food safety expert to develop SOPs for different types of produce. Because it requires extra time and equipment, and buy-in from staff, processing local food is also a major challenge.

Another challenge is student preference and investment. Even when less-processed local food is available, students sometimes choose the more-processed option. Favorite foods for students can be challenging for staff. For example, not only are smoothies difficult to produce and transport, but they are also messy once they reach the school. Janitors were upset that they would spill on the floor. Students were not particularly invested in “Farm Fresh Days,” indicating a potential disconnect between students and food preparation.

Composting and Recycling

According to stakeholders, school officials were initially reluctant to introduce composting at lunch. Many administrators viewed the practice as “one more thing” to add to their teachers’ list of responsibilities and did not want to overwhelm staff members. But PPS students as young as preschool age are aware of the positive environmental benefits a recycling program can bring about. When asked, “Is it important to compost, recycle and pick up trash? Why or why not?” 69 middle-school students answered “Yes”; one student answered “Do not know”; and zero students answered “No.” Of those who answered “Yes,” more than half noted composting is good for the environment.

Through student focus groups, it became apparent that while students believe recycling practices are important, the current lunchroom orientation is discouraging student involvement. Students noted that if they are in a hurry, they are less likely to separate their leftover food and recycling due to long lines. They suggested bringing in another compost station to alleviate the long lines and wait time. Furthermore, high school students remarked that if stationed near the waste receptacles, a strict staff member would be able to enforce composting and recycling rules. Indeed, monitoring participation and tracking progress over time are key strategies for keeping the program robust and sustainable in the long term.

Stakeholders found that, aside from source reduction, share tables were the best way to reduce food waste before getting to the compost stage. According to school surveys, all of the schools have share tables or baskets. Unopened milk, fruit with peels, and snacks with packaging can be donated to the share table, and students can pick up a snack if they are hungry throughout the day. This practice can also make more food available to students who may be hungry throughout the day, not just at traditional meal times. While not currently allowed in food service policies, participants recommended that policies be amended so that share table items could be distributed by the school nurse, used for in-classroom snacks, and distributed through backpack programs.

Central Kitchen has struggled striking a balance with local food and the budget. The majority of Portland Public Schools are participating in waste reduction strategies through composting and

share tables. However, these initiatives could be further supported throughout the school year to become strong community culture.

Recommendations, Implementation, and Evaluation

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, 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 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 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 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

Implementation

The Task Force is honored and humbled to be offering this report and our findings. We would like to emphasize that those working within the schools are the experts on their unique communities. Therefore, our recommendation for implementation is that each school in the district take individual ownership of the process of building a comprehensive and holistic food security strategic plan, using this report as a starting point. The Task Force is available to each school for further consultation and guidance on integrating the recommendations listed above and creating an individualized strategic plan relevant to that school.

We recognize the wonderful work happening in each school and appreciate the opportunity to work with members of the school community to find ways to bolster and enhance what is already being done. Since building food security is a process, the Task Force would like to encourage the Wellness Team at each school to take this on as a priority. This could look different in each school, but one model would be to have at least one designated “food security champion” on each Wellness Team who would work closely with the charitable food program managers, federal nutrition programs staff, school garden staff, nutrition educators, and Green Teams at their school.

The Task Force would like to mirror the recommendation for the school Wellness Team model at the district level and encourage a sitting member of the PPS District's Wellness Committee to focus on food security. We would like to see consensus among Wellness Committee members on which indicators will provide the framework for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the district's food security strategic plan.

We encourage partner organizations to spearhead recommendations that apply to their work and self-organize to increase communication among organizations. We also encourage Portland Food Council's Policy Committee to identify and advocate for district, municipal, and state legislation that bolsters food security.

If you or your school would like the Task Force's assistance to create a food security strategic plan, please contact the Cumberland County Food Security Council (info@ccfoodsecurity.org) for assistance. For more information on the Task Force, please visit www.ccfoodsecurity.org.

Evaluation

To measure the success of the individual and district food security strategic plans, the Task Force strongly recommends ongoing monitoring and evaluation. To inform the evaluations, and to provide more accurate information about the district's accomplishments, consistent and reliable monitoring should occur. We recommend that the District Wellness Committee determine which indicators to prioritize. Where appropriate, formative and process evaluations should occur to better understand how the implementation of these recommendations affects food security in the PPS student body. The PPS district is poised to be a leader in addressing food security in a school system holistically. With substantive monitoring and evaluation in place, the Task Force foresees the district having the capacity to report on its experience. By publishing, PPS will create the opportunity for other schools to learn from and replicate the district's good work.

Conclusion

Every day that passes—every meal that is unavailable or that is filled with unhealthy calories—compiles negative effects that disrupt our children's ability to learn, achieve their potential and participate fully in our community.

The good news is, as this assessment indicates, Portland Public Schools have much current and past success in all stages of keeping students fed. This document acknowledges and celebrates that progress. It also notes where we have failed to maintain that progress or to integrate it into ongoing practice across the whole school system.

At the same time that we note success, there are many additional opportunities to increase access to more nutritious food for PPS students and families. There are many instances where increased efficiencies or better communication would improve student nutrition. The biggest obstacle to

improving the availability and nutritional quality of school food is budget limits. First, we must acknowledge the reality of student hunger and the cumulative costs of food insecurity. From that perspective community resources that improve nutritional access are investments that support the long-term wellness of the students and the common good of our community.

This assessment is unprecedented in its approach to evaluating all elements of the PPS food system. The folks involved in this assessment, whether community partners or school employees, realize mandating change will not automatically make it so. This report provides a vision of food secure schools and describes an approach along with strategies and practices that will support ongoing and consistent improvement in student access to enough healthy food to thrive and succeed in school and beyond.

Future Use and Limitations

The research presented in this report was conducted with the intention of better understanding food insecurity within the PPS, in order to make appropriate recommendations towards alleviating this problem, which many students and families in the district face. The hope of the Task Force is that, by understanding food insecurity in the context of the PPS, we can start an ongoing conversation within the community that will lead toward positive change. Further, the Policy Committee of the Portland Food Council is committed to using this report to inform their advocacy work moving forward to influence change on a broader scale.

One of our greatest limitations throughout this process has been capacity. The activities of the Task Force were largely conducted by volunteers. While this means that everyone at the table came with a fierce passion for solving the problem of child food insecurity in our community, it also meant that we had to make tough decisions regarding how to best utilize precious volunteer time.

During the interview process, one barrier that the Task Force ran into was unresponsiveness to requests for interviews. While we had every intention of gathering information from all schools in the district, this was just not possible within our timeframe. Further, although interviewers participated in a best practices training, the conversational nature of the semi-structured interviews made it impossible to ensure that each participant was asked the same questions in exactly the same way. This may have led to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of participant data.

Because this needs assessment was designed to gather information from schools and organizational partners, only very limited parent and student data were collected. While more of these voices would have added important context, we were unable to include them within the present scope. Future research may include taking a deeper dive into the parent and student perspective of food insecurity within the district, as well as into each of the five program areas.

It was the goal of the Task Force from the onset to lift up the voices of people experiencing food insecurity in this process. While we hoped to enable these marginalized voices to be heard, multiple barriers prevented our including this vital perspective (e.g., time, volunteer capacity, access to translators, legality around interviewing vulnerable subjects, etc.). In future research, we would like to ensure that the voices of those experiencing food insecurity are heard along with the voice of those providing services to those communities.

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Appendices

Appendix A	Portland Community Food Resource Guide
Appendix B	Portland Community Summer Food Resource Guide
Appendix C	Assessment Map
Appendix D	Individual School Reports
Appendix E	Food Security Information Survey
Appendix F	General Support Survey
Appendix G	Parent Survey
Appendix H	Semi-Structured Interview Guide
Appendix I	Food Service 101
Appendix J	Informed Consent Form

Appendix A: Portland Community Food Resource Guide

Portland Community FOOD RESOURCE GUIDE



NUTRITION ASSISTANCE

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
Program formerly called "Food Stamps"

'SNAP'

Call 1-800-442-6003

Apply online at: www.maine.gov/mymaineconnection

When you use SNAP at Farmers Markets, you receive Maine Harvest Bucks to save on fruits and vegetables!

Visit: <http://www.maineharvestbucks.org/>

At Cultivating Community Farm Stands, you can receive a 50% discount on organic vegetables.

Call (207) 761-4769 for more information.

Women, Infants, and Children

'WIC'

You may qualify if you are pregnant or have children under five years old. Fathers may apply for their children. Household income limits apply.

Contact:

Opportunity Alliance

(207) 553-5800

190 Lancaster St,

Portland, ME

NEED HELP? Sometimes assistance programs can be difficult to navigate. If you need help applying or have questions about health and human services programs, you can call 2-1-1 Maine by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting online at www.211maine.org. If you have questions about food pantries or community meals you can also contact Wayside Food Programs at (207) 775-4939.

MEALS FOR KIDS

FREE AND REDUCED SCHOOL LUNCH

Contact Portland School Food Services for more information.

(207) 874-8231

SUMMER MEALS

1-866-348-6479

Find more information online:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks>

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL PANTRIES

Many schools have pantries. When a child says they are hungry they will be given food from this pantry. Emergency food may also be available. Contact your school secretary for more information.

WAYSIDE COMMUNITY MEALS

Wayside hosts dinners for students and their families Mondays at 5 PM during the school year. Participating schools are East End Community, Reiche, Riverton Boys and Girls Club, and Sagamore Village Boys and Girls Club. For more information call Wayside at (207) 775-4939 or visit <http://waysidemaine.org/community-meals>

Appendix B: Portland Community Summer Food Resource Guide

Weekly Summer Food Calendar - 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Stroudwater Christian Church 1520 Westbrook St. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	St. Vincent De Paul 307 Congress St. 11:30 AM - 2:00 PM St. Vincent de Paul Lunch 307 Congress St 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM Wayside Meal @ Woodfords Congregational Church 202 Woodford Street Lunch - 12:00 PM Salvation Army 297 Cumberland Ave. 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM Cultivating Community Mobile Farmers Market Portland Food Co-Op - 290 Congress St. 1 PM - 5 PM Peaks Island Community Food Pantry 19 Church Ave. 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM	Michael Klahr Jewish Family Services 1342 Congress Street By Appointment Sacred Heart / St. Dominic's Food Pantry Corner of Sherman & Mellen 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM St. Vincent de Paul Lunch 307 Congress St 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM Wayside Meal @ Avesta 409 Cumberland Ave. Lunch - 12:00 PM Cultivating Community Mobile Farmers Market Whole Foods - 2 Somerset Dr. 1 PM - 5 PM Cultivating Community Mobile Farmers Market Opportunity Alliance - 190 Lancaster St. 1 PM - 5 PM Wayside Meal @ Salvation Army 297 Cumberland Ave. Dinner - 5 PM	Portland Farmers Market Monument Square 7 AM - 1 PM St. Vincent de Paul Lunch 307 Congress St 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM Salvation Army 297 Cumberland Ave. 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	Michael Klahr Jewish Family Services 1342 Congress Street By Appointment White Memorial* 97 Allen Ave. 8 AM - 9:30 AM St. Luke's Food Pantry 134 Park St. 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM Williston - Immanuel United Church 156 High St. Arrive before 10 AM St. Vincent de Paul Lunch 307 Congress St 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM Preble Street 252 Oxford St. 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM Cultivating Community Mobile Farmers Market Portland Food Co-Op - 290 Congress St. 1 PM - 5 PM Wayside Meal @ Deering Center Community Church 4 Brentwood Street Dinner - 5:30 PM Wayside Meal @ St. Peter's Episcopal Church 678 Washington Ave. Dinner - 5:30 PM Wayside Meal @ Williston - Immanuel United Church 156 High Street Dinner - 5:30 PM (Please Use Back Door)	St. Vincent de Paul Lunch 307 Congress St 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM Salvation Army 297 Cumberland Ave. 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM Cultivating Community Mobile Farmers Market Opportunity Alliance - 190 Lancaster St. 1 PM - 5 PM	Portland Farmers Market Deering Oaks Park 7 AM - 1 PM Cultivating Community Mobile Farmers Market Payson Park Garden - Front St. 12 PM - 4 PM

Navy = Food Pantry Distribution Orange = Community Meal Green = Farmers Market * = Must Bring ID to Pantry

Important Dates

June

June 20 - Last Day of School

July

July 4 - Fourth of July (Meal Sites Closed)

July 9 - 6 PM - Pop Up Picnic Series: Libbytown Community Garden (Kiwani Pool, 165 Douglass Street) (Rain Date: July 11)

July 23 - 6 PM - Pop Up Picnic Series: Payson Park Community Garden (842 Baxter Blvd, behind Seaside Health Care) (Rain Date: July 30)

August

August 6 - Pop Up Picnic Series: Riverton Community Garden (Riverton School, 1600 Forest Ave) (Rain Date: August 13)

August 20 - Pop Up Picnic Series: Boyd Street Urban Farm (Kennedy Park) (Rain Date: August 27)

August 29 - First Day of School

Local Foods In Season This Summer: Arugula - Asparagus - Blackberries - Beans - Beet Greens - Beets - Blueberries - Bok Choy - Broccoli - Brussel Sprouts - Cantaloupes - Carrots - Celery - Chard - Cucumbers - Eggplant - Garlic - Kale - Leeks - Mixed Greens - Onions - Peaches - Peas - Peppers - Potatoes - Radishes - Raspberries - Summer Squash - Strawberries - Sweet Corn - Tomatoes - Watermelon

Portland Community
SUMMER FOOD RESOURCE GUIDE

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program formerly called "Food Stamps"

'SNAP'

Call 1-800-442-6003

Apply online at: www.maine.gov/mymaineconnection
When you use SNAP at Farmers Markets, you receive **Maine Harvest Bucks** to save on fruits and vegetables!
Visit: <http://www.maineharvestbucks.org/>
At **Cultivating Community Farm Stands**, you can receive a 50% discount on organic vegetables.
Call (207) 761-4769 for more information.

Women, Infants, and Children

'WIC'

You may qualify if you are pregnant or have children under five years old. Fathers may apply for their children. Household income limits apply.

Contact:
Opportunity Alliance
(207) 553-5800
190 Lancaster St,
Portland, ME

NEED HELP? Sometimes assistance programs can be difficult to navigate. If you need help applying or have questions about health and human services programs, you can call 2-1-1 Maine by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting online at www.211maine.org. If you have questions about food pantries or community meals you can also contact **Wayside Food Programs** at (207) 775-4939.

PANTRY AND RESOURCE CONTACT INFORMATION

First Baptist - (207) 773-3123 - 360 Canco Rd.
Michael Klahr Jewish Family Services - (207) 772-1959 - 1342 Congress St.
Peaks Island Food Pantry - (207) 332-2443 - 19 Church Ave.
Preble Street - (207) 775-0026 - 252 Oxford St.
Project FEED - (207) 761-3920 - 202 Woodford St.
The Root Cellar - (207) 774-3197 - 94 Washington Ave.
Sacred Heart / St. Dominic - (207) 929-3088 - Corner of Sherman & Mellen
Sagamore Food Pantry - (207) 221-8072 - 21 Popham St.
Salvation Army - (207) 774-4172 - 297 Cumberland Ave.
St. Luke's Food Pantry - (207) 772-5434 - 134 Park St.
St. Vincent DePaul - (207) 772-1113 - 307 Congress St.
Stroudwater Christian Church - (207) 772-2193 - 1520 Westbrook St.
Wayside Food Programs - (207) 775-4939 - 135 Walton St.
White Memorial - (207) 797-4144 - 97 Allen Ave.
Williston-Immanuel United Church - (207) 775-2301 - 156 High St.

SUMMER MEALS

1-866-348-6479

Find more information online:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks>

WAYSIDE & CULTIVATING COMMUNITY POP UP PICNICS

Wayside & Cultivating Community are co-hosting four Pop Up Picnics this summer! The events are designed to build community and are free and open to all. There will be a picnic dinner, activities and games, garden tours and music. For more information call Wayside at (207) 775-4939 or Cultivating Community at (207) 761-4769.

SIGN UP FOR SNAP

Households with income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level are likely eligible for SNAP:

Household	Annual	Monthly	Weekly
2	\$30,044	\$2,504	\$578
4	\$45,510	\$3,793	\$876
+ 1 Add	\$7,733	\$645	\$149

APPLY If you believe you are eligible, apply for SNAP:

1. Online: maine.gov/mymaineconnection
2. In person at your local DHHS
3. Mail in a paper application: 114 Corn Shop Ln, Farmington, ME 04938
4. Fax in a paper application: 778-8429

INTERVIEW If you are not contacted by the DHHS within two weeks of submitting your application **you must call to request a phone interview: 822-2000**

SUBMIT YOUR DOCUMENTS After your interview, DHHS will tell you which verifications to submit, send your documents via:

1. Fax: 778-8429
2. E-mail: farmington.dhhs@maine.gov
3. Mail: 114 Corn Shop Ln, Farmington, ME 04938

Questions???
 Call Preble Street Maine Hunger Initiative: 775-0026 X 2101

Appendix C: Assessment Map

Elementary Schools

Food Programs by School	East End	Riverton	Howard C. Reiche
% Free and Reduced	100%	100%	100%
Provisions	Title 1/ CEP	Title 1/ CEP	Title 1/ CEP
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	heating/ cooling	heating/cooling	heating/cooling
	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)	FFVP	FFVP
	Free Breakfast -Breakfast in the Classroom	Free Breakfast -Breakfast in the Classroom	Free Breakfast -Breakfast in the Classroom
	Free Lunch	Free Lunch	Free Lunch
	Summer Meals/Opportunity Alliance	Summer Meals/OA	Summer Meals/OA
	Afterschool Snack Program (ASSP)	Afterschool Snack Program	Afterschool Snack Program
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	FoodCorps: Programming includes school day with 1st, 2nd, and K (each 6 classes)	Cultivating Community: Programming includes 2nd grade year round (18+ classes), 4th grade and 5th grade recess club year round, and other grades receive teacher support or occasional classes.	Parent Led: Green Team: <i>Raise money and hire outside educator part-time.</i> Programming for K, 1st, and 2nd year round with goal to reach whole school.
	FoodCorps: Summer programming once a week, occasional after school, year round before school	Cultivating Community: Summer Programming once a week	Occasional summer programming
Nutrition & Cooking Education	FoodCorps: Cooking/ Nutrition Series	Cultivating Community Cooking/ Nutrition Series	
	FoodCorps & Central Kitchen: Cafeteria Taste Tests	FoodCorps & Central Kitchen: Cafeteria Taste Tests	
	SNAP-Ed: Pick A Better Snack (PABS) classes throughout the year, monthly, in 5 classrooms, and Nutrition to Grow on in the Rise and Shine program	SNAP-Ed: PABS classes throughout the year, monthly, in 6 classroom, plus in 6-week sessions for a select group of 2nd-5th grade students in LearningWorks Afterschool.	SNAP-Ed: PABS classes throughout the year, monthly, in 6 classroom, plus in 6-week sessions for a select group of 2nd-5th grade students in LearningWorks Afterschool.
		Curriculum: 3rd- agriculture - cycle of plants and seeds; 4th - gardening, Maine Food Industry (fishing, apples, blueberries)	
Charitable Food Programs	Wayside Food Programs free Monday night dinner	Wayside Food Programs free Monday night dinner (Riverton Boys & Girls Club)	Wayside Food Programs free Monday night dinner
	Locker Project snack, pantry, and produce programs	Locker Project snack, pantry, and produce programs	Locker Project snack, pantry, and produce programs
			Oakhurst Milk For Families from (not implemented yet)
Sustainable Food Practices	In Cafeteria Composting	In Cafeteria Composting	In Cafeteria Composting
	Share table	Share table	Share table
Wellness Committees (Y/N - main contact, # of participants, main responsibilities)			

Food Programs by School	Presumpscot	Fred P. Hall	Longfellow
% Free and Reduced	100%	46.62%	18.77%
Provisions	Title 1/ CEP		
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	heating/cooling	heating/ cooling *up for renovation	no onsite heating- food is shipped hot
	FFVP		
	Free Breakfast -Breakfast in the Classroom	Free Breakfast -Breakfast in the Classroom (PEF Grant)	Paid Breakfast - Grab n Go (Secretary Serves)
	Free Lunch	Free/Reduced/Paid	Free/Reduced/Paid
	Summer Meals/OA	no summer meals during construction	does not qualify for summer meals
	Afterschool Snack Program (ASSP)	Afterschool Snack Program (ASSP)	
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)		FoodCorps: Programmin includes year-round with 3rd, 4th, 5th	Parent & Teacher Led: Grade integration and club
	LearningWorks Afterschool and Summer Programs involved periodically in gardening.	FoodCorps: LearningWorks Afterschool and Summer Programs involved periodically in gardening.	
Nutrition & Cooking Education		FoodCorps Cooking/ Nutrition Series	
		FoodCorps & Central Kitchen: Cafeteria Taste Tests	
	SNAP-Ed: PABS classes throughout the year, monthly, in 2 classrooms, plus one 6-week session per year for a select group of 2nd-5th grade students in LearningWorks Afterschool.	SNAP-Ed: one 6-week session per year for a select group of 2nd-5th grade students in LearningWorks Afterschool.	
		Curriculum: Farm to Food; In Many Rivers Classes and all 4th and 5th grade classes	
Charitable Food Programs	Weekend Backpack or White Bag Program, Community Meals, Holiday Baskets - Adopt Families	Wayside Food Programs free Monday night dinner (Sagamore Boys & Girls Club)	
	Locker Project snack, pantry, and produce programs	Locker Project pantry program	
		School: Free Farmers Market	PTO: "SHARE" basket in the cafeteria of food donated for future snacks
			PTO: Thanksgiving Baskets
Sustainable Food Practices	In Cafeteria Composting	In Cafeteria Composting	In Cafeteria Composting
	Share table	Share table	Share table
Wellness Committees (Y/N - main contact, # of participants, main responsibilities)			

Food Programs by School	Lyseth	Ocean Ave	Peaks
% Free and Reduced	36.90%	45.93%	31.58%
Provisions			
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	heating /cooling	heating/cooling	heating/cooling
	Paid Breakfast - In Cafeteria with Ed Techs	Paid Breakfast - In Cafeteria with FS Staff	Paid Breakfast - In Cafeteria with FS Staff
	Free/Reduced/Paid	Free/Reduced/Paid	Free/Reduced/Paid
	Summer Program at Ocean Ave this year	Summer Meals / Portland Public Schools	does not qualify for summer meals
		Afterschool Snack Program (ASSP)	
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Parent & Teacher Led: Green Committee Chairpersons	Parent Led	In progress
Nutrition & Cooking Education			
	FoodCorps & Central Kitchen: Cafeteria Taste Tests	5-2-1-0: Healthy Choices; growing, harvesting; classroom tasting garden veggies.	
		SNAP-Ed: one 6-week session per year for a select group of 2nd-5th grade students in LearningWorks Afterschool.	
		Nutrition classes for second grade	Curriculum: K-5 two year study of "where does our food come from?"
Charitable Food Programs			Community Meals
	Locker Project snack and pantry programs	Locker Project and GSF School Pantry, Weekend Backpack and White Bag Program, Snacks	
	School Staff: Backpack program		
		Community donation: snacks	
Sustainable Food Practices	In Cafeteria Composting	In Cafeteria Composting	In Cafeteria Composting
	Share table	Share table	Share table
Wellness Committees (Y/N - main contact, # of participants, main responsibilities)			

Food Programs by School	Bayside	Long Island	Cliff Island
% Free and Reduced Provisions		exempt	0%
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service			
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)			
Nutrition & Cooking Education			
Charitable Food Programs			
Sustainable Food Practices			
Wellness Committees (Y/N - main contact, # of participants, main responsibilities)			

Middle Schools

Middle Schools	King	Lincoln	Lyman Moore
% Free and Reduced	57.45%	43.33%	54.06%
Provisions			
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	On Site Meal Production	On Site Meal Production	On Site Meal Production
	Free Breakfast in Cafeteria	Free Breakfast in Classroom	Free Breakfast in Classroom
	Free/Reduced/Paid Lunches	Free/Reduced/Paid Lunches	Free/Reduced/Paid Lunches
	Summer Meals/ PPS	Does not qualify for summer meals	Summer Meals/PPS
	ASSP	ASSP	ASSP
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)		Teacher Led: Sustainability Science course	Teacher Led: Occasional
Nutrition Education	Cooking Matters for Teens - provides free 6 week (2 hours per week) nutrition and cooking classes to teens	Cooking Matters for Teens - provides free 6 week (2 hours per week) nutrition and cooking classes to teens	Cooking
	Curriculum: Pathway to Plate Food Expedition (led by teachers, 2017/18 school year 7th grade - may happen every other year)		
Charitable Food Programs	Locker Project pantry and produce	Locker Project pantry, produce, and snack	Locker Project pantry, produce, and snack
		Thanksgiving baskets to families	Community Meals
Sustainable Food Practices	In Cafeteria Composting	In Cafeteria Composting	In Cafeteria Composting
	Share table	Share table	Share table
Wellness Committees (Y/N - main contact, # of participants, main responsibilities)			

High Schools

High Schools	Casco Bay	Deering
% Free and Reduced	41.95%	55.17%
Provisions		
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Meals from Central Kitchen	On Site Meal Production
	Paid Breakfast in Cafeteria	Free Breakfast in Cafeteria
	Free/Reduced/Paid Lunch	Free/Reduced/Paid Lunch
	ASSP	ASSP
	Not eligible for Summer Meals	Summer Meals/ PPS
School Garden		
	Cultivating Community (Summer program not at school) offers Grow Interns and Youth Growers intensive month long gardening and food justice program	Cultivating Community (Summer program not at school) offers Grow Interns and Youth Growers intensive month long gardening and food justice program
Nutrition Education	Curriculum: Wellness course for sophomores receive some nutrition ed	
	Cultivating Community (After School, not at school) offers food justice, cooking, nutrition, and community service for teens throughout the year to all high school students through Culinary Crew and Youth Leadership Intensive	Cultivating Community (After School, not at school) offers food justice, cooking, nutrition, and community service for teens throughout the year to all high school students through Culinary Crew and Youth Leadership Intensive
	UMaine Cooperative Extension Winter intensive around local food systems and food preservation	Cooking Matters for Teens - provides free 6 week (2 hours per week) nutrition and cooking classes to teens. Have been working with Jobs for Maine Graduates to coordinate classes.
Charitable Food Programs		Locker Project pantry, family market
Sustainable Food Practices	In Cafeteria Composting	In Cafeteria Composting
	Share table	Share table
Wellness Committees (Y/N - main contact, # of participants, main responsibilities)		

High Schools	Portland	PATHS	Bayside Learning Community
% Free and Reduced	43.75%		
Provisions			
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	On Site Meal Production	Culinary programs serve food to CBHS students undercutting Food Services 2 days/week	
	Free Breakfast in Cafeteria		
	Free/Reduced/Paid Lunch		
	ASSP		
	Not eligible for Summer Meals		
School Garden		School Program: Horticulture Program, Landscape and Garden Program.	
	Cultivating Community (Summer program not at school) offers Grow Interns and Youth Growers intensive month long gardening and food justice program	Cultivating Community (Summer program not at school) offers Grow Interns and Youth Growers intensive month long gardening and food justice program	
Nutrition Education		School Program: CTE Culinary Arts Program, Food Service Program	
	Cultivating Community (After School, not at school) offers food justice, cooking, nutrition, and community service for teens throughout the year to all high school students through Culinary Crew and Youth Leadership Intensive		
Charitable Food Programs	Locker Project pantry, Backpack Program		Locker Project pantry and snack programs
Sustainable Food Practices	In Cafeteria Composting		
	Share table		
Wellness Committees (Y/N - main contact, # of participants, main responsibilities)			

District-Wide

Central Kitchen		
Sourcing	Breakfast	Lunch
% Locally Sourced	0%	10%
% Organic Food	0%	0%
List of Farms/ Suppliers located in Maine	Bracketts, Oakhurst, Amato's, Fairwinds Farms, Somali Bantu	
One time sourcing from farms in Maine (farm, crop, amount)		
Wellness Policy/ Committee		
Current Policy (link to doc)	http://www.portlandschools.org/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=7044918	
Current Committee (Contacts, roles)	Jane McLucas- Food Service Director, Brian Cavanaugh- Director of Social & Emotional Learning, Beverly Coursey- Principal OAS, Caroline Roberge Asst. Principal DHS, Tammy Garland-HR, Richard Moore-HR, Amanda Hutchings-Let's Go, Tina Vellieux-Head Nurse	

Appendix D: Individual School Reports

Elementary Schools

EAST END COMMUNITY SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	100%
Provisions	Title 1 / CEP
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Heating / Cooling
	FFVP
	Free breakfast - breakfast in the classroom
	Free lunch
	Summer Meals / Opportunity Alliance
	ASSP
	Kitchen capacity - burners, warming ovens
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Yes, Cultivating Community / FoodCorps
	Run by FoodCorps member. Rise N' Shine Program all year, school day special with 1st in Fall and K in Spring (6 classes each), parent & PTO involvement. LearningWorks Afterschool and Summer Programs involved periodically. Other events as planned.
Nutrition & Cooking Education	FoodCorps 2nd grade nutrition classes 6-class series
	In-cafeteria taste tests (FC / Central Kitchen)
	SNAP-Ed is conducting PABS classes throughout the year, monthly, in 5 classrooms, and Nutrition to Grow on in the Rise and Shine program
Charitable Food Programs	Wayside Food Programs free dinner, Monday nights, open to kids & families at EECS
	Locker Project snack, pantry, and produce programs
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

HALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	46.62%
Provisions	Title 1 / CEP
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Heating / Cooling
	Free Breakfast -Breakfast in the Classroom (PEF Grant)
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	No summer meals during construction
	ASSP
	Kitchen capacity - burners, warming ovens
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Yes, through Cultivating Community / FoodCorps
	Garden run by parents & teachers. New FoodCorps member to teach in school specials to 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade, plus in LearningWorks Afterschool. LearningWorks Afterschool and Summer Programs are also involved periodically in gardening.
Nutrition & Cooking Education	FoodCorps offer a 6-class series with 3rd, 4th, 5th grade students in winter
	In-cafeteria taste tests (FC / Central Kitchen) Farm to Food. This is offered in many Rivers Classes and all 4th and 5th grade classes.
	SNAP-Ed is conducted in one 6-week session per year for a select group of 2nd-5th grade students in LearningWorks Afterschool
Charitable Food Programs	Wayside Food Programs free dinner, Monday nights, open to kids (not at the school, but at Sagamore Boys & Girls Club)
	Free farmers market (advisor and student volunteers) Locker Project pantry program
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

LONGFELLOW ELEMENTARY	
% Free and Reduced	18.77%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	No onsite heating, the food is shipped hot
	Paid breakfast, grab-and-go style (Secretary Serves)
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	Does not qualify for summer meals
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Yes
Nutrition & Cooking Education	Not reported
Charitable Food Programs	Thanksgiving Baskets are offered (PTO); "SHARE" basket is in the cafeteria with food that was donated for future snacks
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

LYSETH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	36.90%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Heating / Cooling
	Paid breakfast located in cafeteria with ed techs
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	Summer program
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Yes, with raised beds, run by Green Committee Chairpersons
Nutrition & Cooking Education	In-cafeteria taste tests (FC / Central Kitchen)
Charitable Food Programs	Backpack program
	Locker Project snack pantry, and produce programs
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

OCEAN AVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	45.93%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Heating / Cooling
	Paid breakfast in cafeteria with FS Staff
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	Summer Meals / Portland Public Schools
	ASSP
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	School garden with some foods planted and harvested; each grade level has their own bed to plant
Nutrition & Cooking Education	Nutrition classes offered for second grade

PEAKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	31.58%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Heating / Cooling
	Paid breakfast located in cafeteria with FS Staff
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	Does not qualify for summer meals
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Year-round school project: "How do farmers use tools/resources to produce food?"
	They have chickens who they hope will be laying eggs; hydroponic garden in a classroom; grade 5 is building a hoop house
Nutrition & Cooking Education	K->5 does a two-year study of "where does our food come from?"
Charitable Food Programs	Community meals
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

PRESUMPCOT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	100%
Provisions	Title 1 / CEP
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Heating / Cooling
	FFVP
	Free breakfast - breakfast in the classroom
	Free lunch
	Summer Meals / Opportunity Alliance
	ASSP
	Kitchen capacity - warming ovens
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	No
	LearningWorks Afterschool and Summer Programs involved periodically in gardening
Nutrition & Cooking Education	SNAP-Ed is conducting monthly PABS classes throughout the year in two classrooms; one 6-week session per year for a select group of 2nd-5th grade students in LearningWorks Afterschool
Charitable Food Programs	Weekend Backpack or White Bag Program as well as community meals, holiday baskets for Adopt Families.
	Locker Project snack, pantry, and produce programs
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

REICHE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	100%
Provisions	Title 1 / CEP
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Heating / Cooling
	FFVP
	Free breakfast and breakfast in the classroom
	Free lunch
	Summer Meals / Opportunity Alliance

REICHE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
	ASSP
	Kitchen capacity - warming ovens
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Yes, Parent / Community Led: School Garden Program (Green Team, PTO Subcommittee)
Nutrition & Cooking Education	SNAP-Ed is conducting monthly PABS classes throughout the year in six classrooms, plus one 6-week session per year for a select group of 2nd-5th grade students in LearningWorks Afterschool
Charitable Food Programs	Food Pantry & Backpack Program (Locker Project)
	Wayside Food Programs free dinner, Monday nights, open to kids & families at Reiche School. Portland Community Policing (Sarah Colton, office at Reiche), Wayside Food Programs partnership. Milk for Families from Oakhurst (not implemented yet).
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

RIVERTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	100%
Provisions	Title 1 / CEP
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Heating / Cooling
	FFVP
	Free breakfast - breakfast in the classroom
	Free lunch
	Summer Meals / Opportunity Alliance
	ASSP
	Kitchen capacity - burners, warming ovens
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Yes, Cultivating Community

RIVERTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
	Run by Schools Coordinator CC staff. 4th grade Recess club (18 times throughout year). Plus, school day special with 2nd grade (14 garden classes throughout year). Other grades and events as planned.
Nutrition & Cooking Education	CC staff six class series with 2nd grade in the winter, six classes with 4th grade recess club in winter/ in cafeteria taste tests
	In-cafeteria taste tests (FC / Central Kitchen)
	Grade 2 - Gardening/Cooking Grade 3 - Agriculture, cycle of plants and seeds Grade 4 - Gardening, Maine Food Industry (fishing, apples, blueberries) SNAP-Ed is conducting monthly PABS classes throughout the year in six classroom, plus in 6-week sessions for a select group of 2nd-5th grade students in LearningWorks Afterschool
Charitable Food Programs	Wayside Food Programs free dinner, Monday nights, open to kids (not at the school, but at Riverton Boys & Girls Club)
	Locker Project snack, pantry, and produce programs
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

Middle Schools

KING MIDDLE SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	57.45%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	On-site meal production
	Free breakfast in cafeteria
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	Summer Meals / PPS

KING MIDDLE SCHOOL	
	ASSP
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	No
Nutrition & Cooking Education	Pathway to Plate Food Expedition (led by teachers, 2017/18 school year 7th grade - may happen every other year. World cultures class
	Cooking Matters for Teens - provides free six-week (2 hours per week) nutrition and cooking classes to teens
Charitable Food Programs	Locker Project pantry and produce
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	43.33%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	On Site Meal Production
	Free breakfast in classroom
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	Does not qualify for summer meals
	ASSP
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Yes
Nutrition & Cooking Education	Cooking Matters for Teens - provides free six week (2 hours per week) nutrition and cooking classes to teens
Charitable Food Programs	Locker Project pantry, snack and produce
	Thanksgiving baskets to families
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

LYMAN MOORE MIDDLE SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	54.06%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	On-site meal production
	Free breakfast in classroom
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	Summer Meals / PPS
	ASSP
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Yes
Nutrition & Cooking Education	Cooking Education
Charitable Food Programs	Locker Project pantry, snack and produce
	Community meals School pantry contacts
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

High Schools

CASCO BAY HIGH SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	41.95%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Meals from Central Kitchen
	Paid breakfast in cafeteria
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	ASSP
	Not eligible for Summer Meals
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	No, sometimes benefit from PATHS vegetable garden
	(Summer program not at school) Cultivating Community offers Grow Interns and Youth Growers, an intensive month long gardening and food justice

CASCO BAY HIGH SCHOOL	
	program
Nutrition & Cooking Education	Sophomores receive some nutrition education as part of wellness course
	Cultivating Community offers food justice, cooking, nutrition, and community service for teens throughout the year to all high school students through Culinary Crew, and Youth Leadership Intensive (After school)
	University of Maine Cooperative Extension - Winter intensive around local food systems and food preservation
Charitable Food Programs	None (that are long-standing or permanent)
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

DEERING HIGH SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	55.17%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	On-site meal production
	Free breakfast in cafeteria
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	ASSP
	Summer Meals / PPS
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	(Summer program not at school) Cultivating Community offers Grow Interns and Youth Growers offers an intensive month-long gardening and food justice program
Nutrition & Cooking Education	Cultivating Community offers food justice, cooking, nutrition, and community service for teens throughout the year to all high school students through Culinary Crew and Youth Leadership Intensive (After School)

DEERING HIGH SCHOOL	
	Cooking Matters for Teens, provides a free six week (2 hours per week) nutrition and cooking classes to teens. Have been working with Jobs for Maine Graduates to coordinate classes
Charitable Food Programs	Locker Project pantry
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

PORTLAND HIGH SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	43.75%
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	On-site meal production
	Free breakfast in cafeteria
	Free / Reduced / Paid
	ASSP
	Summer Meals / PPS
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	No
	Cultivating Community offers Grow Interns and Youth Growers intensive month-long gardening and food justice program (summer program not at school)
Nutrition & Cooking Education	Cultivating Community offers food justice, cooking, nutrition, and community service for teens throughout the year to all high school students through Culinary Crew and Youth Leadership Intensive (After School)
Charitable Food Programs	School pantry
Sustainable Food Practices	In-cafeteria composting
	Share table

PORTLAND ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL	
% Free and Reduced	Not reported
Provisions	None
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Culinary programs improperly serve food to CBHS students undercutting Food Services two days/week
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	Yes, Horticulture Program
	Horticulture was growing all the seedlings for school gardens under the F2S Implementation Grant; Landscape and Gardens Program
Nutrition & Cooking Education	CTE Culinary Arts Program
	Food Services Program
Charitable Food Programs	Not reported
Sustainable Food Practices	Not reported

K-12

BAYSIDE LEARNING CENTER	
% Free and Reduced	Not reported
Provisions	Not reported
Federal Nutrition Programs/Food Service	Not reported
School Garden (Y/N, who runs it, how and when do students and community engage)	No, sometimes there is interaction with Cultivating Community Oxford Street Garden
Nutrition & Cooking Education	Not reported
Charitable Food Programs	Locker Project, pantry and snack programs
Sustainable Food Practices	Not reported

Appendix E: Food Security Information Survey

Food Security Information for Portland Public Schools

Please help us confirm and identify the food-related programs Portland Schools have in place. This will help the community better support food security among students and families.

A collaboration of community food security organizations, working with Superintendent Botana, is mapping the food-based initiatives in each Portland Public School. Your feedback will help us understand what is happening and learn where food access can be improved. Please give details about programs where possible.

Thank you for your feedback.

Name of School:

School Garden: Yes No

If yes, contact person's name/email:

Charitable Food Programs

___ school pantry & contact:

___ weekend backpack/white bag & contact:

___ community meals & contact:

___ other & contact:

Any current food-related classes, expeditions, units, curricula being taught/implemented? If so, please include contact:

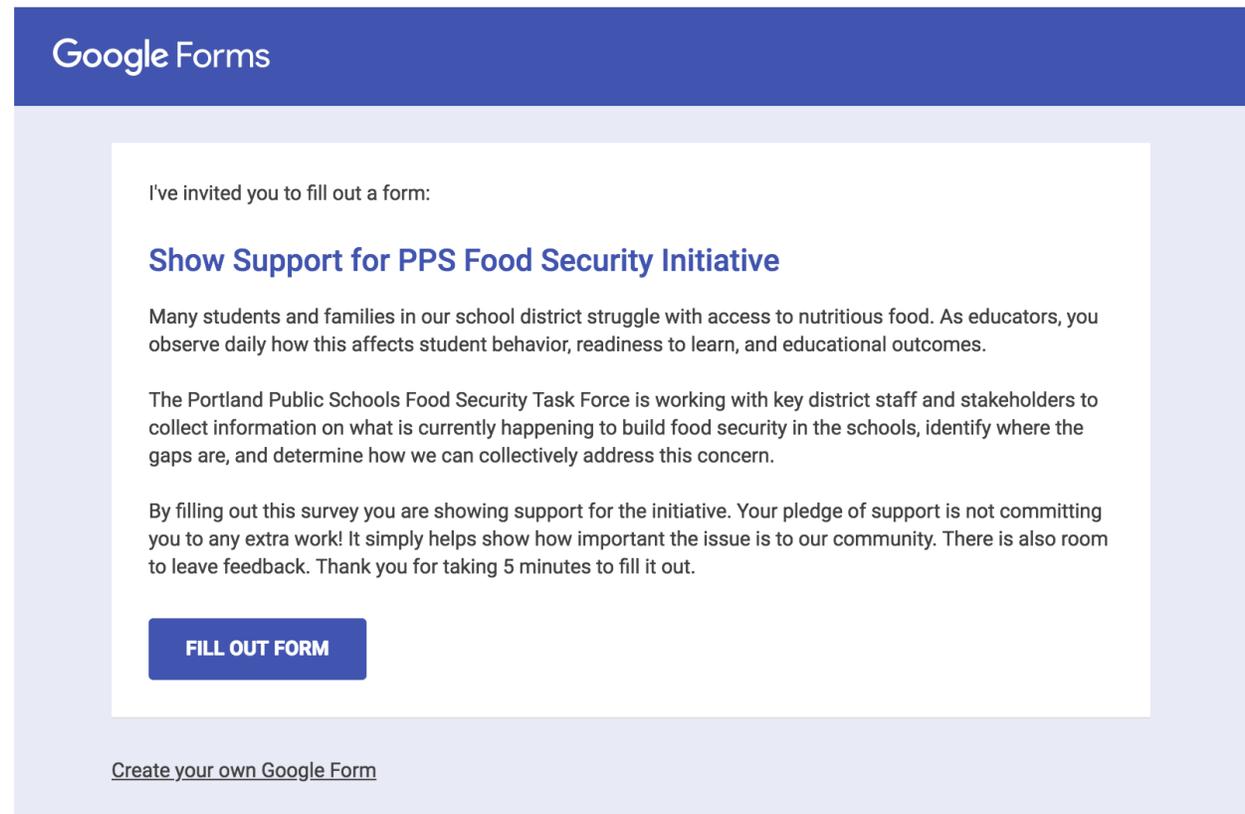
Is anything missing at your school to support students' ability to get enough nutritious food?:

Any other staff or parents at your school that are interested in food security issues that we should add to our email communications list?

Partners involved to date (project initiated July 2017): Teachers, Administrators, Parents and Staff from Portland Public Schools, Cumberland County Food Security Council, Portland Food Council, Locker Project, Cultivating Community, Good Shepherd Food Bank, Preble Street/Maine Hunger Initiative, Maine Food Strategy, AmeriCorps/VISTA, Somali Bantu Community Association, City of Portland/Public Health Division, Wayside Food Programs, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Opportunity Alliance, 5210 Let's Go!

There is also significant interest from the Portland School Committee, Portland City Council, and Portland's representatives to the Maine Legislature.

Appendix F: General Support Survey



Google Forms

I've invited you to fill out a form:

Show Support for PPS Food Security Initiative

Many students and families in our school district struggle with access to nutritious food. As educators, you observe daily how this affects student behavior, readiness to learn, and educational outcomes.

The Portland Public Schools Food Security Task Force is working with key district staff and stakeholders to collect information on what is currently happening to build food security in the schools, identify where the gaps are, and determine how we can collectively address this concern.

By filling out this survey you are showing support for the initiative. Your pledge of support is not committing you to any extra work! It simply helps show how important the issue is to our community. There is also room to leave feedback. Thank you for taking 5 minutes to fill it out.

FILL OUT FORM

[Create your own Google Form](#)

Show Support for PPS Food Security Initiative

Many students and families in our school district struggle with access to nutritious food. As educators, you observe daily how this affects student behavior, readiness to learn, and educational outcomes.

The Portland Public Schools Food Security Task Force is working with key district staff and stakeholders to collect information on what is currently happening to build food security in the schools, identify where the gaps are, and determine how we can collectively address this concern.

By filling out this survey you are showing support for the initiative. Your pledge of support is not committing you to any extra work! It simply helps show how important the issue is to our community. There is also room to leave feedback. Thank you for taking 5 minutes to fill it out.

I support the PPS Food Security Task force to help address food insecurity in our district.

I sign in SUPPORT by checking this box

NEXT

Page 1 of 4

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Show Support for PPS Food Security Initiative

Let us know who you are

Role in the Community

- Teacher
- Staff Member (Nurse, Kitchen Staff, Ed Tech, Custodian, Social Worker, etc)
- Administration
- School Board
- Parent
- Student
- Community Member
- Other: _____

School Affiliation

- Bayside Learning Community
- Casco Bay High School
- Deering High School
- East End Community School
- Fred P. Hall Elementary School
- King Middle School
- Lincoln Middle School
- Longfellow Elementary School
- Lyseth Elementary School
- Lyman Moore Middle School
- Ocean Ave Elementary School
- PATHS
- Peaks Island Elementary School
- Portland High School
- Presumpscott Elementary School
- Rieche Elementary School
- Riverton Elementary School

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Show Support for PPS Food Security Initiative

Leave your Thoughts

Any input you have about the challenges surrounding food security in your school will be taken into account. Please record any thoughts here.

Your answer

If you would like to receive updates on the PPS food security task force enter your e-mail address below.

Your answer

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NEXT

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Show Support for PPS Food Security Initiative

Resources

Thank you for showing your support. If you would like to know more, please explore the links below:

How to get food in Portland (Resource Guide):

<http://www.ccfoodsecurity.org/uploads/9/7/0/5/97051956/foodresourceguideprint.pdf>

Learn more about the Food Security Task Force and how to get involved:

<http://www.ccfoodsecurity.org/portland-schools-food-security-task-force.html>

Learn more about Food Insecurity:

Feeding America Facts about Childhood Hunger

<http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/child-hunger-facts.html>

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SUBMIT

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Appendix G: Parent Survey

Google Forms

I've invited you to fill out a form:

Parent Food Survey 2018

Many students and families in our school district struggle with access to nutritious food. This affects student behavior, readiness to learn, and educational outcomes.

The Portland Public Schools Food Security Task Force is working with key district staff and stakeholders to collect information on what is currently happening to build food security in the schools, identify where the gaps are, and determine how we can collectively address this concern.

Thank you for taking time to answer these questions. Your feedback is very important to us!

Sincerely,
PPS Food Security Task Force

FILL OUT FORM

[Create your own Google Form](#)

Parent Food Survey 2018

Many students and families in our school district struggle with access to nutritious food. This affects student behavior, readiness to learn, and educational outcomes.

The Portland Public Schools Food Security Task Force is working with key district staff and stakeholders to collect information on what is currently happening to build food security in the schools, identify where the gaps are, and determine how we can collectively address this concern.

Thank you for taking time to answer these questions. Your feedback is very important to us!

Sincerely,
PPS Food Security Task Force

Does your family ever not have enough food to eat?

- Yes
- Occasionally
- No

What school does your child or children attend? Check all that apply.

	East End Community School	Hall Elementary School	Longfellow Elementary School	Lyseth Elementary School	Ocean Avenue Elementary School	Presumpscot Elementary School	Reiche Communi School
School Names	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Does your child eat enough food throughout the school day to meet their growing and learning needs?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

Do you want your child to receive nutrition education in school?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

Do you want your child to participate in garden activities in school?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

Are you aware of charitable food programs at school (backpack program, school pantry, etc)?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

Does your family need more support to have sufficient food for your children?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

NEXT

Parent Food Survey 2018

Resources

Thank you for showing your support. If you would like to know more, please explore the links below:

How to get food in Portland (Resource Guide):

<http://www.ccfoodsecurity.org/uploads/9/7/0/5/97051956/foodresourceguideprint.pdf>

Learn more about the Food Security Task Force and how to get involved:

<http://www.ccfoodsecurity.org/portland-schools-food-security-task-force.html>

Learn more about Food Insecurity:

Feeding America Facts about Childhood Hunger

<http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/child-hunger-facts.html>

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SUBMIT

Appendix H: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Charitable Food Programs Interview Guide

GOAL:

The goal of this interview is to ensure that all children within the Portland Public School system struggling with food insecurity have access to adequate, culturally-relevant, nutritious charitable food at school.

TASK FORCE BACKGROUND:

Food security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life (USDA). Many students and families in our school district struggle with access to enough nutritious food. As members of the school community, you observe daily how this affects student behavior, readiness to learn, and educational outcomes.

The [Portland Public Schools Food Security Task Force](#) is working with key district staff and stakeholders to collect information on what is currently happening to build food security in the schools, identify where the gaps are, and determine how we can collectively address this concern.

CHARITABLE FOOD PROGRAMS BACKGROUND:

“A **School Pantry** is a food pantry located within a school. The goal of this program is to provide food insecure children with easy access to nutritious food, either during or outside of traditional school hours. The program provides a platform for community investment in the issue of child hunger. The program model is designed to be flexible to meet the unique needs of each school community, but to be considered a School Pantry site the following must be true of your operations:

1. The food for the program must be stored on school grounds for easy access to students and families.
2. Food must be distributed from the School Pantry a minimum of once per month from September – June.
3. Food must be given away free of charge to program participants.
4. Program participants cannot be discriminated against based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disabilities, etc.

School Pantry sites can be operated in one of two ways. Community Sponsored School Pantry Sites are managed and funded as programs of a community based 501c3 nonprofit incorporated to serve the ill, needy, or children, or a church. GSFBS Sponsored School Pantry Sites are managed and funded as direct programs of the Food Bank” (Good Shepherd Food Bank).

“The **Backpack Program** provides children with healthy, easy-to-prepare food during weekends and school vacations, when the school meals they rely on are unavailable. Good Shepherd Food Bank partners with schools to discreetly provide children with bags filled with whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and protein” (Good Shepherd Food Bank).

Community meals offer individuals and families free, nutritious meals in safe and welcoming settings (Wayside Food Programs).

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 60 minutes, audio recorded

EXAMPLE INTRODUCTION:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I am a volunteer with the Portland Public Schools Food Security Task Force, and we are aiming to conduct roughly 60 interviews to understand what is currently happening to build food security in the schools, identify where the gaps are, and determine how we can collectively address this concern. Today's conversation will be about an hour in length and will be audio recorded. Do you consent to this? Once I turn the recorder on, I will ask again for your consent so we have it on the record.

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: *[Begin the audio recording] My name is [interviewer name] and I am speaking with [interviewee name]. Do I have your consent to audio record this interview?*

SECTION 1: Introduction (5 minutes)

- 1) In just a few sentences, could you please describe your responsibilities at [insert school name]?
- 2) How long have you held that/those position(s)?
- 3) How did you initially get involved doing food security work at your school?e

SECTION 2: School Pantries (20 minutes)

- 1) Do you have a school pantry?
 - a) If yes...
 - i) Where is the pantry located?
 - ii) Who operates the pantry?
 - iii) How is the pantry funded?
 - iv) Are all parents, students, teachers, and staff notified that the pantry exists and serves as a resource for food insecure students? If yes, how is this done and how often? If no, why?
 - v) Is the pantry accessible to students?
 - vi) Who determines if a child is in need of food? What is the protocol if a student is in need of food? Do they get it themselves? Is it given?
 - vii) Can you please list some examples of the food that is stored in the pantry?
 - (1) Is there food that you would like in your pantry that you do not currently have access to? If so, what food?
 - viii) Do you need equipment for food storage? If yes, what types?
 - ix) Do you think there is need for a school pantry?
 - x) What can be improved upon?
 - b) If no...
 - i) Is there a reason there is no pantry? (e.g., no pressing need, no funds, etc.)
 - ii) Do you feel that your school would benefit from a pantry? Why or why not?
 - iii) Are there other services available to food-insecure students? If so, what?

SECTION 3: Backpack Programs (20 minutes)

- 1) Does your school have a backpack program?
 - a) If yes...

- i) How is it decided which children are able to participate in the backpack program?
 - (1) Do you have a list of food insecure students who would benefit from this program?
 - ii) How are the backpacks distributed?
 - (1) Do you need help in distributing backpacks? If yes, how so? (e.g., more volunteer hours)
 - iii) Are all parents and students notified what the backpack program is and how to sign up? If no, why?
 - iv) How is the backpack program funded?
 - v) What would a successful backpack program look like to you?
 - vi) In what way(s) do you feel the backpack program is successful?
 - vii) What do you feel is going well with regards to the backpack program?
 - viii) In what way(s) do you feel the backpack program is unsuccessful?
 - ix) What are some improvements that could be made?
 - x) In your experience, what are the barriers that may prevent eligible students from participating in the backpack program?
 - (1) Is there any stigma for students with regards to the backpacks?
 - xi) Are backpacks supplemented during school breaks? If so, how?
- b) If no...
 - c) Is there a reason there is no backpack program? (e.g., no pressing need, no funds, etc.)
 - d) Do you feel that your school would benefit from a backpack program? Why or why not?
 - e) Are there other services available to food-insecure students? If so, what?
- 2) Is there anything else you would like to discuss regarding this program?

SECTION 4: Family/Community Meals (9 minutes)

- 1) Are there community meals hosted at this school?
 - a) If yes...
 - i) Who hosts them?
 - ii) Are they well-attended?
 - b) If no...
 - i) Why do you think community meals are not hosted at this site?
 - ii) What are the barriers preventing this site from hosting community meals?
 - iii) What changes would have to be made for this site to host community meals?
- 2) Who can attend these meals?
- 3) Would your school benefit from more community meals?
- 4) What is served at these meals?
- 5) What is your outreach strategy regarding these meals?
 - a) How do parents and students find out about them?

SECTION 5: Other/Funding Sources (3 minutes)

- 1) Other than the programs we just discussed, are there any other charitable food programs at your school?
 - a) If yes, could you please describe these?

- b) If no, do you feel there are gaps that could be filled with a different kind of charitable food program? What would these charitable food programs look like?
- 2) Does your school have a food drive?
 - a) Do any other organizations have food drives on your school's behalf?

SECTION 6: Closing (3 minutes)

- 1. Do you have any other thoughts or comments related to our conversation today about food security at your school that you would like to share?
- 2. Do you have any questions for me?
- 3. Your input and participation in this process is vital. Would you be willing to add your email to our [stakeholder list](#) so you can stay informed about task force progress and upcoming meetings? We would love to have you join us at our next meeting [*insert meeting date, time, location*]. Thank you again for your time, we will be sure to share a copy of the report when we are finished.

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: [*End the audio recording*] *The recorder is now off. Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me today!*

Appendix I: Food Service 101

Portland Public Schools - Food Service 101

Jane McLucas, Food Service Director

Almost 6800 students

The Food Service Program operates in:

3 High Schools

3 Middle Schools

9 Elementary School (4 of the 9 are CEP Schools)

Portland and Deering High Schools are production kitchens, which mean that they order and receive their own products, prepare, serve, and clean up in their own kitchens. We serve breakfast free to all students, and charge for lunch. Breakfast is traditional in the cafeteria. There are numerous choices at the DHS & PHS, as well as a full deli and salad bar. Each of these schools are open campus, so they are able to leave school grounds for lunch. Student lunches are \$2.95.

Casco Bay High School does not have any cafeteria facilities, we currently provide meals from Central Kitchen to the school, and set up a serving line in the hallway of the school, that includes a salad bar. We serve both breakfast and lunch in this setting.

King, Lincoln, and Moore Middle Schools each have about 500 students. Each of these schools are production kitchens, but have a limited amount of storage and equipment. In order for them to do their own production, they receive deliveries twice a week from our prime vendor. We served breakfast free to all students. King has a traditional cafeteria breakfast, while Lincoln and Moore each do breakfast in the classroom. We offer three meal choices and a full salad bar daily at lunch, and it is \$2.95 at the secondary level.

The Elementary Schools meals are made at our Central Kitchen, and shipped out each day to the elementary schools, including Peaks Island School. Meals are made and packed into individual units the day prior to service and then shipped to each school on the day of service. We also ship out the breakfasts for the following day, so they are in the school ready to go the next day. Most schools receive their meals cold, and are heated on site by food service staff, but we do heat some meals at Central Kitchen for schools without heating facilities. Each elementary school has two meal choices, and then of course, sunbutter & jelly (for our most picky customers). In addition to those choices they also have a fruit and veggie bar, which is stocked with a different fruit & vegetable each day. All elementary schools follow the same menu for breakfast and lunch. Breakfast service differs in each of the schools. Our CEP schools and Hall School use a Breakfast in the Classroom service model, while Ocean Ave used a traditional cafeteria service model, and Longfellow, Lyseth, and Peaks have a grab & go model. Elementary meals are \$2.70.

Schools with the **Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)** has the ability to serve all students breakfast and lunch, free of charge. This provision is based on data from the Department of Health and Human Services, and a program that we must apply for every 4 years. Currently our CEP Schools are East End, Reice, Riverton, and Presumpscot. We are in our 3rd year, and will need to reapply next school year.

All meals are planned according to the **National School Lunch Regulations**.

There are 5 components in school meals: meat/meat alternatives, grain, fruit, vegetable, and milk. For lunch, we must offer all 5 components, the student must choose 3, and one of them must be a fruit or

vegetable. For breakfast, we must offer 4 items within 3 components, and a student must choose 3, of which, fruit must be one of them.

Over the course of the week, we must meet the vegetable sub group requirement, of the 5 categories of vegetables: dark green, starch, bean, orange-red, and other. We must offer at least 2 different milk choices at each meal. We serve only whole grains in the school lunch program.

The Food Service Department also offers the **USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program** at four elementary schools: East End, Presumpscot, Reiche, and Riverton. Schools are chosen based on their F & R %, and applications must be approved by the Department of Education. This program is to offer students fruits or vegetables that they may not be exposed to at home. This program cannot be served in conjunction with the school meals program, so it is served in the classroom between meal periods.

Afterschool Snacks are also offered at schools with 50% or more F&R students. Students must be in a supervised, structured, enrichment program after the end of the school day. To adhere to the snack guidelines, each snack must contain two of the four components of the meal pattern: milk, fruit & veggie, grain, or meat/meat alternate. In addition to these requirements we have been asked not to serve liquids in the programs, to encourage the drinking of water.

The **Summer Meals Program** in Portland is covered by Opportunity Alliance and PPS. Between us we have over 20 meal sites in the city. PPS offers a cold box meal for each customer with all the components in each box. Last summer we operated 11 sites, and served over 5,000 breakfasts and 13,000 lunches over the course of 44 days.

Students may apply for or be given a benefit rate, depending on their application to either the Department of Health and Human Services or a **Free & Reduced Application**. The government then reimburses the School Lunch Program for the meals that are served to those students at the benefit rate of the student: Free, Reduced or Paid. In Portland, a reduced student does not pay their portion of the meal charge, the state covers the breakfast portion, and PPS covers the lunch portion.

Meal payment can be made with cash or check to school, or a credit card payment can be made online at Paypams.com for a fee of \$1.95 per student transaction.

Students may charge meals to their account. No students are refused a meal, or meals taken away, or alternate meals given. All correspondence is done with the families via school messenger, phone calls, emails, or letters via US Mail. All students started the school year with a zero balance, and we currently have a negative balance of approximately \$7,000.00.

The Food Service Program has a staff of approximately 50 people, some doing double duty by having two positions.

The goal of the program is to be self-sufficient, by operating the program on the income of the meals served. We are working hard to reach that goal, by improving meal quality, consistency of the products, accountability of staff and partners in programs, tighter controls, less waste, increasing participation and a happy work environment.

Appendix J: Informed Consent Form



PPS Food Security Needs Assessment Interviews - Informed Consent Form

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you with important information about taking part in a research study. If any of the statements or words in this form are unclear, please let us know. We would be happy to answer any questions. Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free to not take part or to withdraw at any time for any reason.

The purpose of this study is to collect information as part of the Portland Public Schools (PPS) Food Security Needs Assessment, on what is happening to build food security in the schools, identify where there may be gaps, and determine how we can collectively address this concern. We are asking you to take part in this study because you have been identified as a key organizer in your school.

Audio recording

We would like to audio record the interview. We will store these recordings on an online platform and only approved study staff will be able to access them. Do you agree to let us audio record your interview?

_____YES _____NO _____INITIALS

How Will You Keep My Study Records Confidential?

We will keep the records of this study confidential by only allowing approved members of the research team to access them. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. The study data will be stored on the PPS Food Security Google Drive in the Interview Notes folder.

The results of this research study may be published or used for teaching. We will not put identifiable information on data that are used for these purposes unless we obtain your explicit written permission.

Group Interviews

The researchers will ask you and the other people in the group to use only first names during the group session. They will also ask you not to tell anyone outside the group what any



particular person said in the group. However, the researchers cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the discussions private.

Future Contact

We may like to contact you in the future to follow-up to this study. Do you agree to let us contact you in the future?

_____YES _____NO _____INITIALS

Statement of Consent

I have read the information in this consent form. I have been given the chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the study.

SIGNATURE

Name of Subject (Printed)

Signature of Subject

Date

I have explained the research to the subject and answered all his/her questions. I will give a copy of the signed consent form to the subject.

Name of Person Obtaining Consent (Printed)

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

The contact person for this study is Kristina Kalolo. If you have any questions, Kristina Kalolo can be reached at kalolokristina@gmail.com or (860) 961-7058.