**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

“Food service workers’ jobs become more rewarding and satisfying when the work is less routine and requires skillful execution. It is through professional development that food service staff acquire those valuable and transferable skills that might qualify them for higher pay. When food service staff find the work more satisfying, and receive the respect they deserve, enthusiasm will build for the new program.”

— Marilyn Briggs, former director of the Nutrition Services Division and former assistant superintendent of public instruction for the California Department of Education

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**WHAT’S INSIDE?**

**RETHINKING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** The goal, the challenge, and some key points to remember.

**ROUND TABLE ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**
- **Marilyn Briggs** [former director of the Nutrition Services Division and former assistant superintendent of public instruction for the California Department of Education]
- **Nancy May** [food service supervisor for the Healdsburg (California) Unified School District]
- **Marc Zammit** [director of culinary support and development at Bon Appétit Management Company]
- **Zenobia Barlow** [executive director and a co-founder of the Center for Ecoliteracy] discuss professional development needs.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES:**
Professional development around the farm-to-school model is a new area for food service professionals, teachers, and administrators to contemplate. These valuable resources will spark thought about competencies, knowledge, skills, and training needs.
RETHINKING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Goal To provide food service staff and educators with the professional training and support they need to successfully implement a farm-to-school program that integrates the classroom curriculum and the school lunch experience.

The Challenge Finding the resources and time to provide adequate training for staff to learn new ways to make school lunch part of the academic curriculum.

Using the local food system as a context for learning, and embedding nutrition education in a school’s curriculum, means that there will be new content for students to learn. For teachers, this means new content for them to learn and new strategies for teaching it. For food service personnel, new menus mean developing new ways to purchase and prepare foods. There’s no getting around it: Making the transition to this farm-to-school model, which makes school lunch part of the academic curriculum, will require professional development.

Once the need for professional development is identified, the question is, What is the best training to meet these needs?

Since farm-to-school programs will, of necessity, vary from location to location, there can be no single model of professional development. Members of the Center for Ecoliteracy’s Fertile Crescent Network and Rethinking School Lunch advisors offer general considerations and some specific examples from their own work to help spark ideas at the beginning of program development.
KEY POINTS

Put Professional Requirements in the District Food Policy Though many food service directors provide professional development, it’s not a requirement. The California Department of Education offers training through community colleges. An entire infrastructure is set up, but it’s difficult to fill the classes if there is no specific obligation to attend. To help ensure that the necessary professional development occurs, include it in the district food policy. View it as an investment and a necessary part of any successful program that links farms to school cafeterias.

Menus Will Dictate Food Service Skills New menus based on cooking from scratch may require food service workers to learn new skills, especially if the current service is “thaw-and-serve.” The menus that will be served will indicate what skills the food service staff needs to have. Make a list of all the necessary skills, and survey current staff to see where development is needed.

Find Out What the Law Requires Before designing a professional development program, find out if the school district or state has any professional requirements for food service workers. One California school discovered, for example, that basic sanitation and safety training had emerged only in the past five years, and that only one person in the district needed to be certified in sanitation and safety.

Encourage Dialogue About the New Program Make sure food service staff understand their role in providing and maintaining dining rooms that reflect the district’s intention to support development of healthy eating patterns.

Best Practices for Teacher Professional Development

Concern for students and their learning is at the heart of every effective professional development program.

• Teachers can guide their students more successfully if they have shared the same type of learning experiences. Engaging in active learning, working collaboratively, and using food systems as a context to make learning more meaningful are at the heart of effective farm-to-school teacher professional development.

• Align teacher professional development with the system-based changes that a farm-to-school program introduces. Professional development can use this approach to support the changes in areas such as curriculum.
In designing the framework for professional development, consider the following:

- **Establish goals.** Create a set of clear and shared outcomes for the program.
- **Include time to plan** how the pieces will fit together.
- **Implement the professional development plan.**
- **Leave time for reflection and feedback.** Use the feedback to adjust the professional development program and its goals.

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**RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH**

**Web of Connections**

This document is part of a comprehensive Center for Ecoliteracy project that provides helpful information on topics related to redesigning school lunch programs.

The diagram illustrates our systems approach to integrating school lunch programs with curriculum, improving student health and behavior, and creating sustainable communities.

School administrators, food service directors, teachers, and parents will each approach this project from their unique perspective. Readers can begin with the topic that interests them most, then explore the other related topics.

The entire Rethinking School Lunch project is available at: [www.ecoliteracy.org/rethinking/rsl.html](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/rethinking/rsl.html)
Roundtable on Professional Development

With Marilyn Briggs, Nancy May, Marc Zammit and Zenobia Barlow

Marilyn Briggs: Food service is often the last district partner to be brought into the change process, but it is the one upon which all others rely for success. School districts, especially those that undergo a food policy development process, should plan on implementing a program of professional development for food service staff. Professional development is a direct and critical investment in the individuals the district is counting on to make the change.

Marc Zammit: A fresh prep approach will require workers with different skill levels at higher rates of pay. Instead of a production cook, it would be preferable to hire an executive chef who can write a menu and execute a recipe, someone who knows what to order and how to handle raw food safely.

Marilyn Briggs: I would advocate for better pay for food service workers, and development of some professional requirements and expectations for anyone who is involved in the preparation of food for children. These would include cooking skills, basic sanitation and safety training. Through professional development food service staff acquire valuable and transferable skills, which might qualify them for higher pay.

It is also true that food service workers’ jobs become more rewarding and satisfying when the work is less routine and requires skillful execution. It is through professional development that food service staff acquire those valuable and transferable skills which might qualify them for higher pay. When food service staff find the work more satisfying, and receive the respect they deserve, enthusiasm will build for the new program.

Nancy May: For staff development, we’ve done cooking projects that emphasized how to produce something and how to eliminate a lot of the fat and salt—how to use fresh food and not packaged, and how to look at the menu and create the simplest menu possible. We developed a strong focus on production and serving.

Zenobia Barlow: Providing the support and training necessary to implement new curricula or teaching strategies is an important element of a successful farm-to-school program. For almost a decade the Center for Ecoliteracy has supported schools and teachers as they developed school gardens and other projects that offer students hands-on experiences that link classroom lessons with real life.

One particularly effective teaching strategy the Center has supported is environmental project-based learning (PBL). This strategy allows students to take more responsibility for their own learning as they identify projects that interest them, research answers, and look for solutions to problems. The PBL strategy is ideal for working across discipline areas and integrating skills and content from different subjects.
Nancy May: It’s important to remember that people learn in different ways. Some will get it in the setting of one day’s lesson. Others won’t fully understand it until they have the opportunity to apply it.

Zenobia Barlow: Much of the Center’s most exciting work has been with educators, teachers and principals committed to linking the classroom curriculum to school gardens, kitchen classrooms, school lunch, and regional sustainable agriculture. “Where does our food come from?” is such an evocative question that has the potential for integrating curriculum across subject matter and grade level, and connecting to some of the most important problems of our time. Some of the most effective professional development the Center has supported has provided classroom teachers with the same kinds of learning experiences we advocate for students. From farm tours to hands-on experiences in the garden or with compost, the teachers are the students. The Center supports learning by doing.

Marilyn Briggs [former director of the Nutrition Services Division and former assistant superintendent of public instruction for the California Department of Education], Nancy May [food service supervisor for the Healdsburg (California) Unified School District], Marc Zammit [director of culinary support and development at Bon Appétit Management Company], and Zenobia Barlow [executive director and a cofounder of the Center for Ecoliteracy].
Professional Development Resources

The Center for Ecoliteracy provides the following resources through Rethinking School Lunch:

*Farm to School: An Introduction for Food Service Professionals, Food Educators, Parents, and Community Leaders*, developed by Alison Harmon at Pennsylvania State University for the National Farm to School Program


Other Resources

*Competencies, Knowledge, and Skill Statements for District School Nutrition Directors/Supervisors*

This publication developed for the National Food Service Management Institute is an updated version of their *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills of Effective District School Nutrition Directors/Supervisors* published in 1996. (PDF: 86 pages)


*Foodservice Training Needs*


www.asfsa.org/childnutrition/jcnm/02spring/sullivan/

*Keys to Excellence in School Food and Nutrition Programs*

The American School Food Service Association website provides a self-assessment tool to evaluate school food service programs in four “key” areas: Administration; Communications & Marketing; Nutrition and Nutrition Education; and Operations.

www.asfsa.org

*Professional Development Needs Reported by School Food Service Directors and Recommendations for Meeting Directors’ Needs*

The National Food Service Management Institute at University of Mississippi provides the results of a national survey of food service directors. (Four PDFs: Introduction-Chapter 2: 17 pages, Chapters 3-4: 24 pages, Chapters 5-6: 7 pages, Appendices: 24 pages)

Intro-Chapter 2:

www.olemiss.edu/depts/nfsmi/Information/profdev1.pdf

Chapters 3-4:

www.olemiss.edu/depts/nfsmi/Information/profdev2.pdf

Chapters 5-6:

www.olemiss.edu/depts/nfsmi/Information/profdev3.pdf

Appendices:

www.olemiss.edu/depts/nfsmi/Information/profdev4.pdf
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