

# **BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**TO:** Board of Education  
**FROM:** Michele Lawrence, Superintendent  
**DATE:** February 25, 2004  
**SUBJECT:** Transforming Education through a School Lunch Curriculum

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The National School Lunch Program represents a \$33 billion annual expenditure of public dollars that in its current state is linked to a national health crisis and ignores sustainable agriculture. The nationwide epidemic of obesity and diet related diseases in school age children has been traced to poor eating habits formed during childhood, and changing children's attitudes and behaviors connected to diet is a national concern.

BUSD sponsored a community-based process that led to the formulation of a District Food Policy adopted by the Board of Education in August of 1999 affirming the district's commitment to improving "the health of the entire community by teaching students and families ways to establish and maintain life-long healthy eating habits."

The enormous amount of dedication from various members of the Berkeley community to promote this food policy can be seen in the work of the Child Nutrition Advisory Committee (CNAC), and through funds directed to our schools via federal and state programs, such as California Nutrition Network (CNN) and the grant for Linking Education, Activity and Food (LEAF). In addition, the combined fundraising efforts since 1995 of the Chez Panisse Foundation, the Center for Ecoliteracy and its Food Systems Project and the Edible Schoolyard have provided in excess of \$4 million for district programs, including but certainly not limited to the Edible Schoolyard. Staff of these organizations and at schools such as Willard Middle School, Le Conte, Malcolm X, and Washington Elementary Schools have attracted some \$6 million total to the district for food related projects.

The creation of the new dining facility at Martin Luther King Middle School, made possible through funding from Measure AA, the \$117 million bond measure passed by 88% of the Berkeley voters, represents an opportunity to demonstrate "the connection between a healthy diet and a student's ability to learn effectively and achieve high standards in school" (BUSD Food Policy, '99); the links between diet and long-term

health; and the impact of institutional buying power of schools on local sustainable agriculture. Most important, the lunch served at this facility can teach powerful and critical lessons and values about ecology, economic systems, socialization, and community. The groundwork for this transformation has been laid at King Middle School. Other schools are in various stages and should be included now to ensure that this change occurs district-wide.

Many organizations and individuals in Berkeley have raised worldwide expectations for what is possible in educational reform linked to children's health, food systems and the environment. Now is the time to build on our experiences by developing a school food service that truly reflects our passions and respects our children.

A vision statement for Transforming Education through a School Lunch Curriculum has been included with this document along with five articles that provide background information:

- “Slow Food, Slow Schools: Transforming Education through a School Lunch Curriculum”, a speech by Alice Waters, October 2003
- “The Obesity Epidemic” from American School Board Journal, January 2004
- “Unhappy Meals” from Mother Jones, January/February 2003
- “Fresh Outta the Farm and Straight to Compton” from Los Angeles Times, February 15, 2004
- “The Incredible Edible Schoolyard” from District Administration, July 2003

Staff and representatives from the Center for Ecoliteracy, the Chez Panisse Foundation, Children's Hospital and the Edible Schoolyard will give presentations at the study session this evening.

**POLICY/CODE**

Education Code 9000, 49520, 49530, 49534, 49547

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

To be determined.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive for information.

# **TRANSFORMING EDUCATION THROUGH A SCHOOL LUNCH CURRICULUM**

## **VISION STATEMENT**

This initiative is a proposed curriculum linking gardening, cooking, and a daily lunch to the full range of academic courses offered to Berkeley Unified School District's K-12 students. Through a sensory, hands-on approach to learning, the curriculum teaches healthy approaches to nutrition; promotes agricultural and regional economic sustainability; strengthens ecological literacy; encourages cooperation and inclusion; and cultivates community.

The incorporation of gardening and cooking into core academic subjects, integrated through the school lunch, is wholly consistent with California's teaching standards; in fact, it expands teacher flexibility in the realization of those academic benchmarks. This dynamic curriculum develops the caring and personal responsibility that children can apply to their own life choices for years to come.