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# Reclaiming the Cafeteria

An Advocate's Guide to Understanding Nashville's School Food Environment

Community Food Advocates

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**Reclaiming the Cafeteria:  
An Advocate's Guide to Understanding  
Nashville's School Food Environment**

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**Special Thanks To**

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# Introduction

## Why the School Food Environment Matters

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**Schools have a unique opportunity to become leaders in helping our community’s children develop healthy eating habits for life**

Approximately 67% of school-aged children in Nashville attend public school, and of those, about 68% are eligible for free and reduced-price meals due to their families’ economic status. These students spend the majority of their waking hours on school campuses, and consume anywhere between 35% - 50% of their daily caloric intake in the school cafeteria. For many, the only complete meals they eat are the ones they receive at school. As such, the cafeteria plays a dominant role in the nutritional lives of Nashville’s children.

Many studies have demonstrated a strong connection between children’s food environment and obesity. Children are healthier when healthy food choices are available to them in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools; likewise, children experience higher rates of obesity when they have access to an abundance of unhealthy foods. For that reason, changes to the school food environment can directly improve the health of children, and provides a powerful leverage point to address obesity, academic achievement, and hunger.

**This guide is meant to be a manual for community members interested in understanding the complex inner-workings of the school food environment, so as to better engage in discussions and actions to improve it for the health of our students.**

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# Part I:

# Federal School Meal Programs

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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers two federal school meal programs in which public and non-profit private schools can participate: The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Both programs require that schools meet nutritional standards in order to receive federal assistance in the form of reimbursements (per/meal), and the NSLP receives additional commodity foods which cafeterias can use in their meal preparation. Participating schools must make meals available to all students, at free, reduced or full-price rates depending on the income level of the child. Currently, nearly 32 million children nationwide participate in federal school meal programs each day.

## The History of Federal Meal Programs

Federal school meal programs in the U.S. initially began as small, localized efforts to improve the health of low-income children and enhance their capacity to benefit from schooling. Beginning in the 1890s, private citizen groups promoting health, hygiene and social services were often the vanguards of school meal projects, and in larger cities some were successful in garnering support from municipalities and school boards to continue their programs. In the 1930's, the Great Depression amplified the need for food assistance and raised public awareness about the prevalence of hunger and malnutrition. As public and private institutions failed to meet the meteoric levels of need, an even greater demand was placed on the meal programs that existed.

In an effort to address unemployment and the devastated U.S. farm economy, President Roosevelt included systems in the New Deal to reduce farm production and remove surpluses from the market. Because of the dire public need, those surpluses were purchased by the federal government and redirected to relief programs, creating a mutually beneficial transfer of goods that continued on in various agencies and ultimately became the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture in 1935. Qualifying school meal programs were eligible to receive food so long as they were used in meal production and not

sold on the open market. Meal programs receiving this government support were required to operate as not-for-profits and serve meals free of charge to students that could not afford them.

The importance of such programs was reinforced with the onset of World War II, when reports surfaced that large numbers of young men were failing military physical examinations due to malnutrition. In addition, concerns over wartime food shortages compelled the government to research and established guidelines detailing the exact amount of nutrients required for a person to be healthy and productive, resulting in the the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDAs). The RDAs were used to ensure that members of the military received sufficient nourishment while serving their country, and later became the basis for determining what meals were eligible for federal reimbursement when the War Food Administration began providing small levels of cash support to school meal programs.

In 1946, the National School Lunch Act was passed, establishing a permanent framework for supporting school lunch programs throughout the country. It was passed in Congress after years of lobbying by women's organizations and health and education advocates who felt adamant that a permanent program was needed. As a compromise, the National School Lunch Program was created as a USDA program, rather than within the Department of Education, highlighting the political importance of using schools as a mechanism to support the national farm economy.

Since becoming a permanent fixture in farm, hunger and education policy, the federal meal programs have continued to evolve. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson successfully passed legislation piloting the School Breakfast Program and increasing reimbursement rates to include money for operational costs and state-level administrative expenses, as well as higher reimbursements for free meals served to low-income children. The School Breakfast Program was made permanent in 1975, and along with the lunch and other child nutrition programs, continues to be reauthorized by Congress every five years, providing the opportunity to modify funding levels, nutritional requirements, and implementation standards. The most recent reauthorization occurred in December of 2010 as the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act under President Barack Obama.

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# Meal Program Funding

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## Federal Funding

The Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service provides funding to states for federal school meal programs at a set, per-meal rate. These reimbursements are given only for meals that meet the federal nutrition guidelines by adhering to an approved method of menu-planning. Both the lunch and breakfast programs are “entitlement programs” and are funded sufficiently at the federal level to provide reimbursements for anyone that qualifies for free or reduced meals- no child will be turned away.

*Between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011 the federal reimbursement rates for the National School Lunch Program are (to all states except Alaska and Hawaii):*

National School Lunch Program	Served less than 60% free and reduced	Served 60% or more free and reduced
Paid Lunch	0.26	0.28
Reduced Lunch	2.32	2.34
Free Lunch	2.72	2.74

*For the School Breakfast Program, the reimbursement rates are:*

School Breakfast Program	Non-Severe Need	Severe Need
Paid	0.26	0.26
Reduced Price	1.18	1.46
Free	1.48	1.76

The Metro Nashville Public School District (MNPS) projected in their 2010-2011 budget that the school authority would receive approximately \$25.6 million in federal meal reimbursements that year, which amounts to over 73% percent of the total food service budget.

## State Funding

For states like Tennessee to receive federal reimbursements for meal programs, “matching funds” from the state budget must be provided to the school food authorities. The USDA’s Southeast Regional Office calculates the required state contribution in a three year cycle, which must be no less than 30% of the federal reimbursements received by Tennessee in the year 1980, with other adjustments factored in. The state allocates those funds to school districts for food service-related expenses, based on the meal participation rate in that district. Schools qualify for these funds by meeting certain personnel-related requirements related to the training and certification of kitchen staff. According to the MNPS Central Office, they meet these requirements consistently and are able to receive state funds accordingly.

**In 2010-2011, the Metro Nashville Public Schools were provided \$320,130 of state matching funds to be divided amongst its 139 schools. Given MNPS’ student population of approximately 76,000, that sum amounts to \$4 per student, per year.**

## Local Funding

MNPS’ operating budget is financially independent of the overall school district budget, which is called a “self-supporting” budget. No city funds contribute to the expense of the program, and each cafeteria operates as a business, producing its own revenue through the slim profit margin of plate lunch and a la carte sales. Revenue from these sources, as well as reimbursements from the Department of Agriculture and the small state contribution of matching funds, is all that constitutes the MNPS Food Service Fund.

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# Menu Planning and Nutritional Components

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Cafeterias participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs must use one of five different sanctioned menu-planning methods: Traditional Food-Based, Enhanced Food-Based, Nutrient Standard, Assisted Nutrient Standard and Alternative Menu Planning. Each method is designed to ensure students receive a balanced meal based on the USDA’s Nutrition Standards. Meals deemed to be incomplete are *not* eligible for federal reimbursement. MNPS cafeterias use the Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning approach.

## Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning

Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning requires that each meal contain specific amounts of different food group “components,” with portion sizes determined by age group. This method lends itself toward structured meal patterns and is intended to emphasize whole foods over highly fortified foods. Breakfasts must offer 3 or 4 items from 4 component groups: meat/meat alternative; grains/bread; juice/ fruit/or vegetable; and milk. Lunches must offer 5 items from the same 4 component groups: meat/meat alternative; bread; vegetable; fruit; and milk.

There are various food items that fall within each component group:

**Meat/Meat Alternate** = meat, poultry, fish, cheese, peanut butter or other nut or seed butters, nuts, eggs, dry beans, yogurt, and alternate protein products.

**Vegetables and/or Fruits** = raw, cooked, fresh, dried, canned, and frozen; and full-strength juice.

**Grains/Breads** = bread, tortillas, bagels, rice, pasta, rolls, and many more products made from enriched or whole-grain meal or flour, bran or germ.

**Milk** = fluid, served as a beverage.

Although food components are the critical building blocks of a meal designed by the food-based menu plan, students are allowed to refuse up to one item from a breakfast and two items of a school lunch due to a federal rule encouraging an “*offer versus serve*” policy. Many schools call this flexible approach to meal service as allowing a “no thank you portion,” which helps prevent plate waste caused by students taking food items they don’t plan to eat. A meal is still reimbursable at the usual rate so long as the required number of components is still taken at the correct serving size.

## Variation Amongst Cafeterias

MNPS’ dietician designs a district-wide menu each month (used by all grade levels), and cafeteria managers order the items they need to create each designed menu according to their school’s participation rate in the meal programs. *Manager’s Choice* allows cafeteria managers to make modifications to the menu, both by adding or replacing food items within the required meal component categories. Often managers will do this to respond to a shortage or a surplus of a food item, or to provide more options to students than the original menu allows.

On a school-by-school basis, there may also be variation in how much of a food item is prepared by kitchen staff. On a day when the menu, designed by the district dietician, calls for two entrée food items, it is up to the discretion of the kitchen staff at each school to determine how many of each item to prepare in order to meet their perception of student demand. If turkey tetrazini and tacos with whole grain tortillas are on the menu, the kitchen staff will make as much of each item as they feel they can sell to students. There is no prescribed ratio that mandates equal portions of each entrée be made.

Should a cafeteria manager wish to make other changes to the menu, they would need to consult with and receive permission from their field supervisors, and any changes would need to uphold the federal nutrition guidelines.

# The Price of School Meals

There are three categories of prices within federal school meal programs – Free, Reduced- and Full-Priced (although the price of a “Full-Price” meal does not cover the entire cost of its production—so it’s important to note that every category of meal is subsidized to some extent).

Eligibility for free or reduced meals is based on a household’s income in relation to the federal poverty guidelines, which are typically updated on a yearly basis. A student living within a household making 185% or less of the federal poverty level would be eligible for *reduced* price meals. A student living within a household making 130% or less of the federal poverty guidelines would be eligible for *free* school meals.

**In the Spring of 2010, over 68% of MNPS students were approved to receive free or reduced-price school meals.**

Some students are categorically eligible for free meals, including foster children, and children whose households receive SNAP (food stamps) or Families First (the state of Tennessee’s name for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). They are automatically eligible for free meals, regardless of income level. Other families must complete an application form and submit it to any school within the district for review and approval on a yearly basis.

National School Lunch Program	Price of Meals for MNPS Students
Full-Price	\$2.00 Elementary \$2.25 Middle/High School
Reduced-Price	\$0.40
Free	\$0

School Breakfast Program	Price of Meals for MNPS Students
Full-Price	\$1.25
Reduced-Price	\$0.30
Free	\$0

## Alternate Eligibility Requirements

To streamline local implementation of federal school meal programs, Congress created three provisions which provide alternatives to the typical requirement of determining yearly eligibility for free/reduced school meals. Each provision is intended to reduce administrative burdens and provide a cost savings to school food authorities.

**Provision 1** allows eligibility for free meals to be determined every two years, rather than every year, reducing the application burdens carried by schools.

**Provision 2** requires schools to offer free meals to their entire student population regardless of income. In return, participating schools operate in a four year cycle: during the first year, income eligibility is determined for free and reduced meals, creating a set monthly ratio that will be applied during the next three years to a simple total monthly meal count. Schools will continue to receive reimbursements and commodity foods based on the eligibility percentages determined during year one.

**Provision 3** also requires participating schools to serve meals to all children at no charge. A school's level of federal reimbursement and commodity support is determined by a "base year," which sets the level of assistance to be received each year for the following four years (with minor adjustments based on student population changes and inflation).

Provisions 2 & 3 remove the administrative burden of collecting money, swiping meal cards, processing yearly free and reduced meal applications and tracking meal categories (free, reduced and paid). These options have broader benefits than Provision 1, including the streamlining of meal service, decreasing food service costs, and increasing participation in meal programs. In practice, schools are able to save considerable resources which cover the fees no longer paid by full and reduced price meals, with extra revenue for cafeteria upgrades.

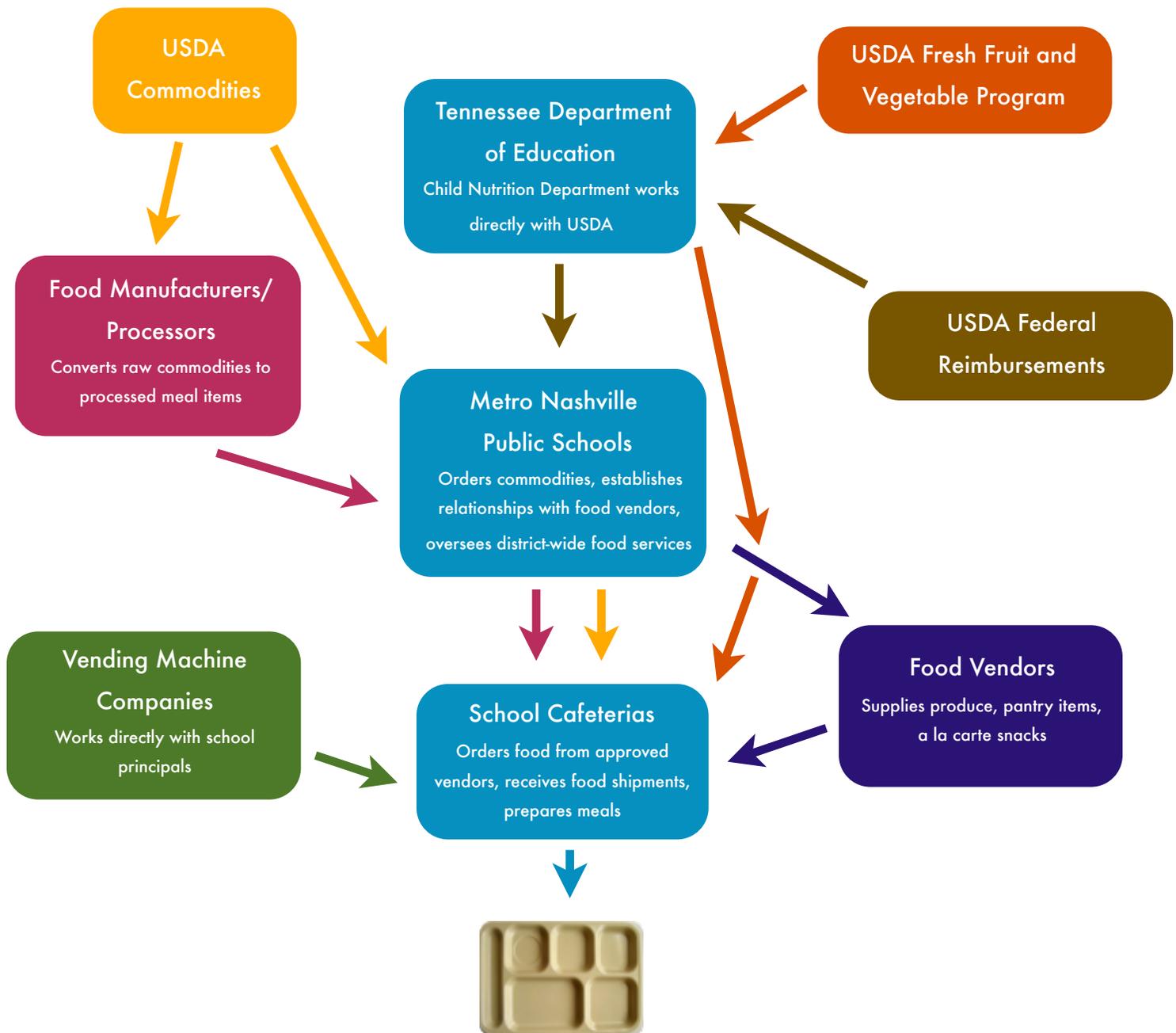
Studies have shown that 75% or more of the student population must qualify for free or reduced school meals for Provision 2 to be financially sustainable; however schools with lower percentages have found methods for making the provision work, including only serving universal breakfasts. Studies have also shown that participation in Provision 2 or 3 can increase student participation by up to 20%.

**Community Eligibility** is a new universal meal option authorized by the 2010 Child Nutrition Reauthorization (also called the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act). In schools where at least 40% of the student population qualifies for free school meals, all students can receive meals at no-charge regardless of their eligibility and without paper applications. Reimbursements to the school are calculated through a formula which reimburses a percentage of meals at the "free rate" and a percentage at the "paid rate." This option will be gradually introduced, with only three states chosen by the USDA to participate in the 2011-2012 school year.

Presently, no MNPS schools participate in any alternative reimbursement provisions.

# Part II: The School Food Supply Chain

Food service within the Metro Nashville Public Schools is centralized; schools do not purchase outside of the relationships that have been established by the Central Office with food vendors.



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# USDA Entitlement Commodities

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Entitlement commodities are an important piece of the package of support provided by the USDA to school districts running school meal programs. Approximately 95% of public schools nationwide participate in the National School Lunch Program, and 87% of those schools also participate in the School Breakfast Program. At those schools between 15-20% of food served in breakfasts and lunches comes in the form of USDA commodities.



Each district is assigned an “entitlement” amount determined by the student population from the previous school year. This dollar amount allows the district to order commodity food items from the USDA Foods Master List, until their entitlement has been spent, in accordance with the menu planned by the district dietician. The list contains about 180 items of standard kitchen staples and an increasing quantity of healthy choices like whole grains, lean meat and low-sugar and fat products. While it is not possible for school districts to specify what producers or regions they would like their products to come from, all USDA commodities are grown in the U.S.

Commodity foods are purchased by the government from the agricultural sector. Historically, this practice began in the 1930s as a means of stabilizing the economy and removing surplus food products from the market. Schools and hunger related programs were a logical beneficiary of this food, and the dual purpose of this commodity purchasing and distribution continues to this day. However, surplus food now constitutes a very small portion of overall USDA commodities—these “bonus” items tend to be unexpected and amount to less than 2% of all commodities offered. The majority of commodities are now intentionally planned for and purchased to serve the nutrition programs operated by the USDA.

Nationally about 50% of all commodity foods delivered to schools is diverted to a food manufacturer that can make easy-to-serve and quickly re-heatable meal items from the staples provided by the USDA. Although the cost of this processing is incurred by the school districts, many do not have the skilled labor or properly equipped kitchens to cook from scratch for their students.

## Commodity Processors

MNPS sends a portion of its raw USDA commodities to manufacturers, which can make uniform portions of processed food that are more easily distributed to students according to proper portion size. The district does incur a cost for the processing – which is absorbed in the overall “Food Purchases” line item of \$12 million – and transportation of that food from their processors to the school district – a \$367,839 expense called “Freight and Storage” in the Food Service budget. (While some school districts in the U.S. “trade in” their USDA commodities for processed equivalents of those items, this is not the case with MNPS.)

Because MNPS is an urban school district serving a large student population, hiring manufacturers to process raw items has multiple advantages from a food service perspective. Skilled kitchen labor can be difficult to procure within the confines of a limited personnel budget, and working with manufacturers can relieve some of the burden of ensuring adequate food safety, uniformity of portion sizes, and meeting USDA nutrition guidelines.

The commodities most commonly processed by MNPS and the manufacturers they contract with are:

Chicken	Beef	Turkey	Cheese	Eggs
Tyson	Advance Foods	Sunnyland	Land-O-Lakes	Sunnyland
Pilgrim’s Pride		Jenny-O		

## Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

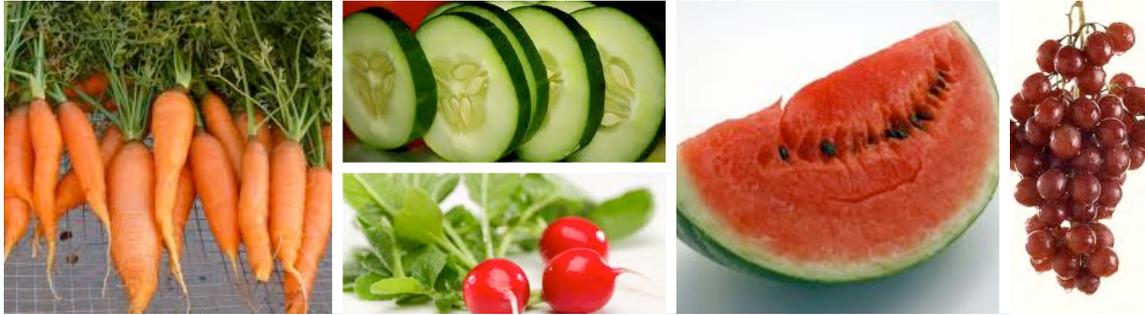
The Department of Defense operates a fresh fruit and vegetable purchasing program which school districts can order from using their USDA commodity entitlement funds. The program operates nationwide, contracting with regional vendors to supply and deliver to schools, and offers a variety of low-cost produce items not available through the USDA.

MNPS does not currently participate in the program – although DOD offers very low unit prices, their specialized ordering system places an administrative burden on district staff and can require additional personnel, offsetting the cost-savings. However, the district has participated in past years, and continues to consider the program as it makes decisions during the annual bidding process.

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# USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

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The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program began as a successful pilot program in 2002 with the goal of increasing the consumption of fresh, wholesome foods in public schools and improving the health of students. The program was made a permanent part of the National School Lunch Program in the 2008 Farm Bill, and funding is provided to all fifty states.

The Tennessee Department of Education is provided a lump sum of funds for all school districts, and accepts annual applications from individual schools to participate. They create their own eligibility requirements for applicants, which most recently required that 75% of the students at participating schools qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

Within MNPS, eight elementary and middle schools were awarded grant money (issued through reimbursements) for fresh fruit and vegetable purchases. The schools participating in 2010 - 2011, and their funding allocations, are:

Hattie Cotton Elementary - \$19,100

Glenview Elementary - \$30,500

Shwab Elementary - \$18,100

Stratton Elementary - \$30,200

KIPP Academy - \$9,550

Murrell School - \$4,000

Una Elementary - \$39,500

H.G. Hill Middle School - \$20,600

Funding is awarded to schools on a per-student basis, and should provide the resources to purchase additional fruits and vegetables to serve to students, free of charge, at least two times per week during the school year. They are required to be served outside of the normal time frames of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, and the items purchased must be different than produce items served in the cafeteria.

The state agency or school district determines the process by which the produce is purchased and served. Within MNPS, enrolled school sites can order produce from vendors already contracted with the school district, and then request reimbursements directly through the Tennessee Department of Education.

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## Food Vendors

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Aside from USDA commodities, which are ordered directly by a school district from the USDA using their entitlement dollars, the majority of the food prepared in a school cafeteria is purchased on the open market from food vending companies and suppliers.



### The Bidding Process

MNPS works with multiple vendors to supply their food service program. Any vendor that carries a product solicited by MNPS can enter the “bidding process” and compete with other vendors to be selected by the district to form a business relationship. Vendors are considered based on their ability to meet the needs of 134 schools, deliver on the schedule required by MNPS, and meet the specifications of the products and prices sought. The Food Service department submits requests to the Purchasing Department based on their review of the bids.

The state of Tennessee, as established in the 2009 Senate Bill 3341, requires each school district to offer

special consideration to local agricultural products and allow for flexible opportunities which will facilitate the ability of local farmers to bid on portions of a menu plan, rather than the entirety of it.

Depending on the item, bids may be accepted on a yearly, twice-yearly, weekly, or five-year basis.

2010 - 2011 MNPS Food Vendors			
Produce	Groceries	Milk	Bread
Williams	Institutional Wholesale Company (supplies majority of product)	UC Milk Company - Goldenrod Dairy	Wonderbread (UBC)
Feyvorite	Otis Spunkmeyer (for whole-grain cookie)		
Institutional Wholesale Company	Coca-Cola (for some non-soda beverage products)		
Angelo Formosa			

MNPS negotiates bids for produce on a weekly basis. In any given week, they may purchase from all four approved vendors, or only one, depending on which supplier has the products needed by the district. Cafeteria managers are able to view the quotes provided by the vendors and fill out requests for the items they need from the vendor of their choosing, taking cost into consideration. Therefore, vendors may vary from school to school depending on which items are ordered.

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## Competitive Foods

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Competitive foods are food items offered within the school food environment that compete with the federally subsidized meal programs for students' dining dollars. These food items are sold in **a la carte**

**lines, student stores, vending machines and school fundraisers**, and have little to no dietary restrictions governing them. The USDA has prohibited certain low-nutrient items from being sold during sanctioned meal periods, called “Foods of Minimum Nutritional Value” (FMNV). These items include: soda water; water ices; chewing gum; hard candy; jellies and gums; marshmallow candies; fondant; licorice; spun candy; and candy-coated popcorn.



It is important to note that a la carte food items are often assumed to be snack foods that differ from the federal meal program foods. However, a la carte sales also include any additional helpings of a food component purchased by a student beyond the number allowed by a reimbursable meal. If a student would like a second helping of green beans, for instance, it will be charged as an a la carte item. Sales of plate lunches to teachers, parents and community members are also rung up as a la carte.

In the 2010-2011 school year,  
MNPS will spent nearly \$12  
million dollars on food purchases  
and receive \$1.8 million of  
donated USDA commodities.

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## Part III:

# The Policy Landscape

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### **2004: Wellness Policy Mandate**

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization of 2004 established a requirement that all schools participating in the school lunch and/or breakfast programs must create a wellness policy by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. Schools are required to engage a broad group of individuals in policy development and create a plan for implementation and measuring effectiveness. Wellness policies must set goals for:

- Nutrition Education
- Physical Activity
- Campus Food Provision
- Other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness

MNPS adopted their wellness policy in June of 2006 and revised the policy in December 2009 and January 2010. The policy document contains the following components:

#### **Healthy School Environment:**

- Schools must form Healthy School Teams, consisting of school personnel and parents to oversee the implementation of the Wellness Policy at the school level.
- Elementary schools should limit classroom celebrations serving food to two per month and must occur after lunch.
- Snacks served during the school day or in after-school programs should make a positive contribution to health.

#### **Health Education:**

- Schools should ensure nutrition education is taught at each grade level.
- Elementary students must have daily supervised recess when weather permits.

**Nutrition Services:**

- Schools should ensure vending machines are turned off during lunch.
- Schools should follow school meal guidelines.

**School Health Services:**

- The district should provide parents/guardians with results of health screenings performed through the Office of Coordinated School Health.
- Schools should promote programs to increase exercise, weight management, good nutrition and stress management.

**Family and Community Involvement:**

- The district and schools will partner with parents and community members to institute programs that support nutrition education and physical activity.
- Schools should encourage parents to serve on Healthy School Teams.

**Pre-Kindergarten Health Services:**

- Schools should provide professional development training for staff in universal precautions, first-aid, CPR and AED.

**Counseling, Psychological and Social Services:**

- Schools should ensure all teachers receive suicide prevention training.
- A School counseling program should be developed and school counselors will provide educational support for all students by promoting and facilitating their academic, personal/social and career development.

**COORDINATED SCHOOL HEALTH**

The MNPS Wellness Policy also adheres to the 8 components of Coordinated School Health, and the Office of Coordinated School Health provides many critical support services to help schools implement the policy’s goals. The office can connect schools with opportunities for training, nutrition education, tobacco prevention, after school activities, physical education and grant funds.



The eight components of Coordinated School Health Programs are:

*School health services:* Preventive services, education, emergency care, referral and management of acute and chronic health conditions.

*Health education:* A planned, sequential K through 12 curriculum addressing the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of health to help students develop health knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

*Health promotion programs for faculty and staff:* Planned health promotion and disease prevention programs and opportunities for school staff.

*Counseling psychological and social services:* Services that focus on cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social needs of individuals and families.

*School nutrition services:* Integration of nutritious, affordable, and appealing meals, nutritional education, and an environment that promotes healthy eating behaviors for all students.

*Physical education programs:* A planned, sequential K through 12 curriculum that promotes lifelong physical activity.

*Healthy school environment:* A safe physical and psychological environment that is supportive of learning.

*Family and community involvement:* Partnerships among schools, families, community groups, and individuals.

The Center for Disease Control first proposed the concept of a Coordinated School Health program in 1987, to connect the many different elements which affect a student's health and capacity to succeed in school. Tennessee's Office of Coordinated School Health (OCSH) was established in 2001, with a mission to improve the health outcomes of students and promote wellness within the schools. OCSH partners with Tennessee's Department of Health, Office of School Health and individual school districts and school sites to implement their health goals, and in 2000 state funding was authorized to expand the program statewide.

## **2004: Tennessee House Bill 2783, State Board of Education's Competitive Food Regulations**

Tennessee House Bill 2783, passed in 2004, required the Tennessee State Board of Education to create nutrition standards for food sold on school campuses with pre-kindergarteners through 8<sup>th</sup> graders,

including food offered in a la carte lines, vending machines, school stores, snack bars, and school fundraisers. These guidelines, established by the Board in 2005, are a mandatory component of every public school districts’ wellness policy, and represent the *minimum* standards each pre-k through 8 school must have.

The standards do not extend to federally reimbursable meals but the Board strongly recommends that schools apply them universally. Private schools and high schools are exempt from these guidelines.

**Tennessee Competitive Food Guidelines:**

Allowable Beverages	Individually-Sold Food Items	Individually-Sold Fruits and Vegetables
<b>Fluid Milk:</b> Reduced, Low- or Non-Fat	7 grams of fat or less - except for nuts, nuts butters and seed mixes	May be fresh, frozen, canned or dried
<b>100% Fruit and Vegetable Juices</b>	2 grams or less of saturated/trans fat	Must be found in the <i>Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs</i>
<b>Water:</b> Not flavored, sweetened or carbonated	15 grams or less of sugar - except fresh and dried fruits	<b>May NOT be sold as fruits or vegetables:</b>  -snack foods made from fruits or vegetables (e.g. banana chips, potato chips) -Pick relish, jam, jellies -Tomato ketchup and chili sauce
<b>Low-Calorie Beverages:</b> Flavored, non-carbonated drinks w/ no more than 15 calories per unit	230 mg sodium maximum per serving of snack items (chips, cereal, crackers, etc.)	
	600 mg sodium maximum per serving of pizza, sandwiches and main dishes	

The regulations include portion-size restrictions and requirements for the monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness, however fruits and vegetables are exempt. According to these guidelines, any vending machines containing soda pop must remain off until the end of the school day.

## **2008: Tennessee Senate Bill 3341 on School Nutrition and Local Producers**

This senate bill requires school boards throughout Tennessee to provide a yearly plan to the Commission of Education outlining their strategy for complying with the nutrition standards of the federal meal programs at least sixty days prior to the start of each school year. The plans must also reflect school boards' consideration of local agricultural products and flexible bidding processes which would allow local farmers to bid more competitively on parts, not necessarily the entirety, of the school's nutrition plan. The bill only requires that school boards *consider* local products and producers.

## **2009: USDA Memo on School Gardens**

Concerns and confusion amongst school administrators around the country prompted the USDA to issue a memo in 2009 to the state directors of Child Nutrition Programs outlining the acceptable relationship between a non-profit food service budget, school cafeterias and school gardens. The main points made in the memo were:

- Funds from a non-profit food service budget may be used to purchase seeds or equipment for a school garden which will either supply produce or proceeds from the sale of that produce back to the school cafeteria, or supply produce for an in-classroom educational lesson.
- Schools can serve produce grown in a school garden as part of a federally reimbursable school meal.
- Schools can purchase produce from school organizations running garden education programs, such as the Future Farmers of America.
- Funds from the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Programs may not be used for the purchase of any school garden materials.

## **2009: Institute of Medicine Nutrition Recommendations**

School meals must comply with nutrition standards based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), but current standards are based on the DGA from 1995 and do not reflect the subsequent changes that have occurred to the guidelines every five years since. After experiencing its own challenges in updating nutrition standards, the USDA charged the Institute of Medicine with studying and providing recommendations for new guidelines for both the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

In 2009, the Food and Nutrition Board at the Institute of Medicine released a report titled “School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children” with recommendations to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into school meals, as well as more whole grains, less fat and sodium, and minimums and maximums for caloric levels in reimbursable meals. The report suggests using the Food-Based Menu Planning method which, although guided by nutrient level *targets*, does not have required nutrient levels and instead requires items from certain good groups.

In addition, the IOM recommends that students be required to select a fruit or a vegetable as one of their components (because of “offer versus serve” students can take as little as three of the total 5 components offered, and most take the meat, milk and bread item only). The IOM also recommends that fruits and vegetables no longer be interchangeable but instead must BOTH be offered to students. Finally, any packaged food sold to students should be free of trans fats.

The official recommendations of the IOM, as compared to the current nutritional requirements, are below:

Breakfast: Minimum Amounts and Types of Food		
	Current Requirement	New Recommendation
Fruit	1/2 cup per day	1 cup per day
Grains and Meat/Meat Alternative	2 grains <b>or</b> 2 meat/meat alternative <b>or</b> 1 of each per day	1.4 - 2 grains per day plus 1 - 2 meat or meat alternative per day (Range reflects difference by grade group)
Whole Grains	Encouraged	At least half of the grains to be whole grain-rich
Milk	1 cup	1 cup, fat content to be 1% or less

Lunch: Minimum Amounts and Types of Food		
	Current Requirement	New Recommendation
Fruit and Vegetables	1/2 - 1 cup of fruit and vegetables combined	3/4 - 1 cup of vegetables <b>plus</b> 1/2 - 1 cup of fruit per week
Vegetables	No specifications as to type of vegetable	Weekly requirements for dark green and orange vegetables and legumes and limits on starchy vegetables
Meat/Meat Alternative	1.5 - 3 oz. equivalents (daily average over a 5-day week)	1.6 - 2.4 oz. equivalents (daily average over a 5-day week)
Grains	1.8 - 3 oz. equivalents (daily average over a 5-day week)	1.8 - 2.6 oz. equivalents (daily average over a 5-day week)
Whole Grains	Encouraged	At least half of the grains to be whole grain-rich
Milk	1 cup	1 cup, fat content to be 1% or less

The IOM’s Food and Nutrition board openly acknowledged in their report that the changes they suggest would increase the cost of school meal production significantly, and that at the present time school food departments are unprepared to cover those costs without higher reimbursement rates or more significant local support. Although the IOM has no authority to require increases to the federal reimbursement rate, that measure was suggested by their report in order to cover the increased costs of food, equipment and training.

## 2010: Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (Child Nutrition Reauthorization)

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill is responsible for reauthorizing funds for all the federal school meal programs, including the National School Lunch and the School Breakfast Programs, by amending the two existing statutes which created school meal programs as we know them today: the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act (which created the school Breakfast

Program). The bill is passed every five years to reauthorize these and other child nutrition programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program; the Summer Food Service Program; Women, Infants and Children (WIC), including, the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program; the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program; and the Special Milk Program. Only the school lunch and breakfast programs are permanently authorized—all other programs, as well as smaller pieces of the bill have expiration dates which require the periodic reauthorization.

The most recent version of this bill, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, was passed during the lame duck session of Congress in December 2010, at a total funding level of \$4.5 billion. The notable components of this bill, as outlined by the Food Research and Action Center, include:

**Improvements to the direct certification process**, which determines free or reduced price lunch eligibility based on other social services a child's family may receive, such as SNAP (food stamps) or Medicaid, thus eliminating the need for an application. Foster children are now categorically eligible for free meals.

**Supporting new paperless options for universal meal service.** A new alternative to certifying the eligibility of students for free, reduced or full-priced meals will be introduced, called "Community Eligibility," allowing schools with a certain percentage of children that qualify for free meals to serve meals to their entire student population at no charge.

**Authorized grants for the expansion of school breakfast programs.** If funds can be procured through the appropriations process, grants may be awarded to establish or expand breakfast programs particularly within schools experiencing high percentages of free and reduced price eligible students.

**Enhances school nutrition quality** through a package of separate provisions. Notably, \$3.2 billion will go towards increases the lunch reimbursement rate by 6 cents for every meal that meets the forthcoming nutrition standards. It also gives the USDA authority to create nutrition standards for *all* food sold on school campuses within the next two years, not only the hot meals which are federally reimbursable. Additionally, \$5 million will be distributed annually in a competitive grants process to entities wishing to begin Farm to School programs. The bill also updates the requirements for Local School Wellness Policies. Finally, a new rule allows only lower-fat milk options to be served in cafeterias, and requires that free water is made available during meal times.

**New school food financing provisions** includes a new requirement that by the 2011-2012 school year, the full-priced "paid" lunch charges must at least equal the federal reimbursement level for a "free" lunch.

Hunger advocates are concerned that this cost may be prohibitive to families that do not qualify for reduced-price meals and that participation levels in the meal programs may drop as a result. Another provision requires schools to ensure the revenue from their a la carte sales is sufficient to cover any a la carte costs, so that federal reimbursements are in no way subsidizing a la carte sales.

In addition to these major changes, \$375 million in funds have been allocated to support nutrition education and anti-obesity efforts at the state level. Additionally \$40 million will be used to study the causes of hunger, obesity, and Type 2 diabetes in children. The bill will also expand summer feeding programs and support after-school meal programs around the country with \$20 million in funds.

## **2011: New Nutrition Standard in Federal Meal Programs**

As mandated by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, the USDA released updated nutrition standards for federal meal programs in January of 2011, the first such revisions since 1995. They closely follow the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine in its report titled “School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children,” and provide food-based standards that align well with the menu planning method currently used by MNPS. The lengthy policy outlines the number and size of servings of fruits, vegetables, dairy, meats and grains.

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## Part IV:

# The Metro Nashville Public School District

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The Metro Nashville Public School District operates 134 different schools, divided into 13 different clusters. Each cluster contains a high school and its feeder elementary and middle schools. While magnet schools are geographically zoned within other clusters, they are also collectively considered to be their own distinct cluster of magnet sites.

**Antioch Cluster:**

Moss Elementary  
Mt. View Elementary  
Thomas Edison Elementary  
Lakeview Design Center  
Apollo Middle  
J.F. Middle  
Antioch High

**Cane Ridge Cluster:**

A.Z. Kelley Elementary  
Cole Elementary  
Maxwell Elementary  
Antioch Middle  
Thurgood Marshall Middle  
Cane Ridge High

**Glenciff Cluster:**

Fall-Hamilton Enhanced Option  
Glenciff Elementary  
Glengarry Elementary  
Glenview Elementary  
Paragon Mills Elementary  
Whitsitt Elementary  
Cameron Middle

Wright Middle  
Glenciff Middle  
Johnson Special Education  
Nashville School of the Art

**Hillsboro Cluster:**

Carter Lawrence Elem. Magnet  
Eakin Elementary  
Glendale Elementary  
Julia Green Elementary  
Percy Priest Elementary  
Sylvan Park Elementary  
J.T. Moore Middle  
Rose Park Magnet Middle  
West End Middle  
Hillsboro High  
Cohn Adult/Alternative  
Harris Hillman Special Ed.  
Murrell Special Education  
Robertson Academy

**Hillwood Cluster:**

Charlotte Park Elementary  
Gower Elementary

Harpeth Valley Elementary  
Westmeade Elementary  
Bellevue Middle  
H.G. Hill Middle  
Hillwood High  
Middle College High  
Nashville Big Picture High  
Nashville Diploma Plus High School

**Hunters Lane Cluster:**

Amqui Elementary  
Bellshire Design Center  
Gateway Elementary  
Goodlettsville Elementary  
Neely's Bend Elementary  
Old Center Elementary  
Stratton Elementary  
Smithson-Craighead Academy  
Goodlettsville Middle  
Neely's Bend Middle  
Madison Middle  
Hunters Lane High

**Maplewood Cluster:**

Chadwell Elementary  
 Caldwell Elem. Enhanced Option  
 Glenn Elem. Enhanced Option  
 Gra-Mar Middle  
 Hattie Cotton Elementary  
 Schwab Elementary  
 Kipp Academy  
 Tom Joy Elementary  
 Jere Baxter Middle  
 Baxter Alternative Learning Center  
 Maplewood High

**McCavock Cluster:**

Andrew Jackson Elementary  
 Dodson Elementary  
 Dupont Elementary  
 Hermitage Elementary  
 Hickman Elementary  
 Pennington Elementary  
 Ruby Major Elementary  
 McCavock Elementary  
 Napier Enhanced Option  
 Tulip Groce Elementary  
 Una Elementary  
 Stanford Montessor Magnet  
 Margaret Allen Middle  
 Donelson Middle  
 DuPont Hadley Middle  
 DuPont Tyler Middle  
 Two Rivers Middle  
 Academy at Opry Mills  
 McCavock High

**Overton Cluster:**

Crieve Hall Elementary  
 Granberry Elementary  
 Haywood Elementary  
 Norman Binkley Elementary  
 Shayne Elementary  
 Tusculum Elementary  
 Croft Middle  
 McMurray Middle  
 Oliver Middle  
 Overton High

**Pearl-Cohn Cluster:**

Cockrill Elementary  
 Wharton Elementary  
 Jones Paideia Elementary Magnet  
 Buena Vista Enhanced Option  
 Park Avenue Enhanced Option  
 Hull-Jackson Montessor  
 Lead Academy  
 Bass Middle  
 Head Magnet Middle  
 John Early Middle  
 Academy at Old Cockrill  
 Hume-Fogg Magnet High  
 McCann Alternative Learning Center  
 Martin Luther King Magnet High  
 Pearl Cohn Academy at McKissack  
 Pearl-Cohn High School and  
 Business/Communications Magnet

**Stratford Cluster:**

Dan Mills Elementary  
 Inglewood Elementary  
 Kirkpatrick Elementary  
 Lockeland Design Center  
 Rosebank Elementary  
 Ross Elementary  
 Warner Enhanced Option  
 Bailey Middle  
 Isaac Litton Middle  
 Meigs Magnet Middle  
 East Literature Magnet  
 Cora Howe Special Education  
 Stratford High

**Whites Creek Cluster:**

Alex Green Elementary  
 Bordeaux Enhanced Option  
 Cumberland Elementary  
 Joelton Elementary  
 Robert E. Lillard Elem. Design Center  
 Haynes Design Center  
 Brick Church Middle  
 I.T. Creswell Arts Middle Magnet  
 Joelton Middle  
 Whites Creek High

Many MNPS schools are located in “food deserts”— areas with an abundance of fast food restaurants and corner stores but a lack of full-service supermarkets. Schools can serve as the leverage point for these areas, and provide students with fresh, healthy and nutritious meals that may be hard to access in their neighborhoods.

## Student Demographics

During the current 2010 - 2011 academic school year, Metro Nashville Public Schools have approximately 76,000 students enrolled. According to MNPS data, in 2008 the student population of the school district was broken into these demographic categories:

**Female:** 48.9%

**Male:** 51.1%

**African-American:** 48%

**Asian Pacific Islander:** 3%

**Hispanic/Latino:** 14%

**Native American/Alaskan:** .2%

**White:** 34%

Although people of color constitute about 39% of the total population of Nashville, 66% of MNPS' student population are students of color. Consequently, children of color are most impacted by the federal meal programs offered within the school district. Because people of color in the U.S. are much more likely to be low-income than caucasians (African-Americans are approximately 16% more likely, and Hispanics are over 13% more likely), students of color are also more likely to rely upon school meal programs for proper nutrition during the school day.

## The Metro Nashville Public School District Budget

MNPS has a self-supporting food service budget, meaning that no municipal funds contribute to their funding. Food service depends entirely upon the federal meal reimbursements provided by the USDA, and the revenue generated in cafeterias through the sale of a la carte items. They also receive a nominal amount of funds through the state of Tennessee's matching fund requirement. To operate on this limited budget, the district takes steps to be cost-effective. They typically use their commodity entitlement to purchase items that would be more expensive from private vendors, such as meat and cheese. Additionally, they contract with food processors to create easily re-heatable meal items for their cafeteria staff to provide to students, reducing the fresh preparation and kitchen skills required on-site. Revenues produced from the sale of food in vending machines, school stores or fundraisers often go into a discretionary fund controlled by the principal, and does not enter into the larger MNPS food service budget.

MNPS Food Service Fund 2010 - 2011 Fiscal Year	
Estimated Cash Reserves July 1, 2010	\$8,170,934
<b>2010 - 2011 Budgeted Revenue</b>	
USDA Meal Reimbursements	\$26,566,154
Lunch Sales	2,696,082
Breakfast Sales	252,852
A La Carte Sales	4,578,351
State Matching	320,130
Interest and Miscellaneous	70,862
Estimate Commodities	1,753,920
<b>Total Budget Revenue</b>	<b>\$36,238,351</b>

**MNPS Food Service Fund  
2010 - 2011 Fiscal Year**

Funds Available for 2010 - 2011	\$44,409,285
<b>2010 - 2011 Budgeted Expenditures</b>	
Salaries	\$12,271,362
Social Security and Medicare Match	858,995
Retirement Match	1,671,003
Employee Insurance Match	3,697,783
Food Purchases	11,946,237
Warehouse and Vendor Supplies	952,933
Other Supplies	104,976
Equipment	757,674
Equipment Maintenance	393,501
Freight and Storage	367,839
Uniform Rental and Laundry Services	166,270
Mileage	85,995
Other Expense	255,263
Utilities	954,600
Estimated Commodities	1,753,920
<b>Total Budgeted Expenditures</b>	<b>\$36,238,351</b>

<b>Estimated Cash Reserves: June 30, 2011</b>	<b>\$8,170,934</b>

## Kitchen Design

Of all 134 MNPS schools, 129 have on-site kitchens, where both processed and raw foods are delivered for assembly and preparation. (Five small and alternative schools do not have kitchens, but instead have their meals pre-prepared and delivered.) These kitchens are well-equipped with the necessary tools to perform nearly all food preparation tasks, including:

- Reheating processed items like pizzas or bread rolls
- Steaming fresh items like broccoli
- Preparing fresh items like sliced fruit or fresh tortilla wraps
- Slicing deli meats for sandwiches
- Preparing scratch meals like casseroles and pastas

Kitchen equipment can include combination ovens (with several functions like steaming and baking), tilt skillets for preparing and mixing casseroles or taco meat, a steamer for vegetables, and convection ovens for reheating processed entrees.

## Kitchen Labor

Labor constitutes the largest expenditure in the MNPS food service budget: during the 2010-2011 school year, projected salaries and personnel-related expenses equal about \$18.5 million, which is just over 50% of the entire food service budget.

The Food Service department at MNPS has a working staff of over 700 people. Twenty-five of those positions are administrative positions at the central office, including the Director of Food Services and various Coordinator positions handling nutrition education and training, personnel and operations, finance, equipment and technology. There are five Field Managers, each of them responsible for supervising the Cafeteria Managers of anywhere between 23 and 31 different schools. They perform trainings for staff, spot health inspections, and complete necessary paperwork for audits. They can also work with sites to better market food and build meal participation.

The Cafeteria Manager at each school supervises a kitchen staff that includes Cashiers and Cafeteria Assistants -- the size of the staff depends upon the school's student population, meal participation, and

kitchen space. Positions may be either full or part time. MNPS hires according to the ratio of 18 meals/ per labor hour.

Kitchen staff is required to have a minimum of a high school diploma. MNPS provides “new hire” trainings that cover food and kitchen safety, culinary skills and MNPS policies. Ongoing trainings are provided to staff in customer service, conflict resolution, diversity training, civil rights, substance abuse, material safety data training, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), and Red Cross training on bloodborne pathogens.

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## Part V:

# Working with Decision Makers

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Although the MNPS Food Service budget is self-supporting, it is still an integral part of the larger school district budget and is reviewed and approved by political bodies outside of the district Central Office. Below is a description of many of Nashville’s “decision makers” that have the power to influence the school district, its spending priorities, and potentially spearhead efforts towards improving the school food environment.

### **The Mayor’s Office**

The current mayor of Nashville and Davison County is Karl Dean, who is serving his second and final two year term, ending in the fall of 2011.

The mayor’s office prepares and administers the city budget every year, and communicates to departments funded by the budget what amount they will be allocated each year in advance of budget hearings. As a department of the city government, MNPS must design an internal budget based on that amount provided by the mayor’s office, which will ultimately be presented to Metro Council for approval.

The Mayor’s office has also developed social initiatives which relate directly to the cultivation of healthy school food environments. They include:

#### **Healthy Nashville Initiative**

The Mayor’s office launched the Healthy Nashville initiative to improve the health of Nashville and mobilize various community efforts toward improving quality of life in the city, and addressing three areas of concern: obesity, tobacco use and disparities in heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

#### **Nashville’s Poverty Initiative**

In February of 2010, Mayor Dean released a plan intended to reduce the rate of poverty in Nashville by 50% over the following 10 years. During the kick-off Poverty Reduction Symposium event, priority areas

of child care, economic opportunity, food, health care, housing, neighborhood development and workforce development were identified. The plan specifically calls for the strengthening of food security through linking community gardens with schools, and increasing participation in nutrition assistance programs.

### **Green Ribbon Committee on Environmental Sustainability**

Mayor Dean created the Green Ribbon committee to promote Nashville's future as a "livable city with clean air, clean water, open spaces, transportation infrastructure and an energy use profile necessary to provide a prosperous community for current and future generations."

The committee issued a detailed report to the Mayor in June of 2009, recommending a series of short- and long-term measures towards achieving those goals, many of which relate directly to the school food environment. They include the following recommendations:

- Collaborate with MNPS to create a Farm to School program.
- Increase and promote local food in institutions including schools.
- Incorporate nutrition curriculum into Metro School requirements.
- Provide an outdoor education classroom area for every Metro Public School.
- Encourage and support school gardens for educational experiential learning.
- Expand the number of community and school gardens in Davidson County.

### **Metropolitan Council**

There are 41 Metro Council members who are each elected to serve a term of four years, and together constitute the legislative body of Nashville and Davidson County. There are five council members-at-large, and thirty-five district council representatives.

Council members vote on the budget submitted by MNPS to the Mayor's office—however they do not have line item veto to accept or deny certain funded areas -- they either accept or deny the entire proposal. If a budget cannot be agreed upon by a certain deadline, the budget may be approved by the mayor without the support of the Council.

## The City Budget

The city budget, including the MNPS budget, is determined in a yearly cycle. Typically, the mayor's office and his Director of Finance will set expectations for all departments so they are aware in advance of their possible funding level. A state mandate called Maintenance of Effort protects school districts by requiring that all city councils either sustain or increase their funding levels, but can never decrease a school district's budget from one year to the next. During times of financial hardship, such as during the past 3 years, the city council has been unable to increase funding levels for schools. This means that MNPS itself must make internal cost-savings within the department in order to respond to certain budgetary items that experience inevitable increases each year, such as insurance, cost-of-living adjustments in salaries, and pensions. (It is important to remember that this dynamic does not directly impact food service: all the expenses in the food service budget are paid for by federal reimbursements, revenue from cafeteria sales, and a small amount of state matching funds.)

According to the Mayor's website, "education" is portioned the largest amount of city funds each year, at 41% of the city budget.

Once the MNPS Superintendent has designed a budget proposal, he submits it for approval to the school board. The board has the authority to deny the proposal and request modifications from the Superintendent. Once approved, the budget is sent to the Mayor's office and will be considered during budget hearings which occur throughout the spring. The mayor will ultimately make recommendations to Metro Council for all city department budgets, and the council will vote on whether to approve the suggested funding levels.

## School Board

The Metropolitan Board of Public Education consists of nine elected members, one member being elected from each of the nine school districts. The term of office is four years with the terms staggered so that no less than four members are elected every two years. In addition, two student advisor representatives from the Student Advisory Council serve with the Board. <sup>1</sup>

The Board is engaged in "Policy Governance" which is a form of governing that requires the Board to set goals as it relates to End Results (or benchmarks and expectations) for students, engage in Board development, and hold the Director of Schools (superintendent) accountable for meeting its goals. Policy Governance establishes a role for the board that is policy-focused on the macro-level, and does not outline detailed expectations of the district concerning operational activities. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "School Board. *Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools*. Web. <<http://www.mnps.org/Page56416.aspx>>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The Director of Schools, Dr. Jesse Register, is the only employee of the school board, and they hold the direct power to hire and fire within that position alone. Dr. Register makes regular monthly presentations to the board regarding the district’s activities, and on an annual basis presents the proposed budget for the following school year, which must be approved by the board.

Because the school board is an elected body, they are directly accountable to voters. However, schools must abide by the policies set by the State Board of Education, which sets standards relating to instruction and student achievement, and the Tennessee Department of Education, which works directly with school systems to ensure they comply with policies and regulations that address every aspect of education.

Public citizens can advocate for changes within MNPS by working with board members– either by sending emails, scheduling in-person meetings, or speaking at public meetings. The school board has the power and authority to ask the superintendent to adopt new policies and incorporate new items in the MNPS budget. Additionally, the school board can seek expanded city funding by working with the Mayor’s Office and Metro Council during the annual budget process.

The school board, unlike some in the country, does not have direct taxing authority and therefore must work with the Metro Council and Mayor’s office to procure funding for its proposed budgets from city funds – it cannot levy additional taxes to pay for special projects or program expansions.

Regular meetings of the Board of Public Education are held at the Administration Building of Metropolitan Public Schools, 2601 Bransford Avenue, at 5 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. These meetings are open to the public and are televised on Metro 3, a local cable community access channel.<sup>3</sup>

## **Principals and School Support Organizations**

Principals have a tremendous amount of power over the food environment in their schools. They are directly involved in determining which competitive food items are sold, and arrange “pouring right” contracts with vending machine companies that help produce revenue for the school’s discretionary budget. They are also critical leaders who can cultivate a strong culture of wellness on their school campus, by working hand-in-hand with school Wellness Teams, and encouraging school staff and faculty to reinforce messages of healthy living and eating throughout the school day.

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<sup>3</sup> “School Board. *Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools*. Web. <<http://www.mnps.org/Page56416.aspx>>.

**Their sphere of influence extends to:**

- Items sold in the a la carte line
- Items sold in student stores
- Items sold in school fundraisers
- Items used as rewards in the classroom or in classroom celebrations
- Integration of wellness and nutrition education in the school environment and classroom
- Gardening projects
- School-day scheduling (lunch times, recess times)

While the MNPS Wellness Policy outlines universal guidelines regarding many of these areas, the principal of each school directly oversees implementation and can wield significant influence over the creation of tangible results from written standards. An engaged principal is a powerful and necessary ally in the quest for a healthy school environment.

**PTOs/PTAs**

While not all MNPS schools have an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or Parent Teacher Association (PTA), many do. They are considered “school support” organizations and are required by MNPS to be or affiliate with a non-profit organization, and to provide written goals and objectives to the district. They must receive prior approval from the Director of Schools before scheduling fundraisers, and the funds they raise and spend must be used purely to fulfill their written objectives.

Their activities and membership may vary per school, but these voluntary organizations provide a regular opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss and tackle issues that will improve their school environment. School support organizations often elect an executive board consisting of positions such as President, Vice President, Treasurer and/Secretary. The organizations work on projects such as building parent involvement and volunteer support at a school, or fundraising for school needs that cannot be covered by the district budget.

PTOs and PTAs are organizations with a great capacity to effect change at a school. They garner a high level of support and engagement from the parent population, and can leverage that support to begin and fund new initiatives.

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Part VI:

# Supplemental Material

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# Glossary of School Food Terms

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## **Bidding Process**

A means of food acquisition in which a school district publicizes the specifications of their food needs, and accepts priced proposals from food suppliers and manufacturers who would like to contract as suppliers. The process promotes competition between vendors and allows the district to select suppliers based on their needs and price restrictions.

## **Categorical Eligibility**

When a person pre-qualifies for one government program because they have fulfilled the eligibility requirements of another program that has overlapping and consistent requirements. For instance, all children that receive food stamps are eligible for free lunches through the National School Lunch Program.

## **Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization (CNR)**

This bill authorizes and funds all federal school meal and child nutrition programs that serve low-income children and ensure their access to nutritious foods. The programs are permanently authorized but require a reauthorization process every five years, a time when changes and improvements can also be made.

The reauthorization amends two existing statutes: the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. The most recent Child Nutrition Reauthorization was signed into law by President Obama in December 2010, as the “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.”

## **Commodities**

Commonly called entitlement and bonus foods, these are food items provided by the USDA to schools participating in national school meal programs to supplement the meal reimbursements they receive for meals that qualify. Commodity items are often raw goods (like ground beef) that require processing. Schools may choose to have that food processed by an outside company into ready-to-serve products (like hamburger patties) or trade them for ready-to-use products.

## **Competitive Foods**

These are foods and beverages available on school campuses that are not a part of the federal school meal and snack programs; therefore, they are seen as “competing” with lunch program sales. Competitive foods often have fewer nutritional restrictions because they are not federally regulated, however, school districts can impose their own guidelines on what can be sold. Competitive foods are offered in a la carte lines, snack bars, vending machines, and school fundraisers.

## **Coordinated School Health**

A strategy recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for improving students’ health and learning in our nation’s schools. The CDC proposes a framework for planning and coordinating school health activities, centered on: health education; physical education; health services; mental health and social services; nutrition services; healthy and safe environment; family and community involvement; and staff wellness. The Tennessee Department of Education has an Office of Coordinated School Health which collects confidential data from schools to help identify and implement opportunities to improve the health of students. Their office releases a yearly report on the state’s progress in coordinated school health efforts.

## **Culture of Wellness**

A school culture that promotes healthy food choices, messages about healthy living, and opportunities for physical activity. It is promoted by school Wellness Policies, which address many factors within school campuses and schedules that affect students’ health—meal time, snack time, classroom parties and rewards, physical education, school day schedules, and more.

## **Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

Guidelines published jointly by the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Agriculture (USDA) every five years. They provide advice to Americans

about good dietary habits and their affect on health and disease prevention. The guidelines serve as the basis for federal food and nutrition education programs, including the federal school meal programs.

### **Direct Certification**

A process that allows children to be automatically certified for free meals by virtue of being recipients of the SNAP/food stamp program. Direct certification requires coordination between the school district, state education agency and Department of Human Services to match enrollment data.

### **Duty-Free Lunch**

Teachers and school librarians in most school districts (including the Metro Nashville School District - MNPS) have a lunch period in which they are not required to supervise or instruct students. Therefore, when students have meal time in the cafeteria they typically are not joined by their teacher, but are supervised by a single cafeteria monitor.

### **Entitlement Programs**

Federal programs that are accessible to anyone who qualifies under established guidelines with no maximum “cap” on participants. The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are entitlement programs: Congress guarantees that all students who qualify for free or reduced school meals will received them.

### **Flavored Milk**

A term used to indicate any non- plain white milk, such as strawberry or chocolate milk. Although plain milk is naturally sweet from lactose, flavored milk contains additional cane sugar or corn syrup sweeteners.

### **Food and Nutrition Standards**

Standards set by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the nutritional quality of federally reimbursable school meals. They are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). The Child Nutrition Reauthorization passed in 2010 updated nutrition standards to reflect the most recent DGA, which had not been done since 1995.

### **Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value (FMNV)**

A category food created by the USDA that is prohibited from being sold in school food service areas during meal periods. The prohibited foods are: soda water; water ices; chewing gum; hard candy; jellies and gums; marshmallow candies; fondant; licorice; spun candy; and candy-coated popcorn.

### **Food Service Area**

Any area on school premises where federal school meals are served and/or eaten.

### **Institute of Medicine (IOM)**

A congressionally chartered non-profit which is part of the National Academy of Sciences. The IOM conducts studies and provides unbiased advice to policy-makers related to biomedical science, medicine and health. The IOM released new recommendations in 2009 for federally reimbursable school meals which include incorporating more fruits and vegetables, reducing sodium and saturated fat, and establishing minimums and maximums for calorie content.

### **Manager’s Choice**

A food item or component, which is not part of the menu pre-designed by the school district dietician, that is added or substituted into a school menu by the cafeteria manager. This occurs when food shortages, surplus, or delayed food shipments necessitate that a menu be modified in order to offer all required meal components.

### **Meal Components**

To make federally reimbursable meals, schools using the Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning method include food items from certain food groups, called “components.” These components ensure the meal meets nutrition standards. Breakfasts must contain at least 3 items from 4 component groups: meat/meat alternative; grain/bread; fruit/ juice/or vegetable; and milk. Lunches must contain 5 food items from 4 component groups: meat/meat alternative; bread; (2 servings of) vegetable and/or fruit; and milk.

### **National School Lunch Program (NSLP)**

A federally assisted meal program that provides nutritionally regulated, low-cost or free lunches to school children. NSLP also provides reimbursements for snacks sold to children in after school educational programs. NSLP is administered on the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service within the Department of Agriculture. On the state level, NSLP is usually administered through state education agencies which have agreements with local school districts.

### **Obesity and Overweight**

Both terms are used to define a higher body fat percentage or Body Mass Index than is healthy for someone of a given height and age. Obesity is used to define people that are

extremely overweight and who have hit a specific Body Mass Index level which puts them beyond the scope of simply “overweight.” These conditions are caused by a lack of healthy diet and exercise, and consuming more calories than are burned, resulting in the storage of excess fat in the body.

Obese and overweight children and adolescents are at risk for health problems during their youth and into adulthood. Health problems during childhood include risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and Type 2 diabetes. In addition, they often experience difficulty sleeping, physical fatigue, and psychological problems (like depression). These can affect a child’s attendance and ability to learn in school.

Many studies have shown that obese and overweight children have a much higher likelihood of remaining obese as adults.

### **Offer vs. Serve**

Often called a “no thank you portion,” this method of food service allows students to refuse up to two items offered as part of federal school meal programs without jeopardizing the school’s ability to seek reimbursement for that meal.

Prior to this option, it is believed that plate waste was increased because students were required to take food items they did not want to ensure the meal would qualify for reimbursement.

### **Plate Lunch**

A term that refers to the federally reimbursable meals offered through the National School Lunch Program.

### **Plate Waste**

The USDA defines plate waste as the quantity of edible portions of food served through their meal programs that are thrown away by students. Plate waste is viewed as a waste of resources and as jeopardizing the nutritional benefits to students intended by the program.

Some challenges to reducing waste include: lunch schedules that serve children when they are less hungry; the difficulty

of ensuring that a set menu appeals to a diversity of students’ needs and preferences; the availability of food from competing sources like vending machines and a la carte lines.

Strategies to combat these challenges include: using “offer versus serve” in meal service, modifying the meal schedule, improving the quality of the food served, adjusting serving

size to better reflect students’ appetites, and providing students with nutrition education.

### **Plate Sales**

The sale of meals offered through the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs.

### **Point of Sale (POS) System**

A computer system that “checks out” students in the lunch line for their meal and a la carte purchases using pin numbers connected to student accounts. Accounts can be charged by parents with money, and are used by schools to gather data on sales records, free- or reduced-meal eligibility, and food inventory, as well as for federal meal reimbursement reporting and food ordering. The POS system also has the capability, but is not currently being used, to allow parents to view their student’s purchasing history and to charge their account online. POS systems replace the old method of using cash boxes, registers, and manual meal count systems.

### **Pouring Rights**

A term used to describe an exclusive contract between a school and a beverage manufacturer or bottler to provide beverage vending and distribution at a school in exchange for the school receiving a portion of the sales.

### **Poverty Level**

A level of personal income determined by the U.S. government to define a person or household experiencing poverty. Income thresholds are based on family size and composition. Poverty “guidelines” are used to determine eligibility for entitlement programs like federal school meal programs.

### **Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA)**

The daily level of nutrients considered to meet the needs of healthy individuals in each demographic in the U.S. RDAs are the basis for nutritional labeling provided on food items sold in grocery stores.

School lunches provide one-third of the RDA of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium and calories over the course of one week of school lunch menus.

### **Reimbursements/Cash Subsidies**

The federal government provides funding to support school lunch and breakfast programs on a per-meal basis. Students

can qualify for free or reduced-price school meals based on their income level, and the school will receive reimbursement based on what income category each student falls within. There are different reimbursement rates for the lunch and breakfast programs. The Child Nutrition Reauthorization of 2010 increased the reimbursement rate by 6 cents for meals that meet undated nutrition standards.

### **Reimbursable Meals**

School cafeterias receive federal reimbursement only for school breakfast and lunches that meet the nutrition standards set by the USDA, and that contain all required meal components.

### **School Breakfast Program (SBP)**

Provides cash assistance to States for operating nonprofit breakfast programs in schools and residential childcare institutions. The program is administered at the federal level by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. On the state level, SBP is usually administered through state education agencies which have agreements with local school districts.

### **School Food Environment**

All facets of the school setting that affect children's dietary choices, be they direct or subtle. These facets include federal meal programs, the a la carte line, snack bars, vending machines, classroom fundraisers, classroom celebrations, food rewards within the classroom, sporting concessions, nutrition and cooking classes, school gardens and more.

### **Self-Supporting Budget**

MNPS is provided no money through the city budget for its schools' food service. If cafeterias require any additional funds beyond the reimbursement money provided for federal meal programs, schools must generate their own revenue – called a “self-supporting budget.” They typically accomplish this through the sale of competitive foods to students.

### **Stealth Health**

A food service tactic that makes familiar cafeteria food more nutritious by incorporating whole grains and vegetables, or fortifying food with vitamins and minerals in a way that is unrecognizable to students. The strategy has been criticized by healthy food advocates who feel the lunch line is an opportunity to teach healthy habits, rather than reinforce children's poor perceptions of healthy food.

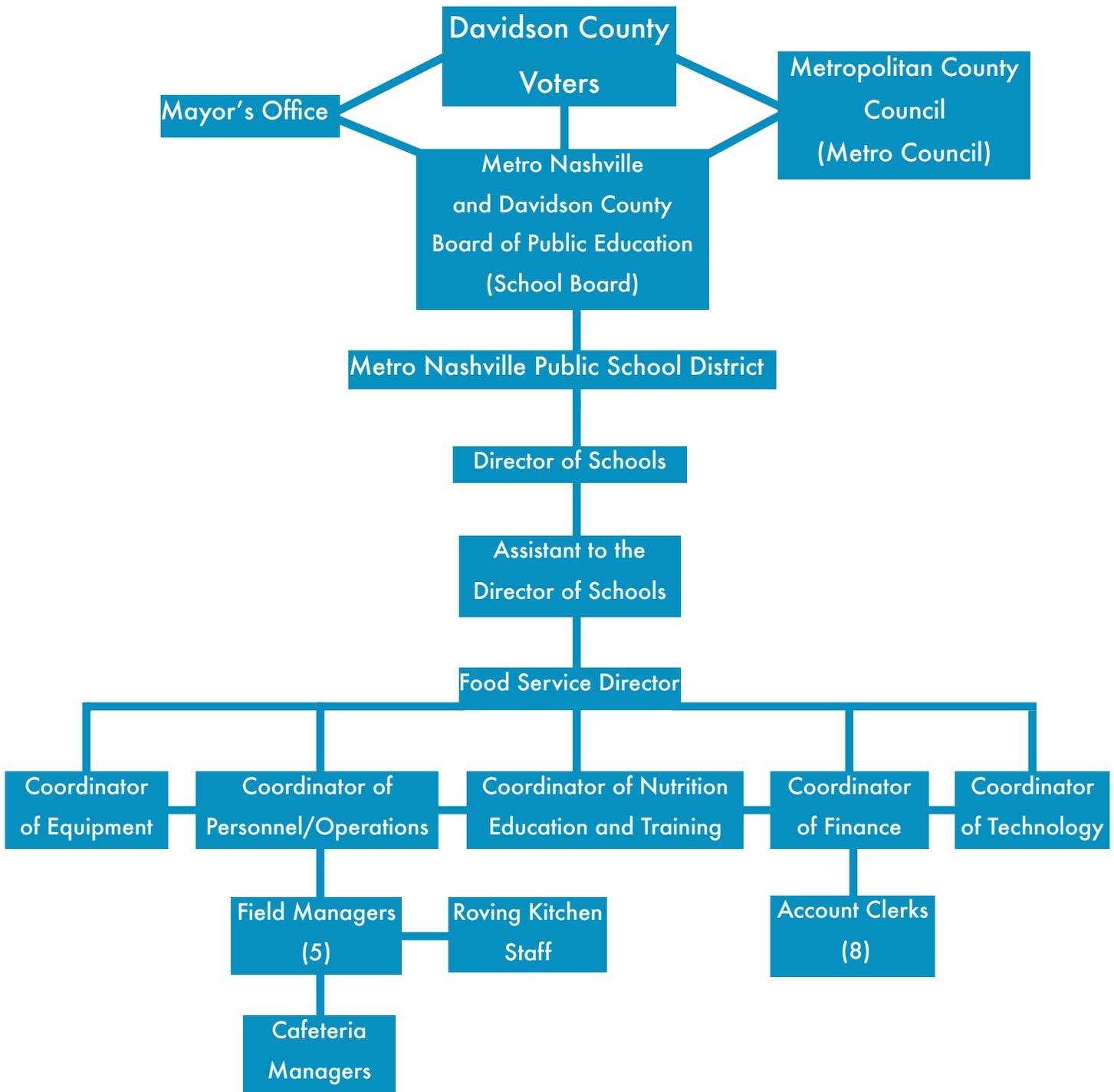
### **Wellness Policy**

These policies were mandated programs in the 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization as a requirement for all schools participating in federal school meal programs. Schools must create a policy setting goals and standards for nutrition education, physical activity, the provision of food on campus, and other activities related to the wellness of students. Schools must involve a broad base of individuals in developing these policies including students, teachers, parents, and community members, and create a plan for measuring the effectiveness of implementation.

### **Vendor**

A business that a school contracts with to provide food to their campus for meals, snack bars or vending machines.

# Chart of Decision Makers



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# Making it Work

## Best Practice Ideas for Making Healthy Cafeterias Affordable

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### Smart Budgeting

The Portland Public Schools in Portland, Oregon once served ranch dressing by the gallon in their lunchrooms. The district recently removed the condiment from all schools, saving \$60,000 per year—approximately the same amount now spent on buying more expensive “real-meat” chicken rather than processed, molded and heavily breaded meat items.

### New Revenue Streams

Many school districts around the country take advantage of the fact that their large-scale kitchen equipment, staff and facilities go un-utilized after 2:00 pm each day. They cater events for their school district, outside organizations, events, and even run their schools’ sports concession stands to bring in an addition stream of revenue. The school district in Mesa, Arizona generates about \$250,000 - \$300,000 through their small catering operation.

### Improving Meal Participation

Parent advocates in the San Francisco Public School District were distraught to find that not only were their schools serving chips, sodas, and other items they deemed “carnival food,” but the district’s food service budget was consistently losing money. They launched a pilot project at one middle school, removing all unhealthy snack food items from the a la carte line and vending machines. Replacing them were healthier, fresher fare like deli sandwiches, soups, and sushi. After six months of the project, the pilot school was one of only two schools in the district whose cafeterias were turning a profit—proving that schools won’t *lose* money by not selling junk food; they’ll make more.

### Using Collective Purchasing Power

The Laconia School District in New Hampshire works together with a group of 22 small school districts to negotiate large food purchases as a collective. Their purchasing power allows them to pay lower prices with suppliers and better afford the freshest local food from area farms, dropping their expenses on food between 30-40%.

### Control Kitchen-Related Expenses

In the Maine School Administrative District 3, trays and all disposable plates and bowls were removed and replaced by smaller, portion-controlled melamine plates. The switch resulted in less food waste, less paper waste, and lower disposal costs for the cafeteria.

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# School Food 101 Fact Sheet

2011 Growing Healthy Kids Leadership Institute

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## **So, what exactly is the National School Lunch Program?**

- The National School Lunch Program is a federal program that funds and regulates breakfasts, lunches and in some cases after-school snacks offered by non-profit food service programs in public and private schools around the country.
- Participating school districts receive cash subsidies and donated commodities from the USDA for each meal they serve.
- In return, they must serve meals that meet federal requirements and they must offer free or reduced priced meals to eligible children.

## **Who makes school food decisions at the federal level?**

- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) sets many of the nutrition requirements, provides cash subsidies, and provides commodities for the program.

## **Who makes school food decisions at the state/local level?**

- Sarah White: State Director of the School Nutrition Program
- Phyllis Hodges: State Director of Procurement
- Jay Nelson: MNPS Food Service Director
- Deborah Walker: MNPS District Dietician, Coordinator of Nutrition Education and Training
- Sheila Clark: MNPS Coordinator of Finance
- Dr. Tina Bozeman: MNPS Coordinator of Health, Wellness, Physical Education and ROTC

## **How is the MNPS Food Service Department financed?**

- MNPS operates on a self-sustaining budget. They receive federal reimbursement/subsidies, and produce additional revenue through the sale of a la carte food.

## **What are the costs of school meals?**

- Schools get around \$2.72 in reimbursements for free meals, but only about 35% is used for food purchases. The rest of the reimbursement goes toward supplies, infrastructure and labor.

## What options do students have for lunch?

### Regular Lunch (federally reimbursable lunch)

“Offer versus Serve”

- Choice of 1: Entree item with bread, hot or cold sandwich
- Choice of 2: Hot vegetable, salad or fruit
- Choice of 1: Milk (5 varieties?)

### A la Carte Foods

- A la carte or competitive foods are foods and beverages which are offered in addition to meals served through the federally reimbursable school lunch and breakfast programs
- A la cart foods are sold at the end of the lunch line, and may include pizza, chips, ice cream, fruit ices, mozzarella sticks, or additional servings of meal components.

## What is “commodity food”?

- In addition to cash reimbursements, schools receive, at a value of 19.5 cents per meal served, “commodity foods.” From time to time, they may also receive “bonus” items which are in addition to their commodity allotment.
- Commodity foods are foods purchased by the federal government and donated to schools participating in the federal lunch program.
- About 1/5 of the food on school trays is commodity food.
- USDA offers schools more than 180 commodities, including fruits, vegetables, meat, cheese and grains.

## Why am I seeing so many branded products as part of a federally subsidized school meal?

- If MNPS contracts with a food manufacturer that processes their raw commodity products, the end result may be in the form of an item that bears that manufacturer’s brand: such as a Smucker’s Uncrustable peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or Tyson breaded chicken nuggets.
- Some school districts view branding as a way to increase meal participation amongst students who may be drawn to brand names they are familiar with.

## Who controls the vending machines?

- Vending machines are under the control of each school principal.
- Tennessee regulates competitive foods sold in vending machines, snack bars, school stores, fundraisers, and individually packaged cafeteria items for preschool - 8th grade.

## How many Nashville children eat school food?

- 68% of MNPS students qualify for free or reduced-priced school lunch.

### **What are the connections between school food and children's health?**

- Some studies have shown that participation in the school lunch program by students eligible for free or reduced-price meals is correlated with negative health outcomes including an increased risk for obesity.
- Overweight children have a 70% chance of becoming overweight adults; yet proper childhood nutrition can reduce these chances.
- Children consume an average of 35%-50% of their calories at school; some children receive all of their calories at school.

### **What are some of the successes of improving school food environments?**

- Students participating in school gardens have been shown to increase their fruit and vegetable consumption by as much as 2.5 servings a day.
- A nutrition initiative in Philadelphia schools resulted in a 35% reduction in the percentage of children likely to become overweight.
- A public school in Wisconsin saw a 29% increase in children's fruit and vegetable consumption after the implementation of a salad bar.
- Studies at the University of Kentucky show that slicing fruit for younger students significantly increases fruit consumption.
- Brown-Mills Elementary in Georgia eliminated sugar from school meals and found immediate improvements in test scores and student behavior: disciplinary incidents fell by nearly one-fourth, counseling referrals dipped by 30% in just six months, and standardized test scores rose 15% in the reading category.

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