

Healthy Schools/ Healthy Communities: Improving School and Community Food Environments

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Gratts Elementary School

Los Angeles, CA

- Pico Union neighborhood, west of Downtown LA
- 98% Latino student population
- 90% eligible for free and reduced-cost school lunch



Food Vendors Outside Gratts Elementary

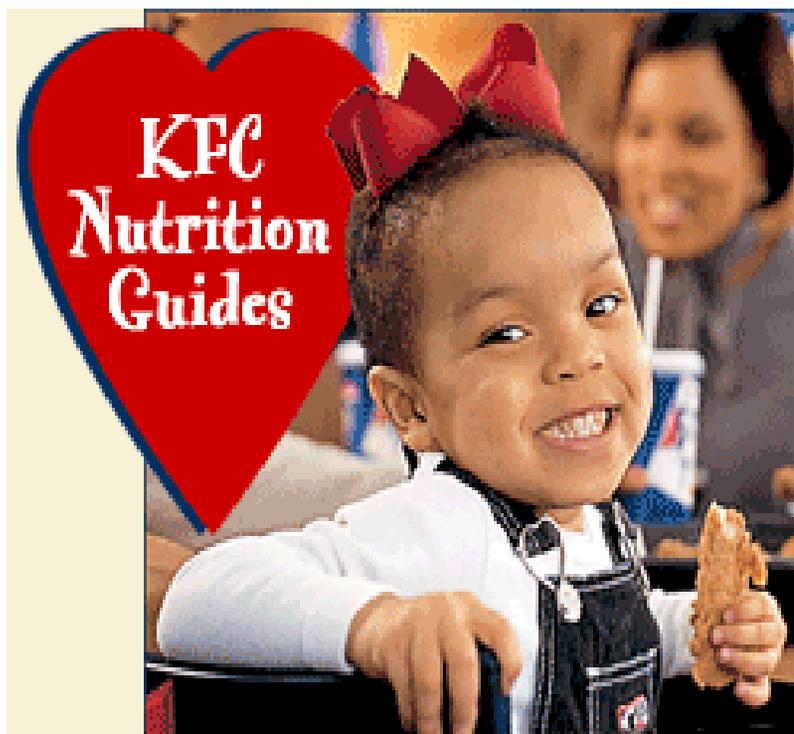


Pigeons Feeding Outside Gratts Elementary



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A Question of Behavior and Choice or
Access and Environment?

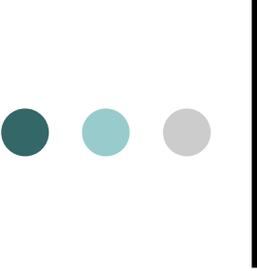


National School Lunch Program

- Established in 1946 as a nutrition-based program
- Goals: promoting health and preventing disease
- “What children eat helps determine not only how healthy they are as children, but how healthy they will be as adults.” (Framing document, NSLP)



Photo from NSLP website



NSLP: Institutional Constraints and Outside Pressures

Revenues needed to cover costs

- Profits returned to school districts' general funds
- 20% of food obtained through federal commodities program
- Services contracted out to private food service corporations
- Elimination of kitchens at individual schools
- Increase in number of contracts with fast food chains
- Trend towards branded items; appeal to fast food culture

Competitive Foods in Schools

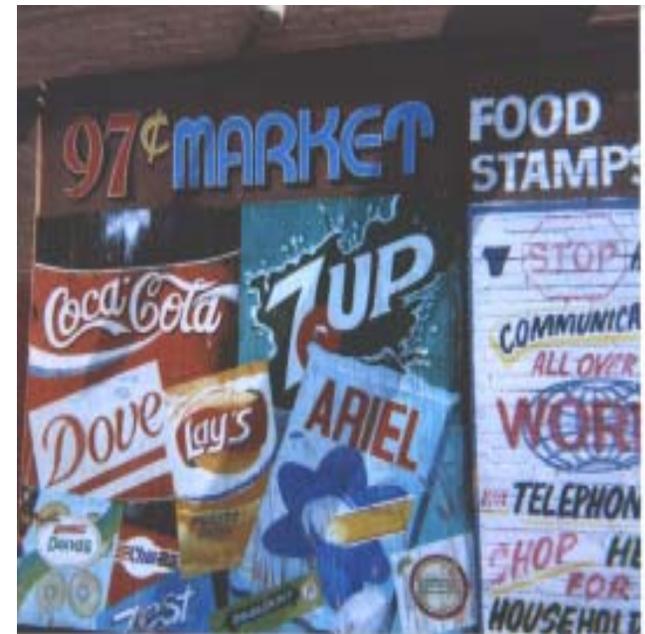
- In addition to the cafeteria food, schools often have foods of minimal nutritional value available through
 - A la carte items
 - Soda machines
 - Snack machines
 - School stores
 - Fundraising sales



Photo from abcnews.com

The Double Bind in Food Insecure Communities

- Lack of access to fresh and healthy food choices
- Overabundance of available fast food and junk food options



Photos taken by Belmont High School Students, within walking distance of Gratts and Belmont.

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Mobilizing for Healthy Food: Institutional Changes, Policy Initiatives and Community Action



LAUSD students organize for healthy food at their schools and neighborhoods

Farm to School: A New Approach to School Food and Sustainable Agriculture



Rodney Taylor, Former Director of Food and Nutrition Services
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District

Initiated and institutionalized salad bars at every school in the district between 1997-2002

Farm to School Expands



A new Farmers' Market Salad Bar opens in Compton, CA
February, 2004

Built Environment In and Around Schools: School Gardens

- Experiential learning environment
- Physical activity benefits
- Source of fresh foods



Challenges for School Gardens

- Start-up costs
- Lack of green space
- Maintenance and sustainability



Park Western Elementary School



LAUSD School Yard

Los Angeles School Board Bans Soda Sales - 2002



Followed by Passage of Obesity Prevention Policy - 2003



- Nutritional standards for vended items
- Phase-in salad bars
- Offer vegetarian entrée
- Pilot soy milk as an alternative
- “Second chance” breakfast at all schools
- Develop plan to eliminate contracts with branded fast-food vendors

USDA Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program, 2002 Farm Bill



King Elementary, Iowa

- Provided funds for 107 schools for free fresh and dried fruit and vegetables for students
- Schools reported that 80% of students were very interested in the pilot (USDA ERS Evaluation of the USDA Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program Report to Congress 2003)
- Des Moines' local purchasing

Child Nutrition Reauthorization: Farm to Cafeteria Legislation

- Farm to Cafeteria Projects Act
- Would establish a competitive seed grant fund
 - New programs could receive funding for
 - Staff time and training
 - Educational and promotional materials
 - Storage and equipment



Project CAFE

Community Action on Food Environments



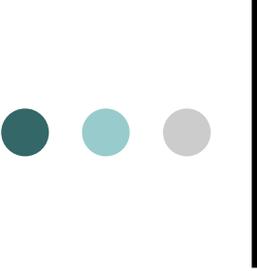
- Partnerships between community based organizations, students, researchers, and health professionals
- School and community food assessments
- Identifying and addressing lack of fresh food access in low income neighborhoods
- New forms of community power and action research around food issues

Food Mapping in the Neighborhood



Pico Union Food Vendor





Strategies for Change

- Institutional change
- Policy change
- Community change framework
- Linking social and environmental justice with food access and community health

