New Haven Public Schools

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New Haven Public Schools

You are hearing from many others about the many challenges faced by school districts in these inflationary times, including food services.

In many cases, as in New Haven, school districts are required to contribute general fund budget money in order to allow the program to balance. Absent such significant contributions the program would have no alternative but to run a deficit – at a time when we are serving healthier meals to very needy children.

Promoting healthy eating

Since converting back to a self operating program in July, New Haven has increased the students' consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. We are serving more REAL foods and limiting the processed food offerings. We have increased our whole grain products. The children are eating vegetables that they may not have ever eaten, including butternut squash and radishes.

This year we served corn on the cob from a farm 8 miles away from our Central Kitchen in Northford, green beans from Rocky Hill and apples, peaches and pears from Glastonbury. We are working in conjunction with Yale Dining Services to procure wild caught Alaskan king salmon to serve to our children at a price less than we would pay for fish sticks.

We work with many community groups in New Haven to promote healthy eating and educate our children on where our food comes from. CitySeed farmers' markets are becoming destinations for the families of our school children. As a parent, chef and the Executive Director of Food Services, I visit the downtown farmers' market every Wednesday to talk with the farmers to build relationships. These relationships that are formed bring the farmers into the classrooms to talk to the students. And, our Local 217 food service workers have embraced our healthier food program.

New Haven has been awarded a variety of grants related to healthy food alternatives and has been recognized in the local media as well as the New York Times for its cutting edge healthy program.

Saving costs

New Haven's strategies include cooperative purchasing together with Yale, procuring local items to save on fuel costs, buying produce in season and making economical but healthy menu substitutions where possible. While improving efficiencies of our operations, we are ensuring that we do not compromise on the nutritional integrity of meals provided.

What will happen if five (5) cents is eliminated from our reimbursement?

Food service programs will struggle even more to provide healthy real foods to our students. We will be forced to procure products based solely on price; our children will be the ones who suffer. In New Haven the meals we provide account for the ONLY meals that some of our students consume daily. Monday's breakfast and Friday's lunch are our busiest meals. With the current economy some families cannot afford to feed their children a healthy balanced meal on the weekends so the children are clamoring to eat lunch on Fridays in schools to make it through the weekend. Come Monday morning at breakfast and the children are starving. This is reality. We as School Nutrition professionals not only hear these stories but we see them with our own eyes in our schools.

THIS IS THE ECONOMY WHEN OUR CHILDREN NEED US THE MOST, AT THE VERY LEAST KEEP FUNDING WHERE IT IS, BUT DON'T CUT IT.