# Chicago Public Schools’ Pathways to Excellence in School Nutrition

**December 2017**

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Every student in Chicago Public Schools should have access to delicious, nutritious meals enjoyed in a positive environment.

Dear Reader,

Each and every day, over 380,000 students enter the doors of Chicago Public Schools. Over the course of the year, we will serve 43 million lunches and 27 million breakfasts totaling 70 million meals to these students. By the time a student graduates, they will have consumed about 4,000 school meals.

That is why it is so important to ensure all meals are nutritious. Studies have consistently shown a powerful connection between health and academic achievement. Healthy, active and well-nourished students are more likely to attend school, be engaged, and be ready to learn.

The National School Lunch Program began more than 70 years ago to address the fact that so many children were underweight and malnourished. The crisis facing us today is both the same and different: children now are overweight and malnourished. Providing nutritious food in schools is especially critical in Chicago because 43.3 percent of CPS students are overweight or obese. Healthy school meals are a critical component of Chicago’s overall effort to address the childhood obesity epidemic.

Promoting health and wellness has been identified as a top priority at the city level, as evidenced by the Chicago Department of Public Health’s broad spectrum public health agenda, Healthy Chicago 2.0. This plan includes a commitment to reducing the prevalence of inequities related to obesity and related illnesses, recognizing that this is central to achieving equity in education and health.

Over the five years, we have taken significant steps to become a national leader in providing healthy school meals through the implementation of high nutrition standards, more scratch cooking and other policies that regulate the sale and marketing of unhealthy food to students.

We have developed an action plan for the continued efforts to provide healthy school food in a fiscally responsible way with the guidance and support of the CPS School Food Advisory group co-convened by Healthy Schools Campaign. The advisory group developed specific plans focused on 11 interconnected pathways that support the strategic goals of CPS Nutrition Support Services.

In this document, you’ll find specific information related to current and future commitments in each of these 11 pathways. You’ll also find a summary of the school food policy, along with a full outline of the standards at the end of this document. Our goal with this document is to bring together all of the school food standards, activities and goal into one place.

Sincerely,

Leslie Fowler
Chief of Nutrition and Facilities Operations

Dr. Kenneth Fox
Chief Health Officer
CPS School Food Policy at a Glance
CPS School Food Policy at a Glance

Healthy students are better learners. CPS created these standards to provide delicious and nutritious food that gives students the best opportunity to learn and grow. These CPS School Food Standards establish procurement and nutrition standards, requirements and recommendations for foods and beverages sold, provided or served to students at school.

This chart summarizes key aspects of the procurement and nutrition standards of the CPS meal program. More information about these standards can be found on page 34 in the “Procurement and Nutrition Standards for All School Meals” section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRUITS + VEGETABLES</th>
<th>WHOLE GRAINS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>· Breakfast features a different fruit daily, at least three fresh fruits a week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Lunch features five different fresh fruits per week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Vegetables from certain sub-groups can be used to meet the breakfast fruit requirement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Lunch features one cup of vegetables daily and two additional vegetable servings weekly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Fresh local produce to be served twice per month, frozen-local produce to be served once per week, additional special local promotions to occur at least one time per month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· All grain items served at breakfast and lunch need to be whole-grain rich.</td>
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<tr>
<th>PROTEIN</th>
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<tr>
<td>· Protein must be included as a component in breakfast three times a week for both hot and cold menus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· A minimum of one meatless lunch option is provided every day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Lean, finely-textured beef (LFTB), also known as pink slime, is prohibited.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· All chicken is no antibiotic ever (NAE).</td>
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<tr>
<th>STARCHY FOODS</th>
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<tr>
<td>· Starchy vegetables are limited to one cup per week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Potato items are limited to once per week in elementary schools and twice per week in high schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Nachos are limited to once a month in elementary schools and once a week in high schools.</td>
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<tr>
<th>FIBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>· Breakfast requires a daily minimum of 3 grams of fiber.</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Lunch requires a daily minimum of 7 grams of fiber.</td>
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</table>
FAT, SUGAR AND SODIUM
- Deep fat frying, MSG, trans fats, and high-fat, high-sugar condiments are prohibited.
- Artificial and added sweeteners are prohibited from water and juice.
- Sodium levels must meet the prescribed USDA targets for school year 2017-2018.
- No sodium is added in meal preparation, and no salt shakers are made available to students.
- Syrup is limited to one packet per meal.

LOCAL FOODS
- Feature locally sourced fresh frozen items once each week.
- Feature locally sourced fresh items twice each month.
- Feature locally-raised no antibiotic ever chicken at least twice each month.

REFORMULATED FOODS
- No reformulated or “copycat” foods are offered.

BREAKFAST RESTRICTIONS
- No dessert-like items are served at breakfast.
- Cereals contain no more than 5 grams of sugar, unless they provide 3 or more grams of fiber.

BEVERAGES
- All milk is low-fat or skim.
- No chocolate milk at breakfast in elementary schools.
- All beverages served or sold must meet the Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy.

CALORIES
- Elementary school breakfast calorie range: 350-550
- High school breakfast calorie range: 450-600
- Elementary school lunch calorie range: 550-700
- High school lunch calorie range: 750-850
CPS Nutrition Support Services Vision

Every Chicago Public Schools student has access to delicious, nutritious and affordable meals enjoyed in a pleasant environment. Our work is guided by these core values:

Health Equity
Everyone deserves to lead a healthy life, and school meals are a powerful way to increase access to healthy foods and habits.

Student Health
Healthy, well-nourished students are more likely to attend school and to be engaged and ready to learn.

Nutritious Meals
Good nutrition is essential to children’s physical and cognitive development and positively affects their academic achievement. All students deserve access to nutritious school meals that are appealing and culturally diverse, providing them with the best opportunity to learn and thrive.

Local Focus
Local products can be fresher, less processed and more nutritious. Purchasing these items supports the local economy and helps to reduce our carbon footprint.

Buying Power
As one of the largest school districts in the country, what we buy can encourage the market to provide healthier, more sustainable and less processed products to schools across the country. Working in collaboration with other large school districts helps to positively influence the market.

Healthy Knowledge
Each meal has the opportunity to mirror classroom education by providing students with the knowledge to develop a lifelong relationship with healthy food and promote an understanding of cultural diversity and environmental issues.

Vital Partners
Feedback from students, parents and the community is vital in improving school meals. Food service staff are partners in providing excellent food for our students, while local organizations and businesses can help support the mission of the school meal program.

Positive Dining Experience
The dining experience should encourage positive social interaction and healthy eating in an environment that students enjoy and makes them feel safe.

Role Models
School staff are important role models who can encourage healthy behaviors in students by engaging in healthy behaviors themselves.

Sustainability
The school meal program should support sustainable food systems. The school cafeteria can serve as a way for students to learn about sustainability and participate in the conservation of natural resources.

Fiscal Responsibility
The school meal program should be a well-managed, fiscally sound operation.
11 Pathways to Success
11 Pathways to Success

Improving the nutritional quality of school meal programs is complex and dependent on many factors. CPS, with guidance from the Community School Food Advisory Group, has identified 11 interconnected pathways that relate to the CPS School Food Standards and the Nutrition Support Services’ strategic goals.

These pathways are a practical way for the district to institutionalize the values and improve the school food environment for all students.
11 Pathways to Success

1. **Food Culture + Health**  
   Offer culturally diverse, nutritious school meals that are appealing to students.  
   *Values: Student Health, Nutritious Meals*

2. **Procurement**  
   Support and expand the procurement of local and sustainably grown products and foods that are less processed and more nutritious.  
   *Values: Nutritious Meals, Local Focus, Healthy Knowledge, Sustainability*

3. **Teaching + Learning**  
   Deepen students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes related to where food comes from; how it is produced; and the connections between our food, our health and the environment.  
   *Values: Student Health, Healthy Knowledge*

4. **Community Engagement**  
   Involve CPS families and the community in the efforts to improve school meals by strengthening feedback mechanisms and providing engagement opportunities, including educational opportunities to raise awareness, understanding and support for the school meal program.  
   *Values: Vital Partners*

5. **Leadership**  
   Continue being a national leader in serving healthy, delicious meals while igniting change by sharing best practices and using creativity to overcome barriers; use the purchasing power and prestige of being the third largest district to influence the marketplace to provide better quality products that are fiscally responsible.  
   *Values: Nutritious Meals, Local Focus, Buying Power, Vital Partners*

6. **Marketing + Communications**  
   Promote healthy meal programs and meaningful learning environments to school staff, students and their families.  
   *Values: Student Health, Nutritious Meals, Buying Power, Healthy Knowledge, Vital Partners, Positive Dining Experience*

7. **The Dining Experience**  
   Create an inviting dining environment that encourages positive social interaction and healthy eating—a place that students enjoy, that makes meals a time they look forward to, and that helps them feel safe and valued at mealtime.  
   *Values: Student Health, Healthy Knowledge, Positive Dining Experience, Vital Partners, Sustainability*

8. **Professional Development**  
   Provide regular professional development to support food service staff in providing excellent food for our students; help educators teach students about food and food systems as a way to learn about health and nutrition, cultural diversity, and the environment; support all school staff to model healthy behaviors to encourage healthy habits among students.  
   *Values: Healthy Knowledge, Vital Partners, Role Models*

9. **Facilities**  
   Have dining facilities that allow for the cooking of healthy and less processed meals and reinforces lessons learned in the classroom.  
   *Values: Healthy Knowledge, Positive Dining Experience*

10. **Finances**  
    Ensure that the school meal program is fiscally sound while providing fresh, nutritious foods.  
    *Values: Fiscally Sound, Nutritious Meals*

11. **Environment**  
    Support sustainable food systems and reduce waste while helping students understand the need to conserve natural resources. Implement green facility cleaning practices to reduce health risks for students and staff, and reduce the environmental impact of cleaning products and materials.  
    *Values: Healthy Knowledge, Positive Dining Experience, Role Models, Sustainability*
1 Food Culture + Health

Goal
Offer culturally diverse, nutritious school meals that are appealing to students.

Values
Student Health, Nutritious Meals

Current Commitments
- Established and adopted healthier standards than what is required by federal regulations and guidance issued. All menus meet the CPS Food Standards (Outlined on page 34.)
- Serving student-developed Cooking up Change recipes at least once a month. (Spotlight on page 23.)
- Adopted the Good Food Purchasing Policy that supports and enhances existing innovative initiatives, including sourcing local and sustainably produced items and offering foods that meet high standards for nutrition, while reducing salt, added sugars and saturated fats, and eliminating artificial additives.
- Implemented a variety of programs to increase student access to nutritious foods including the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) so that all students are offered breakfast and lunch free of charge each day; several Breakfast after the Bell delivery models; the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP); after-school and weekend snacks and meals; as well as summer meal programs that provide free healthy meals at many sites across the city to all children.
- Designed menus in an effort to reflect and celebrate the diversity of CPS students and incorporated Chicago favorites. Developing culturally diverse menus is a priority for the district; in an effort to address this CPS conducts tastings, focus groups and an annual high school student survey, and has established parent and community advisory groups to help improve school food. (More on page 18.)

Action Plan
- Expand daily vegetarian options to include more plant-based proteins.
- Continue to implement the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, including the nutrition standards articulated in this legislation and in the district’s CPS Food Standards.
- Implement the Ingredient Guide for Better School Food Purchasing and food purchasing goals aligned with the City of Chicago’s Good Food Purchasing Policy.
- Continue to expand alternative breakfast models to all high schools, including breakfast vending, grab n’ go, breakfast in the classroom and second chance breakfast.
- Strengthen student feedback collection systems by conducting an annual K-12 survey, focus groups and tastings.
- Continue to strengthen community engagement efforts by convening the parent and community school food advisory group.
- Incorporate salad bars into the daily menu at all schools.
Ensuring All Students Get Nutritious Food

A federal program is helping CPS provide free meals to all of its students.

The Community Eligibility Provision
Starting in 2014, CPS started offering all of its students free breakfast and lunch. More than 85 percent of CPS students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, but a strategy the district adopted is helping to remove the burden of taking advantage of that important benefit. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) was laid out in the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010 and allows districts and schools to provide free meals to all students. This provision reduces the administrative burden on the district and families and ensures all students are getting the meals necessary to fuel their learning.

The Benefits of the Community Eligibility Provision
The program expanded nationally in 2014, and CPS adopted the provision that same year. Since then, all of the district’s students are able to eat lunch, breakfast, snacks and after-school meals at no cost. One area that has seen the greatest impact is school breakfast. Because implementing CEP allows schools to offer universal free school breakfast, it is a great way to facilitate the adoption of effective breakfast models, such as Breakfast in the Classroom.

The Program's Impact in Chicago
In CPS, 59.3 percent of students ate breakfast at school during the 2015-2016 school year—up from 34 percent during the 2012-2013 school year, according to reports from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). “Our department’s main goal is to feed students healthy meals so that they are ready to learn,” says Leslie Fowler, Chief of Nutrition and Facilities Operations. “Providing breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students through community eligibility has boosted participation by removing barriers like household applications and collecting fees from students. By feeding more children we are benefiting our schools, our students and our community.”

The program is also a financial win for the district. The streamlined program provides significant administrative savings in addition to increased participation, both of which support the financial viability of the district’s school nutrition programs.
2 Procurement

Goal
Support and expand the procurement of local and sustainably grown products and foods that are less processed and more nutritious.

Values
Nutritious Meals, Local Focus, Healthy Knowledge, Sustainability

Current Commitments
- Expanded the local produce program to all schools. Each monthly menu features locally sourced fresh frozen items once each week, locally sourced fresh items and local No Antibiotic Ever (NAE) chicken drumsticks twice each month.
- Partnered with FarmLogix and other partners to seek out and purchase local and sustainably grown produce. The district has purchased over $10 million in fresh and frozen local produce and poultry since school year 2013-2014.
- Adopted the Good Food Purchasing Policy in 2017, which will implement food purchasing goals, including sourcing locally and sustainably.
- Supported animal welfare by only procuring from poultry producers that conform to the Certified Responsible Antibiotic Use Standard (CRAU).
- Kicked off the NAE chicken initiative in school year 2012-2013 when the district purchased half a million pounds of Indiana-raised, Amish antibiotic-free chicken from Miller Poultry, with the support of School Food FOCUS, Pew Charitable Trusts, Healthy Schools Campaign and Whole Foods Market.
- Piloted and implemented a garden to cafeteria program, Eat What You Grow, which allows produce grown by students in school gardens to be used in school dining centers.

Action Plan
- Purchase exclusively NAE chicken starting in school year 2017-2018.
- Continue to build supply chain for local and sustainable food by working with School Food FOCUS, Urban School Food Alliance and other partners.
- Implement the Ingredient Guide for Better School Food Purchasing and generate a target list of menu items compiled by the CPS School Food Advisory Group, starting with bread items first, then protein and yogurt to eliminate ingredients of concern.
- Continue to expand the Eat What You Grow program and develop Farm to School nutrition education curriculum to be used in the classroom.
SPOTLIGHT

Procuring Less Processed, Healthier Food

CPS has been working on transitioning away from highly processed menus to healthy, less processed food.

Leading the Effort for Healthier Food
The School Food Advisory Group, which CPS co-convenes with Healthy Schools Campaign, has been taking the lead on many of the efforts to provide students with more nutritious, less processed food.

In 2014, the group worked with the University of Illinois-Chicago to benchmark the level of processed food served by the district. Since then, the advisory group has been working with CPS on developing strategies for reducing that amount. One of those strategies has been adopting the Ingredient Guide for Better School Food Purchasing, created in partnership with School Food FOCUS. School Food FOCUS is an organization that works with school districts—including CPS—to break down marketplace barriers to sourcing fresh and healthy food.

CPS was one of the first districts to adopt this new guide. This ingredient guide includes a list of "unwanted ingredients" such as artificial colors and preservatives that are possible carcinogens and should be eliminated from products and a "watch list" that includes ingredients that are common in foods of lower nutritional quality and tend to indicate a highly processed food.

What the Guide Means for Students
Adopting this guide means students in CPS will no longer be served food that contains synthetic dyes, which studies have shown can trigger hyperactivity or other behavioral problems; flavor enhancer Monosodium Glutamate (MSG), which can cause headache, nausea, weakness, and a burning sensation on the back of the neck, forearms and chest in some; or high fructose corn syrup, which contributes empty calories.

CPS looked to the School Food Advisory Group to help prioritize the elimination of ingredients of concern and guide the district in moving the meal program towards less processed foods with their guidance and expertise. After much discussion, CPS is committed to starting with bread items, then moving on to proteins and yogurt. CPS will target bread first because it is the most frequently served, but also it is an easier item to change because the bread is supplied by local company that can be responsive to CPS’ requests.
Teaching + Learning

Goal
Deepen students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes related to where food comes from; how it is produced; and the connections between our food, our health and the environment.

Values
Student Health, Healthy Knowledge

Current Commitments
- Launched LearnWELL, a district-wide effort to incorporate nutrition education; healthy fundraising, celebrations and rewards; and physical activity into classrooms from pre-K through high school.
- Launched an annual healthy school indicator, Healthy CPS, which is displayed on the school progress report card and measures a school’s health and wellness environment and compliance with the wellness policy.
- Transform schoolyards into beautiful and functional spaces to play, learn, garden and be outside through Space to Grow. A key component of each schoolyard is an edible garden which is an extension of the classroom. The schoolyards also use design elements to reduce neighborhood flooding. The partnership, managed by Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands, maximizes financial investment from CPS, the Chicago Department of Water Management and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.
- Implement the federally assisted Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), which provides fresh fruits and vegetables to students in participating elementary schools. The goal of the program is to help children learn more healthful eating habits by exposing them to a variety of fruits and vegetables and increase children’s fruit and vegetable consumption. CPS has expanded FFVP to 162 schools, an increase of 156 schools compared to 2013.
- Implement a comprehensive Farm to School program that has procured more than $10.2 million in produce from regional farmers over the last four years. CPS also established cpsfarmtoschoolmarket.com, a website that includes monthly purchasing reports and resources for schools to deepen students’ knowledge.
- Supports 432 school gardens with a variety of partners so that students can participate in education activities related to agriculture, food and nutrition.
- Launched the Eat What You Grow program to set food safety guidelines and allow produce grown in school gardens to be consumed as part of the school meal in the school dining center.
- Established the role of the school wellness champion, a staff person charged with helping the school meet the requirements of the district’s wellness policy. Currently, 98 percent of CPS schools have a wellness champion. CPS also established the Wellness Champion Leadership Team to discuss best practices, successes and challenges and provide district-wide professional development.

Action Plan
- Support all schools in implementing health-promoting policies and meeting the requirements of the Healthy CPS Indicator.
- Build an additional 25 Space to Grow schoolyards, bringing the total number to 34 by 2020.
- Develop and implement a customized Farm to School nutrition education curriculum, including lesson plans that focus on specific menu offerings. This will include linking nutrition education to core classroom curriculum, school dining and school gardens.
- Continue to expand the Eat What You Grow program and develop curriculum aligning food system and nutrition education with what is being taught in the classroom.
- Continue to implement strategies for educating parents and the community about the importance of healthy eating and how it relates to academic achievement, including publishing a set of toolkits for school stakeholders that communicate the goals of the school meal program.
- Integrate the Illinois Harvest of the Month featured menu item and host monthly farmer visits to ensure the dining center is a key component of Farm to School nutrition education.
Helping Schools Eat What They Grow

Wadsworth Elementary students are now able to eat food from their schoolyard’s edible garden, and CPS will support more schools in eating what they grow.

The Garden at Wadsworth
Just a few years ago, the schoolyard at Wadsworth had an unusable basketball court and a playground with dilapidated slides. After a Space to Grow renovation, the schoolyard has plenty of space for students to play, read and grow their own food.

Wadsworth is one of 150 CPS schools that’s Eat What You Grow certified, which means the food grown in the school’s learning garden can be incorporated into the cafeteria. CPS first piloted the Eat What You Grow program in five schools in 2013 with the help of a USDA Farm to School grant. Not only does the program allow students to eat fresh fruits and vegetables grown right on their own campus, it also teaches students lessons about nutrition and food production in a way that only hands-on learning can.

In early summer, just before school let out, Wadsworth’s garden was bursting with radishes, lettuces and wheat. After harvesting the lettuce, the food service staff cleaned and prepared the greens. A simple dressing featuring orange juice was added to the fresh produce, and the salad was served to students. They couldn’t get enough!

The Impact of Eat What You Grow
The effect of the program and the garden extends beyond just a tasty treat. Wadsworth also has an engaged garden club where students are responsible for planting, tending and harvesting the garden. Teachers incorporate the garden into their lesson plans, including a science experiment using different colored lights to grow plants and a health lesson about butterfly diets featuring lettuce from the garden.

The Eat What You Grow program is a critical way for schools to connect the classroom, the dining center and the school garden.
Community Engagement

Goal
Involve CPS families and the broader community in the efforts to improve school meals by strengthening feedback mechanisms and providing engagement opportunities, including educational opportunities that will raise awareness, understanding and support for the school meal programs.

Values
Vital Partners

Current Commitments
- Convene two advisory groups of city-wide stakeholders and parents to provide action plans for a roadmap of how to continue efforts to provide healthy school food in a financially responsible way.
- Piloted and launched a series of School Food 101 workshops with Healthy Schools Campaign to raise awareness of the new changes to the school meal program to increase understanding of school meal basics and to hear how those changes are being implemented at the school level. CPS facilitates School Food 101 workshops regularly and by request.
- Works with partners to offer nutrition education programming for schools. More than 200 schools participate in one of these programs: Chicago Partnership for Health Promotion (CPHP), Common Threads, Cooking Matters Illinois, Purple Asparagus, The Kitchen Community, Pilot Light and Enlace.
- Established a Health and Wellness Materials Review Committee convened by the Office of Student Health and Wellness to review and approve nutrition education programming provided to schools.
- Meets with researchers and experts to stay informed about the latest research and best practices related to healthy school food and nutrition education.
- Continues to strengthen the mechanisms for student and community feedback by conducting an annual student survey, organizing tastings, conducting focus groups, facilitating School Food 101 workshops and establishing an online feedback form and school food specific email address (food@cps.edu).
- Created a set of new resources with Parents United for Healthy Schools to raise awareness of the CPS’ school meal program, but also to ensure schools are maximizing the meal program to its greatest potential. Read more in the connected Spotlight.

Action Plan
- Expand opportunities for community members to share expertise, feedback and other information related to school food.
- Convene a district Menu Review Committee comprised of school dining staff in order to garner staff feedback and input on daily menu selections.
- Engage with all CPS Student Voice Committees related to the school meal program and establishing healthy school environments.
- Expand student surveys from high school only to include elementary school students.
- Host bi-annual student food fairs where students can sample potential new menu items and give feedback directly to vendors.
Community Support Ensures Success

CPS has been working hard to improve its school food program over the past decade. Parent voices are key to this work.

Parents and Schools Working Together
CPS engages parents through a variety of methods, including through Parents United for Healthy Schools, a parent movement organized by Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC). Parents United helps parents develop the knowledge and skills to help bring about health-promoting changes at their children’s schools and reinforce healthy eating habits at home.

In 2013, CPS and HSC launched a series of School Food 101 workshops to raise awareness of the new changes to the school meal program, increase understanding of school meal basics and hear about how those changes are being implemented at the school level. We asked elementary school parents to survey their kids about the school meals they were receiving. From this learning process, CPS and HSC launched a comprehensive school meal survey for parents in the fall of 2014. The results from this survey made it clear that parents and school administrators needed more resources and information and ways to share their feedback.

New Resources for Parents
It was with that in mind that CPS and HSC partnered with parents to create new resources around school food. A Principal Toolkit was created to educate principals about what decisions they can make to ensure the school meal program is working as well as it can for their schools. We also created Frequently Asked Questions and School Food Checklist documents for parents to help them learn about the school meal program and evaluate how their child’s school is meeting the school meal program requirements.

These resources were unveiled to a group of parent leaders involved in Parents United for Healthy Schools. At that same meeting, parent leaders also heard from CPS about the school meal program and were able to sample some of the district’s menu items.

Because of this process, the district is strengthening how it engages with parents around school meals and therefore strengthening the success of the meal program. CPS continually asks for feedback from parents and uses that feedback to create policies, such as the wellness policy, the PE policy and Breakfast After the Bell (Formerly known as Breakfast in the Classroom). This community support has undoubtedly played a significant role in the success of these policies.
Leadership

Goal
Continue serving as a national leader in serving healthy, delicious meals to students while igniting change in school food by sharing best practices and using creativity to overcome barriers; use the purchasing power and prestige of being the third largest school district to influence the marketplace to provide better quality products that are fiscally responsible and reasonable.

Values
Nutritious Meals, Local Focus, Buying Power, Vital Partners

Current Commitments
- Adopted three policies that promote healthy eating and physical activity: the Local School Wellness Policy, the Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy and the Physical Education (PE) Policy. These written policies are stronger and more comprehensive than those of most school districts.
- Adopted Universal Breakfast and Breakfast in the Classroom, initiatives that offer all students, regardless of their families’ income, a free breakfast when they arrive at school. This made CPS the first large urban school district to offer free breakfast to all students.
- Participated in the School Food FOCUS National Procurement Initiative and Midwest Regional Learning Lab, a participatory research process that fully involves food service leaders in rigorous investigation of select procurement goals. The desired outcome is research based innovation in school food purchasing that has been shown to work—real practices that can have local, regional and national impact.
- Served as a key collaborator in the Nourish to Flourish Summit where leaders from every sector of the school meal system came together to discuss the future of school meals and how to best collaborate for excellence in school meals.
- Partnered with the Healthy Schools Campaign to launch a pilot green cleaning program in 2003. Since 2008, the CPS Green Cleaning Policy has been to maintain clean, safe, healthy schools and facilities and eliminate contaminants that affect children and adult health, performance and attendance. CPS is committed to the implementation of cleaning processes and supplies that protect children’s and adults’ health without harming the environment.
- Serves as a key member of the Urban School Food Alliance, a group of the largest U.S. school districts working to build a coalition to change the landscape of school food by increasing demand for high-quality, healthy food at a price feasible for districts nationwide.

Action Plan
- Continue serving as a national leader in serving healthy, delicious meals to students while sharing best practices with other school districts. CPS will also continue to serve in a leadership role in the Urban School Food Alliance.
- Continue to implement strong nutrition standards that meet and exceed standards in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.
- Continue to participate in forums and groups like School Food FOCUS, to continually keep abreast of and integrate evidence-based research and best practices related to healthy school food and nutrition education.
- Continue to be a leader in green cleaning practices.
- Share successes and best practices with other districts.
CPS Leadership Paves the Way

CPS partners with other large, urban school districts to help affect change in the school food marketplace.

Partnering to Maximize Impact
As one of the largest school districts in the country, CPS commands a lot of power when it comes to moving the school food marketplace. To increase that impact even more, CPS partners with other large school districts (Baltimore, Broward County, Clark County, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, Nevada, New York, Orlando and Philadelphia) to form the Urban School Food Alliance.

This group focuses on using their collective buying power for positive change. In particular, they focus on bringing down costs while improving quality and mitigating their environmental impact. Much of their work related to quality and environment is also relevant to health of the consumer. The alliance yields tremendous buying power: Together, its members serve a total of about 469 million meals a year.

Sourcing a Sustainable Tray
CPS was increasingly interested in purchasing a more eco-friendly replacement for its traditional polystyrene tray, but it couldn’t quite find one would that would work. The polystyrene tray cost the district 4 cents each, but many compostable trays cost 14 to 16 cents each. For a district that serves 43 million lunches every year, that would have cost the district over $4 million annually.

That’s where the Urban School Food Alliance came in. The group used their collective purchasing power to find a plate made of recycled newsprint that costs about 5 cents each. Six districts started using the new plates in 2015.

CPS is piloting a composting program in several schools in an effort to have all schools compost the trays in the future. Even so, the recycled plate is more eco-friendly than the polystyrene tray because it’s made of recycled materials, and it leaves the door open for composting in the future.
Marketing + Communications

Goal
Promote healthy meal programs and meaningful learning environments to school staff, students and their families.

Values
Student Health, Nutritious Meals, Buying Power, Healthy Knowledge, Vital Partners, Positive Dining Experience

Current Commitments
- Markets only foods and beverages that meet the nutrition standards set forth in the district’s Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy and prohibits marketing of unhealthy foods.
- Uses digital media to communicate with parents and students, including cps.edu/food and the food@cps.edu email address, and uses Twitter and Facebook to communicate daily offerings and special programs.
- Educates students and their families about the importance of a healthy breakfast to academic achievement and encourages participation in the breakfast program.
- Supports cafeteria activities, including taste tests and menus promoting Illinois Harvest of the month items, to encourage students to taste new foods.
- Offers meals created by students participating in Healthy Schools Campaign’s Cooking up Change annual contest on the school menu once each month. As student-developed recipes, these meals are generally less processed and designed to appeal to students.

Action Plan
- Develop an annual communications strategy and plan with the CPS Communications department and others to raise awareness and elevate the profile of the CPS school meal program.
- Create opportunities for teachers to learn more about the school meal programs and learn ways they can incorporate menu offerings into lesson plans.
- Create a school food newsletter for families and other school stakeholders.
- Communicate CPS’ health-promoting stance on various issues through a variety of strategies, including workshops, digital media, press and the refinement of existing resources and toolkits for school stakeholders.
- Continue to support and expand cafeteria activities such as student taste testing to encourage students to try new foods.
- Continue to brand menu choices in a fun, exciting way that appeals to various age groups, including elevating the branding of student-created meals.
Promoting Student-Designed Meals

Students should have a voice in what they eat at schools, and the Cooking up Change program gives them the opportunity to design their own school meals.

Students Creating Healthy + Delicious Meals
As part of Healthy Schools Campaign’s Cooking up Change contest, four student chefs from Richards Career Academy saw the meal they developed served to 380,000 CPS students. The meal, Vesuvio Chicken and Spaghetti, Chopped Caesar Salad and Caramelized Pear-pone, won first place at Cooking up Change in November 2016.

The meal is a creative, healthy take on a dish from a popular Italian chain, designed and created by the students. Not only is the meal delicious, but it adheres to all of the requirements of the National School Lunch Program, including price and nutrition parameters.

That’s a challenge the student chefs were excited to take on. “We went through so much to come up with this good, healthy lunch for students,” says Naheishia. “We went through four to six different menus before we came up with this one. I learned to never give up and keep pushing and trying until you get it right.”

Adding Student-Designed Meals to the Menu
The CPS school menu now features at least one Cooking up Change recipe every month. These meals have proven hugely popular among students. This is a testament to the students’ skill in creating recipes under real-life constraints and their ability to design healthy lunches that are popular with their peers.

The meals are marketed with special signage in cafeterias and special notes on the CPS menu. Many of the items also contain no antibiotic ever chicken and local fruits and vegetables.

The Cooking up Change program allows students to rewrite the recipe for school food and create meals their peers want to eat featuring culturally diverse dishes and spice combinations not often seen in school meals.
7 The Dining Experience

Goal
Create an inviting dining environment that encourages positive social interaction and healthy eating—a place that students enjoy, that makes meals a time they look forward to, and that helps them feel safe and valued at mealtime.

Values
Student Health, Healthy Knowledge, Positive Dining Experience, Vital Partners, Sustainability

Current Commitments
· Ensure all CPS lunchrooms meet the bronze level of the Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard. The scorecard contains 60 simple, no-cost or low-cost strategies that lunchrooms can use to increase participation, improve consumption of healthy food, and reduce food waste. The strategies are based on research from the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs and partners. Achieving bronze status means schools are implementing 15-25 of the smarter lunchroom strategies.
· Redesigned and rebranded the dining space of 80 schools with student and parent input to improve traffic flow and the overall dining environment.
· Ensured that all schools are on the same menu, regardless of preparation method. CPS schools have three different types of kitchens: cooking, receiving and Open Kitchens.
· Eliminated the use of pre-plated, frozen meals in the school meal program through a partnership with Open Kitchens in Pilsen. The program delivers food to 125 schools that cannot prepare food on site.

Action Plan
· Support all schools in meeting the Smarter Lunchroom gold award level, meaning schools are implementing 45-60 of the strategies.
· Explore establishing guidelines and best practices for redesigning school dining centers and cafeterias.
· Continue to include student and parent voices in redesigning spaces and other efforts to improve the dining experience.
· Align dining center operation requirements and best practices with the district’s Healthy CPS initiative and annual healthy school indicator.
**SPOTLIGHT**

**Improving Kitchen Facilities**

Many CPS schools have challenging kitchen facilities, but CPS uses creative solutions to ensure all students are getting nutritious and delicious food.

**The Challenge with School Facilities**

Many CPS schools have very limited kitchen facilities. In the past, students at these schools were served pre-plated frozen meals. While these meals were supplemented with fresh fruits and vegetables, many students found the pre-plated frozen meals unappealing. As a result of concerns from parents and the guidance of the School Food Advisory Group, CPS worked to change the service delivery model in these schools.

CPS invested in facility upgrades and implemented new service models, in an effort to end the practice of serving pre-plated frozen meals in schools that don’t have full-service kitchens.

**The New Service Models**

Schools can either be a cooking or a receiving school. Schools with adequate space, equipment and facilities are able to prepare all components of the school meal on site. Schools that do not have capacity to cook meals due to facility limitations may be a receiving school. This means that a nearby cooking school prepares meals that are then delivered to receiving school kitchens.

Starting in 2014-2015, CPS contracted with a company named Open Kitchens located in the heart of the Pilsen neighborhood. Open Kitchens serves approximately 125 schools that, due to severe equipment and/or facility needs, cannot prepare food on site. Schools receive two to three deliveries each week of meals that are fresh and never frozen. Schools then reheat the foods to the proper temperature and offer them to students. Since these foods are fresh, the quality is higher, and schools are able to serve items that are more appealing to students.

**The Impact of the New Service Models**

These changes have positively impacted 100,000 students in 175 schools. In the schools that have already transitioned, student participation rates in the school meal program have increased by 16 percent. Regardless of preparation methods, all schools now follow the same core menu year round. While there may be variations due to equipment and facilities, the menu is the same for each school, every day.
**Professional Development**

**Goal**
Provide regular professional development to support food service staff in being partners in providing excellent food for our students; support educators in teaching students about food and food systems as a way to learn about health and nutrition, cultural diversity, and the environment; support all school staff to model healthy behaviors to encourage healthy habits among students.

**Values**
Healthy Knowledge, Vital Partners, Role Models

**Current Commitments**
- Established a five-day onboarding process for newly hired dining staff.
- Developed a professional development opportunity for dining staff called NSS Academy, a voluntary training on how to excel in school dining and customer service.
- Established a dining staff recognition program for outstanding performances by school food service staff. Annual awards are given to school staff based on a variety of merits such as safety record, customer service and more.
- Convenes all 2,200 dining staff for an Annual Back to School Kick Off Professional Development day for food service training.
- Streamlined performance review process, including creating a self-assessment to accompany a formal evaluation for dining staff.
- Provides educators and other school staff with professional development opportunities and resources to create healthier school environments where healthy behaviors are reinforced, encouraged and integrated into classroom learning. OSHW hosts two district-wide professional development days every year.

**Action Plan**
- Encourage school administrators to include school dining staff in school staff meetings.
- Embed health-promoting messages in existing digests, newsletters and other communications shared with dining staff and educators.
- Continue to implement and strengthen professional development opportunities for educators and school staff on supporting a healthy school environment. Professional development will integrate more messaging and resources on how to best support the success of the school meal program.
Providing Food Service Staff with the Tools They Need

Food service staff are an important partner in any successful school meal program, and the NSS Academy makes sure they have the skills and knowledge they need.

Providing Professional Development

Food service staff play a hugely important role in creating the dining experience for CPS students. In order to make sure they have the tools they need, CPS created the NSS Academy. NSS Academy is a professional development training program consisting of 11 mini courses.

The courses give individuals the opportunity to sit down with a group of staff members looking to gain the knowledge necessary to improve their abilities in their current position or looking to move up in the organization. Course topics include: Food Service 101, Diversity and Conflict Resolution, Basics of Culinary Arts and Food Production, and Waste Management.

The Impact of NSS Academy

NSS Academy is an opportunity to provide staff with the lessons, resources and experiences necessary for them to be successful in our meal service program. The interactive platform of NSS Academy provides staff with the opportunity to develop themselves while gaining the confidence to be successful in their roles in Nutritional Support Services.

After completing the training, staff has said: “I find it very beneficial because now I know the right way to do everything and the consistent way to do everything.”

This tremendous professional development opportunity helps to enrich and nourish the lives and experiences of the dining center staff. Ultimately that provides a better dining experience for all CPS students.
Facilities

Goal
Have dining facilities that support the cooking of healthy and less processed meals and reinforces lessons learned in the classroom.

Values
Healthy Knowledge, Positive Dining Experience

Current Commitments
· Redesigned the cafeteria branding in 80 schools with challenging buildings.
· Partnered with the Healthy Schools Campaign to launch a pilot green cleaning program in 2003. Since 2008, the CPS Green Cleaning Policy has been to maintain clean, safe, healthy schools and facilities and eliminate contaminants that affect child and adult health, performance and attendance. CPS is committed to the implementation of cleaning processes and supplies that protect child and adult health without harming the environment.
· Converted 75 of 210 non-cooking sites from modular meals to bulk prep through equipment and facility updates to help schools successfully transition from pre-plated frozen meals to a fresh bulk service model. Open Kitchens is the new local vendor, who provides fresh, never-frozen pre-plated meals to schools.

Action Plan
· Acquire and introduce equipment that improves the ability of food service staff to deliver quality food.
· Explore innovative food service strategies, such as food trucks, for schools with limited facilities.
· Explore establishing design guidelines for all new school cafeterias.
Encouraging Better Habits with Cafeteria Rebrands

The look and feel of a dining space can have a big effect on the entire dining experience. That’s no different with school cafeterias.

Refreshing School Cafeterias
CPS has been working on refreshing school cafeterias to encourage students to eat more fruits and vegetables and be more active.

In order to do this, a new elementary school dining center brand called Feel the Fresh was developed. The brand features bright colors and silhouettes of students made up of fruits and vegetables. The brand was developed specifically for Chicago, and many of the children featured in the branding elements are actual CPS students.

The silhouettes feature only fruits and vegetables that are actually served in CPS cafeterias, and the kids are ethnically diverse and age-representative. All of the kids are doing something active, which helps CPS students see themselves in the environment.

The idea was to develop a brand that could be implemented with little labor (i.e. no painting), little disturbance to the school (i.e. no drilling) and little turnaround time (i.e. no cafeterias closings). The Feel the Fresh kit includes self-adhering wall posters, vinyl murals, signage, decals and a menu sign template. These items are easy for schools to install and use.

The Rebranding in Action
Drake Elementary School on Chicago’s near south side was one of two schools rebranded as a pilot. The rebranded cafeteria opened in May 2016. “When I came into the door this morning, I saw the bright colors,” the school nurse said. “Not only is it amazing, it’s encouraging and it’s propelling us to move forward, not only in the school but in this community.”

Schools with rebranded cafeterias see a 5-15% increase in school meal participation because of the initial excitement. There’s also an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption at those schools.

So far, CPS has rebranded 26 elementary schools with the Feel the Fresh brand. Overall, more than 80 CPS schools have been refreshed with one of the four brands. CPS hopes to rebrand 30 more schools in the next school year.
## Finances

**Goal**
Ensure that the school meal program is fiscally sound while providing fresher, more nutritious foods.

**Values**
**Fiscally Sound, Nutritious Meals**

**Current Commitments**
- Certified compliance with new meal patterns to receive an additional 6-cents per lunch reimbursement.
- Implemented the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) so that all students can participate in the free meal program regardless of income.
- Increased meals per labor hour, which means staff are operating at a higher, more efficient level while providing better service to students and more dollars to the classroom.
- Serves as a key member of the Urban School Food Alliance, a group of the largest U.S. school districts working to build a coalition to drive down the school food service costs.
- Implemented the district’s first ever Point of Sale (POS) system in school year 2014-2015 to more efficiently track and report daily meal counts.
- Maintains student participation by responding to current food markets trends and student requests.
- Maximizes dollars by centralizing contracts to provide kitchen equipment and kitchen hood servicing, cleaning and repairing.

**Action Plan**
- Increase school breakfast participation through a variety of initiatives.
- Continue to incorporate student-selected promotion menu items in an effort to increase participation in the school meal program.
- Routinely evaluate labor and staffing measures based on current industry standards.
- Implement robust focus groups to inform how to grow student participation in the meal program.
- Host bi-annual vendor fairs to identify potential new menu items to be featured at student food fairs and taste tests.
- Continue to seek grant funds that encourage innovation in meal programs and that supplement the overall NSS budget.
Balancing the Budget

The CPS school meal program now turns a profit, but it wasn’t always that way.

The Background
In school year 2012-2013 Nutrition Support Services (NSS) was operating with a $24 million dollar deficit. General funds had to be used to balance the budget and operate meal programs. That meant fewer dollars to use in the classroom. To address this, NSS focused on several key areas of opportunity.

NSS first did an extensive analysis of labor needs across the district. Through this, CPS was able to right size the labor force and realize a cost savings of $6 million. Additionally, NSS applied for the six cent certification, an incentive provided by the USDA for school districts that adopted the new nutrition guidelines. Through this CPS was able to recoup $4.5 million annually to invest back into the program.

Cost Savings and Revenue Initiatives
Around the same time, the USDA was piloting the Community Eligibility Option (now the Community Eligibility Provision), and CPS became one of the first school districts to pilot this program. (Read more about this program on page 13.) After two pilot years, CPS expanded the program to the entire district.

Through this provision, all students can participate in the meal program at no cost to the student. Another benefit to the program is that CPS receives the highest rate of reimbursement from the USDA. CPS has not only seen increased daily student participation in the meal programs but has also seen an increase in revenue of approximately $3 million annually.

CPS released a first ever Request for Proposal (RFP) rather than a bid. This allowed NSS to negotiate the full meal program and ensure excellence for all students through a cost savings of $12 million dollars annually. Finally, CPS invested in a point of sale (POS) system. This system allowed the district to adequately track and capture all meals, as compared to the paper forms previously used. In addition to meal captures, the district has piloted back of house modules to better track inventory, ordering, production records, and hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) documentation.

The Result
Through all of these initiatives CPS NSS is proud to share that the district is operating all meal programs at a profit, generating a combined fund balance of $23 million over four years while contributing $11 million in indirect costs annually to the general fund. This results in more dollars to the classroom so that students can learn and succeed.
Environment

Goal
Support sustainable food systems and reduce waste while helping students understand the need to conserve natural resources. Implement green facility cleaning practices that reduce health risks for students and staff, and reduce the environmental impact of cleaning products and materials.

Values
Healthy Knowledge, Positive Dining Experience, Role Models, Sustainability

Current Commitments
- Transitioned from using polystyrene foam trays to the use of compostable meal trays in all schools starting in school year 2015-2016.
- Established guidelines and protocols collectively called FoodShare, for schools to redistribute uneaten fruit and non-perishable food items to local food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters. In school year 2014-2015, more than 9,000 pounds of produce were donated.
- Added share tables where students can drop off things like packages of carrots, bananas, apples or unopened graham crackers for other students to pick up free of charge.
- Reduced plate waste by using the offer versus serve provision for meal service and providing nutrition education.
- Piloted a composting program at 14 schools.
- Partnered with Healthy Schools Campaign to launch a pilot green cleaning program in 2003. Since 2008, the CPS Green Cleaning Policy has been to maintain clean, safe, healthy schools and facilities and eliminate contaminants that affect children and adult health, performance and attendance.
- Committed to procuring No Antibiotic Ever (NAE) chicken to support public health and the environment.
- Committed to procuring local foods when available and economically feasible in an effort to support local farmers and decrease the carbon footprint of the COS meal program.

Action Plan
- Improve marketing initiatives and raise awareness of environmental efforts related to the school meal program.
- Continue to procure NAE chicken to support public health and the environment.
- Compile lessons learned and best practices about the composting pilot program and disseminate program to additional schools. This will include developing a plan for introducing a composting program.
- Create public awareness among students about reducing waste.
- Continue to promote Share tables and the FoodShare program.
- Monitor amount of unconsumed food.
- Explore other school meal items to source sustainably.
- Launch a back of house waste monitoring program.
Using Water to Clean
CPS uses a technology that allows schools to be cleaned better and safer.

Beyond Green Cleaning
Many schools across the country have adopted green cleaning policies, but Chicago Public Schools has gone one step further and implemented what it calls a “blue cleaning” system. The secret is using electrically activated water (EAW).

Tap water is treated with a low-level electrical charge, which transforms it into a cleaning solution that breaks apart and lifts dirt from surfaces like a magnet. Hard surfaces can be wiped clean quickly without leaving unnecessary chemical residue. Carpets cleaning and spot removal can also be done without unnecessary chemical residue.

The Benefits of Activated Water
Traditional green cleaning reduces the effects of harmful cleaning products but still uses some potentially toxic chemicals. CPS’ program uses only tap water, a salt-and-water brine with an electrical current to charge the water. This means improved air quality for students and staff through the reduction of exposure to chemical agents and odors. Using tap water also improves employee safety and wellbeing by reducing exposure to chemicals at mixing stations.

The program also reduces the carbon footprint of CPS through reducing chemical usage and the energy sources used to transport, store and distribute chemicals.
Laws and Regulations

CPS participates in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, After School Snack, After School Supper, Saturday and Summer Meal programs. All food and beverages served or sold to students as part of these programs, must meet all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including, but not limited to:

Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (Public Law 111-296)
Through this legislation the USDA made the first major changes in school meals in 15 years to help raise a healthier generation of children. CPS will continue to implement the legislation and is committed to the nutrition standards articulated to improve the nutritional quality of meals served and “competitive foods” offered or sold in schools.

The CPS Local School Wellness Policy
This policy requires that all schools serving National School Lunch and Breakfast adhere to the required federal, state and local laws. The policy also requires that all schools which CPS serves as their school food authority are required to meet the CPS School Food Standards. The policy also outlines requirements around nutrition education, physical education and activity. Specifically, schools are required to provide students with consistent nutrition education messages through multiple channels, including the cafeteria, classroom and gardens.

The Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy
This policy requires that all foods and drinks sold on school grounds, including items in vending machines, school fundraisers, à la carte and school stores, meet the specific nutritional criteria. Schools must adhere to the regulations outlined in the Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy in regards to the sale of these items. The policy also requires CPS schools to plan for promoting healthy foods or fun, rather than food, for school fundraising and classroom celebrations.

The Breakfast After the Bell Policy
This policy establishes the requirements for the full implementation of the Breakfast After the Bell program in all Chicago Public Schools. This policy implements alternative models in all schools, including breakfast in the classroom, grab n’ go, second chance breakfast, breakfast vending and hybrid models.

Community Eligibility Provision
CPS implements the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) so that all students are provided meals free of charge each day, regardless of family income.

Other CPS Board policies governing food allergy management, diabetes management, administration of medication, green cleaning and student health and nutrition are also applicable.
Procurement and Nutrition Standards for All School Meals

CPS has elected to establish and adopt healthier standards than what is required by federal regulations and guidance issued by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

In 2012, the USDA released new guidelines for school food: more whole grains, vegetables, and fruits; less fat and sodium; and sensible calorie limits based on the age of children being served. The following are CPS’ procurement and nutrition standards.

Scratch-cooking
CPS is committed to increasing scratch cooking. CPS has increased capacity for cooking at schools by investing in kitchen facilities and will continue to build on those improvements. CPS has eliminated the pre-plated frozen meal delivery model. Also, CPS is committed to regularly offering students freshly baked, bone-in (NAE) chicken among other items.

Elimination and Reduction of Concerning Ingredients
CPS is committed to implementing the Ingredient Guide for Better School Food Purchasing, which includes “unwanted ingredients” and “watch ingredients.” Unwanted ingredients include artificial colors and preservatives that are possible carcinogens; watch ingredients include items such as added sodium and all added sugars that are common in foods of lower nutritional quality and tend to indicate a highly processed food.

Local and Sustainable Procurement
CPS has a longstanding commitment to offer students more foods that are grown within 350 miles of Chicago. At minimum, each monthly menu must feature locally sourced fresh frozen items once each week, locally sourced fresh items twice each month, local chicken raised with no antibiotics at least twice each month, cage-free shell eggs, and milk free of rGHB, BST (bovine somatotropin). CPS will procure only from poultry producers that conform to the NAE standard. Preference will be given to locally grown and processed fruits and vegetables when economically feasible.

Good Food Purchasing Policy
As part of the City of Chicago’s Good Food Purchasing Policy, CPS is committed to implementing food purchasing aligned with supporting five areas: (1) local economies, (2) environmental sustainability, (3) valued workforce, (4) animal welfare, and (5) nutrition.

Reformulated Foods
As part of the district’s ongoing effort to deliver consistent messages to students and families about healthy nutrition and improve student health and school nutrition, CPS offers no reformulated or “copycat” foods as part of the school meal programs. These are foods that are of the same brand and packaging as those sold in stores, but are reformulated to comply with school nutrition standards set forth by the district, as well as by the USDA.

Breakfast Product Restrictions
CPS does not offer or serve dessert-like items for breakfast, including flavored milk, as well as donuts, breakfast pastries, Pop Tarts or any items containing “dessert or candy type” ingredients. Additionally, no reformulated cereals are allowed and breakfast cereals will have no more than 5 grams of sugar, unless they provide 3 or more grams of fiber.

Smarter Lunchroom Strategies
CPS is committed to implementing the Smarter Lunchroom strategies to encourage students to select and eat healthier items. These 60 simple, no-cost or low-cost strategies to increase participation, improve consumption of healthy food, and reduce food waste. The strategies are based on research from the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs and partners.

Fruit
For breakfast, CPS offers a different fruit daily, at least three fresh fruits per week (daily where there is a choice of fruit), and 100 percent juice may be counted as a fruit only once per week. For lunch, five different fresh fruits are offered per week, and 100 percent juice
cannot be considered a fruit. Canned or frozen fruits are allowed only in natural juices or light syrups.

**Vegetables**
For breakfast, CPS allows vegetables from the dark-green, red, orange, beans and peas and other sub-groups to be substituted for fruits to meet the breakfast fruit requirement. For lunch, CPS offers one cup of vegetables daily and two additional vegetable servings weekly.

**Starchy Foods**
CPS limits the servings of starchy vegetables (peas, corn, and potatoes) to one cup per week. Specifically, potato items (i.e., French fries, tater tots, hash browns, etc.) are limited to one time per week in elementary schools and two times per week in high schools. The service of nachos is limited to once a week in high schools and once a month at elementary schools.

**Whole Grains**
For breakfast, 100 percent of grains must be whole grain-rich and no dessert-like foods are allowed. French toast, waffles, or pancakes are only allowed with one syrup packet or a fruit topping. For lunch, all grains must be whole grain-rich and no desserts are offered.

**Protein**
For breakfast, a serving of protein must be a component three times a week with both hot and cold menus. For lunch, a variety of protein is offered each week, with one meatless entrée offered each day. Tofu, soy, beans, legumes, peanut butter, and Greek yogurt are allowed to be used to meet the protein requirement of the breakfast and lunch meal. CPS also sources NAE chicken. All CPS menus are pork free. Lean, finely-textured beef (LFTB), also known as pink slime, is prohibited.

**Fiber**
For breakfast, a daily minimum of 3 grams of fiber must be averaged weekly. For lunch, a daily minimum of 7 grams must be averaged daily.

**Fat, Sugar and Sodium**
CPS prohibits deep fat frying, MSG, trans fats, and high-fat, high-sugar condiments from the school meal program. CPS has sugar limits for milk and milk substitutes and prohibits artificial sweeteners and added sweeteners from water and juice, as outlined in the Healthy Snack and Beverage policy. Sodium levels must meet the prescribed USDA targets for school year 2017-2018 and be on track to meet the final target for school year 2022-2023. CPS meals have no sodium added in meal preparation and no salt shakers are made available to students.

**Beverages**
All milk offered, served or sold shall be low-fat or skim white milk or skim chocolate milk. No chocolate milk is served for breakfast in elementary schools. No added water, preservatives, neutralizers, rGHB, BST or other foreign matters are allowed in the milk served to CPS students. All other foods and drinks sold or served on school grounds, including items in vending machines, à la carte and school stores, must meet the nutritional criteria outlined in the Healthy Snack and Beverage policy.

**Calorie Requirements (averaged over a week)**

**School Breakfast**
- Grades K-5: 350-500
- Grades 6-8: 400-550
- Grades 9-12: 450-600

**School Lunch**
- Grades K-5: 550-650
- Grades 6-8: 600-700
- Grades 9-12: 750-850
Programs to Increase Student Access to Healthy Foods

Community Eligibility Provision
CPS implements the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) so that all students are offered breakfast and lunch free of charge each day, regardless of income.

Breakfast After the Bell
To create a school environment that supports breakfast participation by all students, CPS incorporates breakfast as a part of the school day through Breakfast After the Bell. All schools provide at least one alternative breakfast model, including breakfast in the classroom, grab n’ go, second chance breakfast, breakfast vending and hybrid models.

Summer, After-school and Weekend Food Service Programs
CPS ensures children receive nutritious meals over summer break by providing free meals at outdoor school locations through the LunchStop program to children ages 1-18 years old in the community (children do not have to be CPS students) as well as inside the school to students attending summer programs. CPS also provides opportunity for students to participate in Saturday meal programs and after school snacks or meals.

Farm to School
CPS enriches the connection schools have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by having students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health and nutrition. This includes:

Website
CPS established cpsfarmtoschoolmarket.com, a website that includes monthly purchasing reports and resources for schools to deepen students’ knowledge about where their food comes from and the larger food system.

School Gardens
CPS established guidelines and resources for school gardens so that they are well-maintained and fully integrated into the classroom, the dining center and school culture. CPS launched the Eat What You Grow
program to set food safety guidelines and allow produce grown in school gardens to be consumed in the school dining center so that students can eat what they grow and participate in education activities related to agriculture, food and nutrition.

**Nutrition Education**
CPS requires schools to provide students with consistent nutrition education messages through multiple channels, including the cafeteria, classroom and gardens. Each month CPS, in partnership with the food service company, will highlight one locally grown produce item on the menu. Wellness Champions will receive posters for each month that are to be placed in the dining center. Along with the larger posters, all local menu items will be highlighted on the service line through farmer specific marketing materials.

**Salad Bars**
In an effort to increase student access to healthy food options in the school dining center, CPS is committed to providing salad bar programs to all schools throughout the district.

**The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)**
CPS participates in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), a federally assisted program providing fresh fruits and vegetables to students in participating elementary schools during the school day. The goal of the FFVP is to increase exposure to a variety of fruits and vegetables in an effort to increase consumption and create healthier eating habits.

**Access to Water**
CPS will provide access to free drinking water during meals and snacks to increase students’ overall water consumption, maintain hydration, and provide a healthy alternative to sugar-sweetened beverages.

**Handwashing**
CPS requires all schools to implement the district’s handwashing protocol for students and school staff. Hand washing is an important food safety issue and implementing a hand washing routine allows the students to wash their hands after playing outside and before eating, especially during the cold and flu season.

**Adequate Mealtimes**
Lunch and breakfast schedules should allow 20 minutes of seated time for lunch and 10 minutes of seated time for breakfast.

**Recess Before Lunch**
CPS strongly recommends that elementary schools schedule lunch after the district-required 20 minutes of recess, a practice that aims to improve students’ health and behavior by having children play first and eat lunch afterward. This results in students eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking more milk and water, wasting less food, and are better behaved on the playground, in the lunchroom and in the classroom.
Engaging the Community

CPS is committed to being responsive to community input and building awareness of the CPS Food Standards and the overall school meal program. The Executive Director of Nutrition Support Services or designee is the primary contact for communication and for addressing methods of communicating with the public. To that end, CPS will:

- Actively inform and communicate to school stakeholders about the CPS Food Standards on an annual basis, including any updates to and about the standards.
- Involve a broad set of school stakeholders to participate in the development, implementation, and periodic review of the CPS Food Standards.
- Strengthen the feedback mechanisms between the district and school stakeholders by soliciting student, family and community feedback through a variety of ways including convening a school food advisory group, focus groups, surveys, taste tests of new foods and recipes, and the use of online and print feedback mechanisms.
- Provide support and guidance to schools and families about how to support the implementation of and the goals of the school meal program through toolkits, programs or other resources.

The Office of Nutrition Support Services, in collaboration with the Office of Student Health and Wellness, will oversee the district and school implementation and compliance with the CPS Food Standards, the Wellness Policy and other related policies and in doing so will:

- Develop and maintain a plan for implementation of the execution of the CPS Food Standards that articulate goals and action plans.
- Compile an annual report to share district progress, including progress of district food service providers, in meeting CPS Food Standards and the goals of the school meal program to the Board of Education.
- Provide a health and wellness metric, Healthy CPS Indicator, the district’s annual health-focused measure displayed on the school progress report card that is directly correlated with a school’s health and wellness environment and compliance with district wellness policies.
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School Food Advisory Committee

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