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## Articles about school food by Dana Woldow

**September 19 2016** Beyond Chron [Good News and Bad News about SFUSD's School Meals](#)

Good news: complete nutritional information on Revolution Foods meals finally released

Bad news: lots of sugar

**September 7, 2016** Beyond Chron [Why the secrecy around SFUSD school meals?](#)

It's discouraging to see that after so many years of work to improve the quality of school meals, SFUSD is still serving kids breakfasts containing half the recommended amount of added sugar kids should consume in a full day. Worse, it requires much internet digging to find the sugar content, as SFUSD's publicly available nutritional information includes all the usual facts (protein, fiber, sodium, etc.), but not sugar.

**August 9, 2016** Beyond Chron [Who should lead SFUSD's school meal program?](#)

As San Francisco kids head back to school, they probably won't realize that their school meal program currently has no leader. The heart of the program – the food – remains the same, and that's a problem, because over the past few years, the number of students eating school meals has been dropping for both breakfast and lunch, even as efforts have been made to drive those numbers higher. The long-held goal of scratch cooking remains out of reach. Who should lead SFUSD's school meal program? Someone like this.

**July 11, 2016** Beyond Chron [Is There a Secret to Getting Kids to Eat Veggies?](#)

Is there really a “superpowered secret” to getting kids to eat more fresh vegetables? Apparently CNN thinks so (“The superpowered secret to get kids to eat veggies”); so does CBS News (“A clever way to get kids to eat their vegetables”) . Would you be shocked to learn that these major media outlets got it wrong?

**June 28, 2016** Beyond Chron [Will SFUSD Scratch Cook School Lunch?](#)

It looks like scratch cooking of school meals may, some day, come to San Francisco's public schools. After years of relying on outside vendors like Revolution Foods and Preferred Meals, SFUSD may take the first step this fall on the road toward a self-operating, scratch cooking meal program (called “self op” in school lunch jargon). But it will be a very long road. Very long...

**June 16, 2016** Beyond Chron [IDEO's SFUSD School Lunch Plan Flops](#)

A plan created in 2013 by world-famous design firm IDEO, intended to increase the number of students eating school lunch in San Francisco, has proven to have had just the opposite effect. Nearly three years after the SF Board of Education approved the IDEO project to “reimagine” school lunch through nicer cafeterias and additional ways for students to get their meal, the number of students choosing to eat school lunch has dropped 16%, to its lowest point in recent memory, and school officials have no idea why.

**March 28, 2016** Beyond Chron [Parents Behaving Badly: School Lunch Edition](#)

Some parents in Mill Valley are disrupting school lunch (not in a good way) by having restaurant food delivered at school to their child and a select group of friends, as a birthday treat. These feasts take place in full view of those who have not been invited to the party, which the school says drives the excluded into a "frenzy." What are these parents thinking?

**February 11, 2016** Beyond Chron [Communal School Lunch in SFUSD](#)

Inspired by school lunch in Japan, SFUSD's Future Dining Experience plan envisions small groups of elementary students (in pint sized chef's attire) serving each other lunch from family style bowls under the watchful eye of an adult. The biggest obstacle to the plan is the cost of labor, but here's how one school in Minneapolis has solved that problem brilliantly. Can SFUSD follow suit?

**February 3, 2016** Beyond Chron [More Setbacks for SFUSD's Future Dining Experience](#)

In 2013, SFUSD unveiled an ambitious plan to improve cafeteria service and get more kids to choose school meals. Almost 3 years in, there is still no data to show whether the project is accomplishing its goals, and a UC Berkeley study to collect that data has had to be delayed for a year, but the district's own figures show no increase - at all - in the number of kids eating school lunch.

**January 18, 2016** Beyond Chron [Proposed School Lunch Rules a Win for Kids' Health](#)

The Senate Agriculture Committee has scheduled a markup of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization, rules for federal programs like school lunch that feed tens of millions of children, most of them low income. For some kids, these meals may be the only proper nutrition they receive all day. The legislation reflects a truce in the two year battle between the School Nutrition Association, who wanted waivers, rollbacks, and even elimination of various provisions of existing rules for school meals, and those determined to maintain progress made on improving child nutrition. The compromise legislation is bad news for SNA and their processed food sponsors but great news for kids' health.

**January 12, 2016** Beyond Chron [Another Chef Tackles School Lunch](#)

A well-known chef leaves a flourishing restaurant career in Europe to come to America to fix school lunch. Sound familiar? No, I am happy to report that this is not the second coming of Jamie Oliver. The Washington Post recently profiled Daniel Giusti, formerly chef de cuisine at Copenhagen's world-renowned Noma, who says he is ready for a career change to something that would help improve the American diet. What better place to start than with kids?

**November 30, 2015** Beyond Chron [Craziest School Lunch Myth Yet](#)

Has anyone noticed that Congress has still not reauthorized school meals or other child nutrition programs? But there is plenty of misinformation flying around about those school meals, and the latest myth is the craziest one yet - that National School Lunch Program rules forbid adding a dash of spice to garnish a school lunch.

**November 3, 2015** Beyond Chron [Should Schools Dump Hot Dogs?](#)

With new evidence linking processed meat consumption to cancer, is it time for schools to dump hot dogs and pepperoni, and is a lawsuit against a school district the best way to encourage that?

**October 22, 2015** Beyond Chron [Is There a “Contraband Economy” in School Cafeterias?](#)

Of all the anecdotes used in lieu of evidence by those trying to gut healthy school lunch rules, the silliest may be The Tale of the Contraband Salt. In this fantasy, school cafeterias from coast to coast are hosting a veritable black market of enterprising students smuggling in salt shakers in their backpacks to add additional sodium to their meals, and to those of their paying friends. Let's hope that in renewing child nutrition rules, Congress takes this alleged “contraband economy” with a grain of salt.

**October 19, 2015** Beyond Chron [School Lunch Foes Favor Anecdotes Over Evidence](#)

The anecdotes about school lunch flying around Washington these days - featuring students "starving," schools "struggling" to find healthy meals kids like, and how vital it is to serve white jasmine rice - don't hold up to closer scrutiny. They certainly don't justify the gutting of Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act rules that some are proposing.

**September 30, 2015** Beyond Chron [NY Times School Lunch Story Ignores Data](#)

Don't you hate it when the facts contradict a really catchy headline? I guess the New York Times does. Contrary to the screaming headline of a recent NYT article claiming that kids hate school lunch, the latest data from the USDA makes clear that more kids chose to eat school lunch in nearly every month of the 2014-15 school year than during the comparable months of the previous year. Oh snap!

**September 16, 2015** Beyond Chron [Signs Matter for Students' Health](#)

Can elementary school cafeterias help students choose healthier lunches? Signs point to yes. That is, signs with easy to understand graphics can help even beginning readers learn what they should put on their lunch tray. Encouragement from cafeteria workers can nudge students towards taking a complete meal, and eating it. Unfortunately, poorly thought out signage or confusing messages can have the opposite effect.

**August 26, 2015** Beyond Chron [SF Schools' Meal Meltdown](#)

It's déjà vu all over again, as SF public schools have been left waiting - and waiting - for their cafeteria meal deliveries, beginning the first day of this new school year. That's exactly what happened at the start of the 2011-12 school year. Although the root causes of the two meal meltdowns may differ, the one common thread is the involvement of Preferred Meals.

**August 20, 2015** Beyond Chron [Mom Bloggers to the Rescue](#)

Revolution Foods has introduced another overpriced kids' snack - Dynamos, billed as "protein power bites" - along with their Meal Kits, now rebranded as Jet Packs, at a higher price. They've enlisted the help of mom bloggers to try to drum up business, stressing how "healthy" the Dynamos are, but are they really?

**August 5, 2015** Beyond Chron [Rand Paul Doesn't Get School Lunch](#)

The belief that schools are paid for meals with government funds *before* those meals are served to students reveals a deep and troubling misunderstanding – by a Presidential hopeful – of how federal school meal programs work.

**July 28, 2015** Beyond Chron [School Nutrition Association – The New Stepford ?](#)

Has Big Food spirited off a longtime champion of healthy school meals, and replaced her with a “Stepford Wives” robot who happily parrots the agribusiness party line as President of the School Nutrition Association?

**July 21, 2015** Beyond Chron [Will SNA Chart a New Course?](#)

Meet Jean Ronnei, whose position as incoming President of the School Nutrition Association puts her in a tough spot. She must tread a fine line between the interests of America’s “lunch ladies” and the children they serve, and the interests of the processed food companies that sell their wares to school cafeterias and provide about half of SNA’s operating budget. As President, will Ronnei continue to prioritize the needs of SNA’s Big Food sponsors, or will she once again put kids’ health at the top of the organization’s agenda?

**July 7, 2015** Beyond Chron [How Lunch Ladies Get Schooled by Big Food](#)

Last week, former Senator Tom Harkin told the audience at a child obesity conference that the School Nutrition Association has become nothing more than a mouthpiece for agribusiness. Here's why.

**June 15, 2015** Beyond Chron [Schools Struggle After Leaving Federal Meal Program](#)

There was a media frenzy a few years ago when a small number of schools dropped out of the federal school lunch program. The schools, located in areas with few poor students, claimed that new healthy food rules were driving kids from the cafeteria, generating more waste, and pushing school meal programs into the red. So how’s it working out for those schools? Having shaken off the shackles of government, did kids flock back to the cafeteria in droves to gobble up their rule-free lunches, and send cafeteria revenues soaring?

**May 26, 2015** Beyond Chron [Preferred Meals Returns to SFUSD](#)

Preferred Meals, the company that tried to sue San Francisco Unified School District after losing a \$9 million school meal contract to Revolution Foods in 2012, will once again be doing business with SFUSD. Preferred has been awarded a contract to deliver Revolution Foods meals to SFUSD schools. Why would a company whose core business is the manufacture and sale of frozen meals be so eager to land a contract to deliver someone else’s product?

**May 12, 2015** Beyond Chron [School Nutrition Association Caters to the 1%](#)

Whose interests should school cafeterias prioritize – the 30 million mostly low income kids who gobble up healthy school lunches every day, or the tiny number of more affluent students who might prefer less nutritious food? SNA leadership wants to cater to the tastes of the finicky few, even if that means serving less healthy meals to the low income millions.

**May 4, 2015** Beyond Chron [SFUSD Wellness Policy Gives Sweetened Drinks the Boot](#)

The SFUSD Board of Education has taken a bold step, approving an updated school wellness policy that once again puts San Francisco on the leading edge for student health. The new policy ventures into territory where few have dared to tread, mandating that nearly all food sold or served at school, including food sent for sharing at classroom parties, must meet strict nutrition guidelines. Soft drinks – even diet drinks – may not be sold or served, ever, not even to adults.

**April 23, 2015** Beyond Chron [Are School Lunches Starving Student Athletes?](#)

Now that there is a cap on calories in school lunches, a new character has emerged in the cafeteria food fight – the Starving Football Player, who supposedly can't get enough to eat under new rules to make it through a scrimmage without malnutrition setting in. Some say federal calorie limits should be abandoned, leaving it up to kids to decide how many calories they want to consume at school. But is that a solution in search of a problem?

**April 16, 2015** Beyond Chron [School Nutrition Association Chooses Flexibility Over Funding](#)  
As Congressional hearings on the Child Nutrition Reauthorization got underway on April 15th, the School Nutrition Association (SNA) showed their true colors. As predicted, SNA wasted no time in tossing their request for higher school meal funding under the bus, instead harping on their belief that schools should be allowed to serve crappy food because that's what students want.

**April 13, 2015** Beyond Chron [UC Study Bringing Data to School Lunch Debate](#)  
Can letting students preorder their cafeteria lunch using a phone app get more kids to eat school food? How about offering more places where they can pick up their meal? Or maybe having school staff promote the idea that school lunch is cool? A UC study just getting underway at 24 SFUSD middle and high schools will try to answer these questions and more.

**March 9, 2015** Beyond Chron [Will SNA's 35¢ Ask Save SFUSD's Cafeterias?](#)  
How much does it cost to serve kids healthy school meals? The School Nutrition Association should know. Some of their members are complaining that they can't run their cafeterias in the black. That's why SNA is asking Congress for an extra 35 cents per meal for school breakfast and lunch, to bring government funding for school meals closer to their cost. But is an extra 35 cents per meal really enough for school cafeterias to break even? Would it be enough to bail out the perennially insolvent SFUSD school meal program?

**February 24, 2015** Beyond Chron [What SNA Should Ask From Congress](#)  
Much has been written about the School Nutrition Association's controversial 2015 Position Paper, which calls for allowing school meal programs to serve less healthy food to students to balance their budgets. Less has been said about what might make a better "ask" from Congress. What do school meal programs really need to serve kids healthy food and still break even?

**February 17, 2015** Beyond Chron [School Nutrition Association Defies Common Sense](#)  
The School Nutrition Association's mission is "advancing the quality of school meal programs through education and advocacy", but some of their recent advocacy efforts defy common sense. How can an organization dedicated to advancing the quality of school meals justify calling for serving kids crappier food, and how many of SNA's 55,000 members are actually wailing that they must be allowed to continue serving the kind of food that contributes to poor health?

**February 11, 2015** Beyond Chron [Big Food Sponsorship Taints School Nutrition Association](#)  
To understand what's wrong with the way America feeds its schoolchildren, read this sponsorship brochure for the School Nutrition Association, the folks who decide what will be on school breakfast and lunch trays for over 30 million students each day. Think SNA members are making those decisions based on what is most healthy for growing kids? Unfortunately they are just as likely to be influenced by Big Food companies peddling processed crap.

**February 9, 2015** Beyond Chron [School Nutrition Association picks wrong fight](#)

The School Nutrition Association has repeatedly blamed rules mandating healthier food in school meals for the increasing financial woes of school meal programs, but their own survey numbers tell a different story.

**February 3, 2015** Beyond Chron [Every day's a holiday for the candy industry](#)

Studies show Americans are trying to eat better. Too much sugar, it is becoming clear, is shortening our lives and making us sick. Is it too much to ask that the candy industry dial back the 365 day a year holiday season, and give us Valentine candy in February and not December??

**January 20, 2015** Beyond Chron [School Lunch: Private vs Public](#)

My head may explode if I read one more article gushing over a fabulous private school lunch program, complete with a celebrity chef insisting that any public school can easily do what he does. Just how easy - and inexpensive - is it to put a healthy school lunch on the table?

**January 7, 2015** Beyond Chron [Food Politics Off to Crazy Start in 2015](#)

Food politics for 2015 are off to a crazy start in Congress, where January 2nd saw the introduction of legislation to ban hot food, but allow soda, candy and energy drinks, in school lunch programs. Granted, the legislation, introduced on the last day of the 113th Congress by a Congressman who lost his re-election bid, was never intended to pass. But given the enthusiasm among Republicans for gutting school lunch standards, is this joke legislation actually funny?

**December 8, 2014** Beyond Chron [Was 2014 a Watershed Year for Food Politics?](#)

Is this really the year when the pendulum began to swing back in favor of consumers, workers and health, and away from corporations, exploitation and disease? Or am I high from the Berkeley soda tax win?

**November 6, 2014** Beyond Chron [Why the Soda Tax Lost in San Francisco](#)

There are several reasons why Berkeley's Measure D fared better than San Francisco's Proposition E. In the end, though, what may have mattered most is that there was far more leadership to pass a soda tax shown by elected officials in Berkeley than by their counterparts in SF.

**November 5, 2014** Beyond Chron [Berkeley Wins: What's Next for Soda Taxes?](#)

Now that Berkeley has led the nation in passing the first excise tax on sugary beverages, will other communities follow suit? Or is Berkeley, as Big Soda spokesman Roger Salazar maintains, "not necessarily the trendsetter that they claim to be"?

**November 4, 2014** Beyond Chron [Five Reasons to Vote Yes on SF's Prop E](#)

There are so many reasons to vote Yes on San Francisco's Proposition E, the so called "soda tax", that it is hard to choose just five. Thinking about Prop E as just a means of raising the price of the harmful drinks that can lead directly to diabetes and metabolic syndrome oversimplifies the benefits to every SF citizen of passing this tax. And the money raised is guaranteed to go to pay for these benefits.

**November 3, 2014** Beyond Chron [Were you tricked by Big Soda's ads?](#)

Have you seen or heard those ads from the No on Prop E campaign claiming that passage of the soda tax measure would cost San Francisco over \$60 million in revenue and 1,000 lost jobs? If you were fooled into thinking that any of the "facts" contained in those ads are true, you're not alone. Beverage industry spokesman Roger Salazar was also able to trick at least one experienced reporter.

**October 15, 2014** Beyond Chron [Big Soda is Just Making Stuff Up](#)

Once upon a time, Big Soda would commission studies to support their claims. Now, they just make stuff up. As soda taxes on the ballot in SF and Berkeley gain momentum, the opposition has been reduced to bluffing to try to salvage their case.

**October 7, 2014** Beyond Chron [Big Soda's Deceptions Keep on Coming](#)

It's been a rough few weeks for Big Soda spinmeisters, as their latest attempts at deception have all been busted by an increasingly skeptical media. From bogus claims about who exactly opposes a soda tax, to high profile promises to reduce beverage calories that turn out to be meaningless, the fizz has gone flat in Big Soda's attempts to control the story around sugary drink consumption and the harm it does to public health.

**September 22, 2014** Beyond Chron [Talking Back to Big Soda](#)

While the beverage industry is able to devote all of its considerable resources to defeating any attempt to limit sugary beverages, health advocates have never been able to raise sufficient funds to counter the myths and spin promoted by industry. But this time around, social media is helping to level the playing field. People are starting to talk back to Big Soda, especially on Twitter, and the usual myths and spin are starting to unravel.

**August 25, 2014** Beyond Chron [Should Schools Ban Hot Dogs?](#)

A grim story in the news this past week – at a Phoenix elementary school, a 7 year old died after choking on a corn dog in his school lunch. As horrifying as this event must have been for the children and school staff who witnessed it, and as devastating as it surely is to the child's family, the question is not "How could this happen?", but rather "How often does this happen?" Maybe it's time school cafeterias said goodbye to hot dogs once and for all?

**August 18, 2014** Beyond Chron [Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Jumps on Fat Shaming Bandwagon](#)

Why would a pediatric healthcare organization whose stated mission is "To make kids better today and healthier tomorrow" think that it was either better or healthier to shame children for being overweight? That question comes to mind after viewing a disgraceful video produced by Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

**July 31, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda tax myths: Going Sugar-free Will Kill You!](#)

When Mark Bittman broke the news in the New York Times that on July 30th, Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) would be introducing a bill in the House of Representatives requiring a tax on sugar sweetened beverages, you could almost hear the cries of anguish and gnashing of teeth coming from Big Soda. Coca-Cola Vice President and Chief Scientific and Regulatory Officer

Dr. Rhona Applebaum immediately sent out a tweet warning that a sugar-free diet “could kill you”.

**June 30, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda tax myths: Is A New Tax “The Last Thing” Berkeley Needs?](#)

On July 1, the Berkeley City Council is expected to vote unanimously to put a proposal to tax sugar sweetened beverages on the November ballot. Its purpose is “to diminish the human and economic costs of diseases associated with the consumption of sugary drinks by discouraging their distribution and consumption in Berkeley.” A similar 2 cents per ounce proposal is expected to be finalized for the SF ballot by July 22nd. But as the Bay Area soda tax battle heats up, the beverage industry will trot out the myths they have used to defeat such measures in other communities. Here, some of Berkeley's leading soda tax supporters counter those myths with truth.

**June 16, 2014** Beyond Chron [School Food Service Director's War on Sugar: Miguel Villarreal](#)

Every week seems to bring a new report on how harmful added sugar is to our health, but how many of us can claim to have eliminated literally tons of sugar from kids’ diets? Meet Miguel Villarreal, head of school food service for Novato Unified School District, about 30 miles north of San Francisco.

**June 5, 2014** Beyond Chron [SFUSD Counts Pizza as a Vegetable](#)

The SFUSD Wellness Policy, which includes standards for all food and beverages sold or served to students at school, was groundbreaking in 2004, but fast forward ten years, and the policy, last updated in 2007, has become an anachronism. Why would a school district whose Superintendent has said that "Serving fresh healthy food every day...is a priority for us" insist on maintaining the freedom to serve food filled with preservatives and chemicals?

**June 2, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda Tax Myths: Will Soda Taxes Really Cost Consumers More?](#)

Which costs more - having an unhealthy population, or doing something about it? A common argument against soda taxes and warning labels on sugary beverages is that they will end up costing us more at the store. But out of control rates of diabetes and other diseases linked to drinking sugary beverages are already costing us more, just not at the cash register.

**May 13, 2014** Beyond Chron [An RD Explains Why All Foods Don't Fit in a Healthy Diet: Andy Bellatti](#)

Meet the man who started Dietitians for Professional Integrity, to object to food industry sponsorship of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. "I went to school to be a dietitian, " he says, "not a Public Relations and damage control expert for Big Food. It doesn't help to keep putting an “All foods can fit in a healthy diet” message out there when the average American diet isn't very healthy to begin with."

**May 12, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda Tax Myths: Do All Foods Really Fit in a Healthy Diet?](#)

Nutrition is an emerging science, and as more is learned about how our bodies process what we feed them, consumers can feel overwhelmed trying to figure out what they should be eating. That's why many people rely on registered dietitians for nutrition advice they can trust. But what

if it turned out that these trusted advisers get their professional training from an organization with deep ties to the food industry itself?

**April 28, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda tax myths: Big Soda Says It's Your Fault If You're Fat](#)

In Big Soda's world, the negative health impact of sugary beverages is limited to just obesity. As if obesity were the only consequence of drinking too many sugary drinks, or even the most important one. In the real world, it's not how much someone weighs that is the problem - it's the chronic illnesses linked to soft drink consumption, like diabetes, metabolic syndrome and heart disease, that are the problem.

**April 16, 2014** Beyond Chron [Heartless Big Soda Terrifies Mom and Pop Businesses](#)

A front group for the American Beverage Association, called the Coalition for an Affordable City, has fast-talking operatives out in force trying to convince small business owners across San Francisco that a soda tax will deliver an enormous, possibly fatal, blow to their bottom line. But since no city in the country has passed the kind of tax proposed for SF, how do Big Soda's paid operatives know what the result will be for small businesses? Simple answer - they don't. It's just a scare tactic.

**April 14, 2014** Beyond Chron [NY Soda Tax Advocate's Advice for SF and Berkeley](#)

When San Francisco and Berkeley become the first cities in the country to pass a soda tax next fall, it will be at least in part because those working to pass the taxes have learned so much from previous failed efforts, including in nearby Richmond (CA). Local activists have also been tapping into the expertise of those who have been involved in similar efforts outside California. Meet New York-based healthy food crusader Nancy Huehnergarth, who has proven to be a veritable fountain of useful soda tax information.

**March 31, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda Tax Myths: Does Big Soda Support Free Choice?](#)

Big Soda loves to proclaim that any government regulation of sugary drinks would take away consumers' "right to choose" the beverages that are best for themselves and their families. Soft drink companies position themselves as defenders of "free choice", but with Coca Cola alone spending over \$3 billion to advertise its products in 2012 (and \$11 billion on marketing), are consumers really making a "free" choice, or are they being persuaded to drink sugar-sweetened beverages by a relentless barrage of industry-sponsored propaganda?

**March 17, 2014** Beyond Chron [Can Big Soda's Statistics Be Trusted?](#)

Big Soda likes to say that only 4% of calories in the average American diet come from soda. They said it recently to support their claim that a proposed bill to put a warning label on sugar-sweetened beverages sold in California would not help lower obesity rates. They say it when opposing soda taxes proposed for San Francisco and Berkeley. If it is true that the average American gets only 4% of their calories from sugary drinks, then are we wrong to believe medical researchers who have linked consumption of those beverages to obesity, diabetes, and other diseases?

**March 6, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda Tax Myths: Do Soda Taxes Reduce Obesity Rates?](#)

As the first glossy anti-soda tax mailer was delivered to the homes of San Francisco voters, the SF Chronicle marveled that it was the earliest campaign flyer ever seen for a November election,

while over at 48 Hills, editor Tim Redmond said it set a "new record" for hyperbole. More troubling is that the mailer, paid for by the American Beverage Association, cites a public health study to justify its claim that soda taxes raise food costs without reducing obesity rates. In fact, the study cited found no such thing. In fact, it found just the opposite.

**March 3, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda Tax Myths: Are Beverages Being Unfairly Targeted?](#)

February wasn't a good month for Big Soda. As proposed soda tax measures moved forward in SF and Berkeley, and the concept gained traction in Illinois and Connecticut, new studies showed that sugary beverage taxes do not cause job losses, and do result in consumers making healthier beverage choices. Scientific research is undermining all of Big Soda's traditional arguments against a sugary beverage tax, and a recent Field Poll showed 78% of Bay Area residents support such a tax. As frustration mounts within the ranks of Big Soda's shills over their inability to control public opinion, can anyone blame them if they occasionally crack?

**February 18, 2014** Beyond Chron [Truth an Early Casualty in SF's Soda Tax Fight](#)

While all San Franciscans will benefit from the new recreation, nutrition and health programs to be paid for by the recently proposed soda tax, kids stand to benefit the most. That's because 40% of the funds will go directly to SFUSD, earmarked for improved school meals, more PE, and more nutrition education. Who doesn't support helping children live longer, healthier lives? The beverage industry, apparently. But historically, San Franciscans always support measures benefiting children and schools, and most Californians support a soda tax if it benefits children's health, so its foes have taken to misrepresenting what the soda tax is all about.

**February 10, 2014** Beyond Chron [Clearing Cafeteria Debt Without Shaming Children](#)

There have been numerous news reports of school cafeteria staff snatching meals away from children whose lunch accounts were overdrawn. In Utah, Florida, and New Jersey, elementary school students have been humiliated in front of their friends and classmates when their hot lunch was literally taken out of their hands and dumped into the trash. While cafeterias can't afford to underwrite unlimited lunches for students who don't qualify for government paid meals, is shaming children in front of their peers really the best way to encourage families to clear their cafeteria debt?

**February 4, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda Tax Myths: Soda Taxes Distract from Real Issues](#)

With a proposed 2 cents per ounce tax on sweetened drinks coming before the SF Board of Supervisors this week, the American Beverage Association has been highlighting its silliest argument yet. It's the "Government can't walk and chew gum at the same time" claim - that when a city has "real" problems like housing, transportation, crime, or unemployment (and what city doesn't?), lawmakers shouldn't be "distracted" by proposals to tax sugary beverages. But rather than being a "distraction" from the "real" business of government, moving forward legislation on soda taxes is exactly what our government leaders should be doing.

**January 27, 2014** Beyond Chron [School Nutrition Association Pushes Fruitless Position](#)

The School Nutrition Association has released its 2014 position paper on federal child nutrition programs, and it's a doozy. SNA bills itself as "the only professional association dedicated solely to the support and well being of school nutrition professionals and to advancing good nutrition for all children." These people are running school lunch programs feeding over 31

million kids a day, so it's disappointing that some SNA positions for 2014 are not really "advancing good nutrition for all children."

**January 21, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda Tax Myths: The Arkansas Argument](#)

California state Senator Bill Monning (D-Carmel) is once again trying to pass statewide legislation to add a penny per ounce tax on sugary drinks, to fund statewide childhood obesity prevention activities and programs. The media's response to Monning's proposed measure, no doubt fueled by beverage industry propaganda, provides a preview of what we can expect to see in February when San Francisco Supervisors introduce legislation to levy a 2 cents per ounce tax on distributors of soda and other sugary soft drinks. Meanwhile, the beverage industry has already come out swinging. One of their favorite talking points against soda taxes is the Arkansas Argument.

**January 14, 2014** Beyond Chron [Soda Tax Myths: Are Beverage Companies Friends to the Poor?](#)

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors may place legislation on the November ballot to levy a 2 cents per ounce tax on distributors of sugary soft drinks, providing a year of nonstop entertainment as arguments for and against the so-called "soda tax" fly back and forth. We are sure to hear the phrases "nanny state" and "personal choice", and dire warnings that taxing sugary drinks is a slippery slope down which we will slide into the unholy maw of a City Hall that dictates what is and is not appropriate for our families. But with widespread public concern about the rising cost of living in SF, it may turn out to be the beverage industry's economic fear mongering that plays the lead role in their 'No Soda Taxes' minidrama.

**January 13, 2014** Beyond Chron [SFUSD Fumbles High Profile Cafeteria Plan](#)

The new 'Saveur 100' list of gourmet magazine Saveur's favorite foodie things highlights at #49 the San Francisco Unified School District. Wedged between an app that translates Chinese menus into English, and an Earl Grey tea flavored chocolate cookie, SFUSD wins praise for its contract with healthy lunch provider Revolution Foods, and for the plan (developed by design firm IDEO) to improve SFUSD's cafeteria experience. Unmentioned is that SFUSD seems to be setting the IDEO project up to fail, especially since, against all expectations, fewer students chose Revolution Foods lunches this fall than did so last spring.

**January 6, 2014** Beyond Chron ["No Free Lunch" Congressman's Other Gaffe](#)

Rep. Jack Kingston (R.-GA) made headlines for suggesting that students receiving free school lunch should be required to "pay a dime, pay a nickel to instill in them that there is, in fact, no such thing as a free lunch." He even proposed students sweep floors in exchange for school meals. Rep. Kingston wants to teach students personal responsibility, but sets a very poor example. Worse, the statistic he cited to support his claim that the school meal program needs "nickels and dimes" from low income children isn't even valid.

**November 25, 2013** Beyond Chron [We can all be Batkid](#)

The story of how the Make-A-Wish Foundation made a 5 year old leukemia patient's dream to be a superhero come true has captured the imagination of the world. As Batkid Miles Scott swept through San Francisco turned Gotham City for a day, rescuing damsels in distress, fighting villains, and winning hearts, one could almost see the thought balloons suspended above the

heads of the cheering onlookers. Everyone was thinking, "I wish I could be a superhero for a day!" Guess what? We can be.

**November 18, 2013** Beyond Chron [It's Time for SFUSD to Stop Selling Sugar to Students](#)  
Middle and high school cafeterias in San Francisco still sell cookies and fizzy juice to students, despite claims that a la carte sales have been eliminated to promote better nutrition and equity. The time has come for our schools to stop selling sugar to kids; we can no longer ignore the fact that added sugar contributes to weight gain, tooth decay, and increased triglycerides. Why should students be buying sugar at schools that pride themselves on the healthiness of their food offerings?

**November 12, 2013** Beyond Chron [Is IDEO's Vision Harming San Francisco's School Lunch Program?](#)

Since early spring, SFUSD's Student Nutrition Services (SNS) department has been concentrating on the lovely vision for school meals proposed by design firm IDEO. Most of IDEO's concepts require extensive additional funding, and must be piloted ("prototyped", in design speak) for many months to determine if they are feasible at all. It will be a long time before any of IDEO's plans might be made real in local schools. Meanwhile, SNS has stopped focusing on the food it currently serves to students, or just about any other aspect of its meal program.

**October 7, 2013** Beyond Chron [There's no stopping children's advocate Margaret Brodtkin](#)

Margaret Brodtkin, mother of 2 and grandmother of 4, has spent her entire adult life advocating for other people's children. At an age when most of her peers have retired from public service, Brodtkin is as busy as ever. She recently hosted over 200 attendees from around the state at a conference on establishing local dedicated funding measures for children, youth and families in California. I met with Margaret recently to talk about her new project, as well as the current status of the Children's Fund, the role for private philanthropy in kids' issues, and the impact of poverty on children's lives.

**September 30, 2013** Beyond Chron [Do hipsters on food stamps shop at Whole Foods?](#)

Have you noticed unemployed hipsters clogging the checkout at your local Whole Foods Market, buying sustainably raised quinoa and heritage pork with food stamps? Yeah, me neither. But according to a recent opinion piece in the SF Chronicle, this societal leech in skinny jeans and ironic eyewear is the 2.0 version of Ronald Reagan's "Cadillac-driving welfare queen" - the symbol of all that the Chronicle's Debra J. Saunders feels is wrong with the current food stamp safety net.

**September 23, 2013** Beyond Chron [To understand IDEO's vision, read the fine print](#)

Design firm IDEO's vision for the future of school meals in San Francisco was unveiled at a recent Board of Education meeting. Although only an abbreviated PowerPoint version was presented, the Board received copies of the full-color, 206-page book IDEO produced for the project. It looks like a corporate annual report on steroids - the heavy paper, the wealth of dazzling full color photos - and, as in an annual report, the size of the type is in inverse relation to the importance of the information. While readers are drawn to the photos and headlines, they might skip the fine print, but that's where most of the good stuff is buried.

**September 16, 2013** Beyond Chron [Denying children food is penny wise, pound foolish](#)  
Willingboro, NJ, now has a new reason to be embarrassed. The residential community outside Philadelphia, whose major source of shame used to be that it was briefly called "Levittown" (after the tract housing builder), has become the poster child for how not to treat schoolchildren. Those whose cafeteria accounts are empty will no longer be provided a free lunch on credit; instead, students without lunch money will have to surrender their lunch tray and see their meal dumped into the trash.

**September 9, 2013** Beyond Chron [Revolution Foods Meal Kits: Why bother?](#)  
Why would anyone spend so much money on a "meal kit" that could be made at home in seconds for a fraction of the price? Why we do persist in believing that eating on the go, and having separate meals aimed just at kids, is a good thing? And why - oh why - are we teaching our kids that every mouthful of food should come to them separately shrink wrapped in plastic and stuffed into a colorful cardboard box?

**September 3, 2013** Beyond Chron [Attacks on School Lunch Program Got it Wrong](#)  
It's Back to School season, and for some, that means back to bashing the federal school meal program. A widely disseminated AP article misleadingly implied that new healthier lunches were causing a mad rush by school districts to withdraw from the federally funded National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Nothing could be further from the truth, but apparently the 'Kids hate healthy food' story line is now the default for lazy media, just as the 'School meals are crap' story line was 5 years ago.

**August 19, 2013** Beyond Chron [If You Can Read This, Thank a Teacher](#)  
Teachers spend hundreds, even thousands, of dollars of their own money each year to outfit their classrooms. What other profession requires employees to bring their own supplies - do office workers have to bring paper if they want to use the copier? Do surgeons have to plead with the families of their patients to donate surgical masks and gloves so that they can properly perform their job?

**August 12, 2013** Beyond Chron [Devil Is In the Details For IDEO's School Lunch Fantasies](#)  
Design firm IDEO recently invited some SFUSD community members to learn about The New Lunchroom, their vision for a "financially-sustainable system that engages students in eating good food." I had high hopes that IDEO would produce groundbreaking, disruptive ideas that no one had ever thought of before, injecting new energy into the tired old concept of school lunch. But the ideas we saw were not new, and due to a lack of any supporting numbers, I came away feeling more baffled than energized.

**August 5, 2013** Beyond Chron [Celebrating Farmers Markets, in the Style of Louis C.K.](#)  
Like many other regular patrons, I have a love/hate relationship with farmers markets. As farmers markets have become more popular (love that), they have also become less fun (hate that). Of course we want children to come to farmers markets and learn where their food comes from, to try new fruits and vegetables they may never have seen before, so that they will happily eat these healthy foods and not reject them. Of course we do. But maybe....

**July 30, 2013** Beyond Chron [Numbers Don't Support "Massive School Lunch Fraud" Claims](#)  
"Free lunch fraud runs rampant" blared the headline of a recent article about a government audit in Indiana, but the facts prove that headline wrong. The article estimates that one third of Indiana students receiving free or reduced-price school lunches do not qualify for the program, but the evidence shows that less than one half of one percent of Indiana students getting government-paid meals submitted invalid applications.

**June 24, 2013** Beyond Chron [The Golden Age of School Food in SF](#)  
It feels like the Golden Age of school food has arrived in San Francisco, but how long will it last? With labor and delivery costs expected to rise, there are choppy financial waters ahead; strong leadership for Student Nutrition Services will be needed to keep the ship afloat, and already the ball has been dropped on a crucial issue.

**June 18, 2013** Beyond Chron [Will IDEO's school meal experience fly?](#)  
I spent an hour recently at the offices of IDEO, the design firm hired by the Sara and Evan Williams Family Foundation to lead an initiative to reform the school meal experience in San Francisco. No matter how "disruptive" their ideas may be, they will need to engage all members of the SF Board of Education if they ever want to move forward, and it wouldn't hurt to suggest setting up a foundation, perhaps funded by local tech companies, to help pay for improvements.

**June 10, 2013** Beyond Chron [Proposed food truck legislation undermines healthy school meals](#)  
New legislation has been proposed which would allow mobile food vendors, including roach coaches selling soda, chips and candy, to park closer to public middle and high schools in San Francisco. While the legislation's sponsor, District 8 Supervisor Scott Wiener, is focused on trying to please both restaurant owners and food truck owners, the impact of bringing mobile food vendors closer to schools, which long ago banned junk food, has been largely ignored.

**May 29, 2013** Beyond Chron [The Greatest School Lunch Superhero You Never Heard Of](#)  
When San Francisco Unified School District's Student Nutrition Services director Ed Wilkins retires next month after 16 years, SF's students will lose a champion for their health and nutrition whose accomplishments rival those of any school food reformer nationwide. Yet most people, even in San Francisco, have never heard his name.

**May 21, 2013** Beyond Chron [Fighting big food with social media](#)  
Big food and beverage companies are spending less on advertising their products to kids, and yet their presence in children's lives feels greater than ever. How can that be? Two words - social media. Using Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to bring their message to children is vastly cheaper than traditional media, and it may not even be perceived by youngsters as "advertising", making it all the more insidious. Now one fed-up mom is fighting back, taking advantage of social media's low cost and ease of distribution to get her message about processed food out to kids.

**May 14, 2013** Beyond Chron [Do Revolution Foods' meals make students smarter?](#)  
Over the years, some pretty outrageous claims have been made about healthy school meal provider Revolution Foods. Everything from "it doesn't cost schools more to choose these

meals" (yes it does) to "[their] fresh ingredients are organic" (most aren't.) But some recent claims have raised the bar on unbelievable. Can better school food really make kids smarter?

**May 7, 2013** Beyond Chron [Michael Pollan: Oppressor of women or hopeless romantic?](#)

Is Michael Pollan the most notorious sexist in America? Or does he just need a dose of reality? If only everyone else's life resembled Pollan's - big kitchen, one lone child, time and money to shop and cook at leisure, and let's not forget the book contract driving his latest work on the subject - maybe more of us would share his feelings. After cooking daily for 40 years, I usually do still enjoy it, but the Sisyphean never-ending-ness of it dispelled the romance long ago.

**April 29, 2013** Beyond Chron [A reluctant school food advocate: Bettina Elias Siegel](#)

How do you get kids to eat healthy in an environment where they are offered junk food at every turn, including at school? Ask Houston's Bettina Elias Siegel, the brains behind The Lunch Tray, a popular and highly respected blog about kids and food with a following of thousands of fans. Here, she talks about her work, including the challenges of trying to improve food in the nation's 7th largest school district, why she calls herself "a reluctant school food advocate", and what changes in the food environment she thinks parents can reasonably hope to accomplish.

**April 15, 2013** Beyond Chron [Will IDEO reimagine SFUSD's cafeterias?](#)

The new SFUSD school meal initiative is just getting started, and already there is grumbling. Maybe it's because the work is being funded by The Sara and Evan Williams Family Foundation, and led by the SF office of design group IDEO; neither one has any previous involvement with San Francisco's public schools. What ideas can they come up with that haven't been thought of before? How can people who don't understand school meal program regulations and financial constraints possibly be helpful? How many IDEO employees send their own kids to SFUSD schools? But it won't be the IDEO staff creating the vision and ideas that the initiative seeks to articulate; that's not their way.

**April 8, 2013** Beyond Chron [Where do we draw the line on poverty?](#)

It's clear that poverty is at the root of many problems students have at school, everything from low income students starting school with smaller vocabularies than their wealthier peers, to low income students being more likely to suffer from malnutrition, asthma, painful tooth decay, and other poverty-related disorders that affect the ability to focus and learn. But how can schools begin to mitigate the impact of poverty on students when they don't even know how many are affected?

**April 1, 2013** Beyond Chron [April Fool's Day Headlines: Truth or Fantasy?](#)

Twitter cofounder fixes school lunch! Revolution Foods makes kids smarter! Teacher in a state plagued by high child obesity rate begs strangers to donate candy and soda to her classroom! Congress cracks down on classroom birthday parties! Truth or April Fool's hoax?

**March 18, 2013** Beyond Chron [Hunger in America](#)

Even as the new documentary A Place at the Table highlights in heart wrenching fashion the plight of 16 million US children who don't know where their next meal is coming from, some want to end a safety net that for decades has stood between some kids and a slow death from malnutrition - the school meal program. Think starvation can't happen here, in one of the richest

countries on earth? Think again. Not only could US children starve without school meals, but not all that long ago, they did.

**February 26, 2013** Beyond Chron [High cost of living thwarts school meal improvements](#)

One way school districts differ in their ability to provide healthy and tasty fresh meals to their students is labor costs. Although the government payment for a free school lunch is uniform, labor costs vary widely from community to community. Districts with lower overall labor costs can afford more workers, enabling labor-intensive programs like breakfast in the classroom, or properly staffed salad bars, or scratch cooking, while those with higher costs must make do with fewer workers, and may not be able to afford labor-intensive programs. This chart shows salary ranges for the lowest paid cafeteria worker job at 46 school districts around California. With salary levels at the top of the heap, SFUSD is at a clear disadvantage when it comes to being able to offer labor intensive meal programs within the tight confines of uniform federal meal funding.

**February 13, 2013** Beyond Chron [Minor infraction snares SFUSD in school meal mispending report](#)

A recent report from the California Senate Office of Oversight and Outcomes (SOOO) revealed that eight school districts statewide, including SFUSD, had violated federal regulations by spending money intended for school meal programs on other district expenses. SFUSD's infraction was so minor that the report provides no details. Of more interest is the report's revelation that, for more than a decade, the California Department of Education has been violating USDA regulations.

**February 11, 2013** Beyond Chron [Don't Call Healthy School Lunch an "Encroachment"](#)

As school budget season gets underway, it's time to say goodbye to "encroachments." San Francisco Unified School District's Student Nutrition Services spends more money running school meal programs than it collects in meal payments from families and the government, necessitating an infusion of cash from the district's general fund. In Budgetspeak, this is called an "encroachment", which means the cost of providing a required service is more than the funds provided to pay for it, so other funds must be used to cover the cost. Given that some of SFUSD's own policies and procedures exacerbate the shortfall, it would be more appropriate to call the \$2 million in general fund money which SNS needed last year, and which may be higher this year, a "contribution" or "support" from the school district, not an "encroachment".

**February 4, 2013** Beyond Chron [What Japan can teach us about school lunch](#)

Every so often an article pops up comparing school lunches in America to those served in other countries. To the surprise of no one, our lunches usually fare badly in comparison. How is it that so many other countries are getting school lunch right, while America continues to get it wrong?

**January 30, 2013** Beyond Chron [Reclaiming Valentine's Day](#)

The heart may be the most enduring symbol of Valentine's Day, but here's another image: second graders using giant "scoop" style corn chips to eat the neon pink frosting from atop their cupcakes. Every year, epicurean excess like this happens in classrooms nationwide during the ritual known as the "class party." It's time to reclaim Valentine's Day as a time to celebrate love, friendship, and a healthy heart.

**January 23, 2013** Beyond Chron [Will Congress deny 280,000 low income children a free school lunch?](#)

Last year, when Congress failed to pass a new farm bill, an often-repeated claim was that the version of the bill proposed by the House Agricultural Committee would throw 280,000 children off the free school lunch rolls. Less clear was who exactly these kids would be, why some members of Congress thought it was a good idea to literally take food out of the mouths of low income children, and whether those families could just work around such legislation and still get free school lunch.

**January 16, 2013** Beyond Chron [Apparently Coke Thinks You Are Stupid](#)

Coca Cola must think you are stupid. How else to explain their new ad campaign which recommends that consumers just laugh off the empty calories in their daily sodas, as a strategy to fight obesity? In the "Can't make this stuff up" category, this bizarre PR effort to rebrand Coke as actually caring about its customers' health should win some kind of award.

**January 14, 2013** Beyond Chron [Catching up on local school food stories from 2012](#)

Preferred Meal Systems Grinch tries, and fails, to steal SFUSD students' Christmas; Revolution Foods meals prove hugely successful in SFUSD; Supervisor Scott Wiener shows once again he is no friend to low income youth; and SFUSD moves forward with its groundbreaking Initiative to Reform School Food in SF.

**January 7, 2013** Beyond Chron [True Cost of SFUSD Revolution Foods Meal Contract is Unknown](#)

History is being made today as a new meal contract with Revolution Foods brings fresh lunches into every SFUSD school for the first time in modern memory. Exciting as this is, it's a little scary to realize that no one knows how long SFUSD will be able to afford these higher quality, higher priced meals.

**December 17, 2012** Beyond Chron [Dear Preferred Meal Systems: Please go away](#)

At first, our relationship with Preferred was everything a new romance should be - the food was better than what most schools had been serving before, and the price was affordable. But now the romance is over, we want someone else. All your bid protest has done is generate more bad feeling in the community towards your company. Is this really how you want the relationship to end? Don't be like that pathetic guy in high school who can't accept that his girlfriend had moved on, who hangs around her locker, harassing her and her new boyfriend. Take your loss like a man, move on, and maybe we can still be friends

**December 11, 2012** Beyond Chron [School lunch dreams for 2013](#)

Now that the San Francisco Unified School District has a plan to bring freshly prepared meals to all SFUSD students in the new year, what's left for a school food advocate to wish for? Here's what I'm dreaming of for 2013.

**December 4, 2012** SF Bay Guardian [Vote yes on fresh school meals](#)

My young friend ate school meals in San Francisco for 12 years. With food in short supply at home, he had little choice but to eat cafeteria offerings, but he was disheartened by the rubbery meat patties and limp vegetables that characterize frozen reheated school lunches. That's why he

was thrilled to hear that SFUSD wants to replace frozen meals with freshly prepared entrees. Although his school lunch days are over, his younger siblings still rely on the cafeterias. He hopes they will never again be served a meal still frozen in the middle, or the lifeless, tasteless food he remembers.

**December 3, 2012** Beyond Chron [Fresh school lunch comes to SFUSD](#)

On December 11th, a new meal contract is slated to come before the Board of Education, and when the Board approves it, school food will go from being mostly frozen meals prepared thousands of miles away, to being freshly cooked locally no more than 24 hours before delivery. While there have been many other positive changes to San Francisco school meals over the past few years, the move from frozen meals to fresh represents an enormous accomplishment for SFUSD Student Nutrition Services (SNS), one which was many years in the making, and which addresses the most commonly heard complaint from students, parents, and teachers.

**November 13, 2012** Beyond Chron [How Farm Bill cuts impact school lunches](#)

Those interested in school food reform should stay focused on the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, because both the bill itself, and the timing of when Congress gets back to dealing with it, contain some potential bombshells for student nutrition. It's bad enough that Congress seems determined to throw hundreds of thousands of poor kids out of the free school lunch program, forcing schools to choose between letting those kids go hungry, or using scarce education dollars to feed them. Will they really continue to squabble over the Farm Bill while the country operates under post World War II agricultural policy, and consumer milk prices double overnight?

**October 23, 2012** Beyond Chron [Free school breakfast in the classroom makes dollars - and sense](#)

Overcoming the effects of poverty, including hunger, on academic achievement is a tall order for schools, and to succeed, they need to work every angle. In San Francisco, 14 schools serving mostly low income minority students have been designated as Superintendent's Zone schools, whose focus is "to expand and coordinate resources to ensure each school has the teaching and learning conditions necessary to accelerate academic growth for its students." Since reams of evidence support the conclusion that children eating school breakfast do better in school, making sure every student in these schools starts the day with a nutritious meal should be part of the toolkit.

**October 9, 2012** Beyond Chron [The real school food heroes of San Francisco](#)

Why is it that people who do the heavy lifting on an issue so rarely get credit for it? With little grant funding available to pay for better school food, but a seemingly endless supply of money to fund studies (no matter how inaccurate) and start conversations (no matter how redundant), the issue of fixing school food is attracting a new wave of folks seemingly more focused on landing grants to produce reports than on improving the food. Meanwhile, the real heroes of SF school food reform remain largely unacknowledged.

**September 25, 2012** Beyond Chron [Cafeteria Man Tony Geraci: hype or hope?](#)

Hyperbole is the stock in trade of many high profile school food reformers. Jamie Oliver relies on "stunts", like filling a school bus with sugar, to promote his views, and Chef Ann Cooper uses catchy sound bites, like calling chocolate milk "soda in drag." So it's not surprising to find that

former Baltimore City Public Schools' nutrition director Tony Geraci stretches the truth a bit to make a point, although it does mean that those who are serious about school food reform need to take his statements with a grain of USDA-regulated salt.

**September 17, 2012** Beyond Chron [Don't rush to judgment on new school lunch rules](#)

The new school year has been underway for just a few weeks, but it is never too early for some people to try to pass judgment on the new school lunch regulations. Almost before students had taken their first bite of the sweet potato, kiwi or collard greens now showing up on school lunch trays as a result of the Healthy Hunger Free Schools Act, folks were declaring the new rules a win - or a loss - for student health. But buried deep in the last paragraph of an Associated Press article was the best synopsis of the situation; it concluded that "just weeks into the school year, it's probably too early for final grades."

**September 10, 2012** Beyond Chron [Why Walmart loves free school breakfast](#)

The big news in school breakfast this year is that, thanks to the Walmart Foundation, 10 more school districts are receiving a total of \$5 million to increase the number of students eating a healthy meal at the start of the school day. That's good news for kids and families in these communities, but it's good news for Walmart too. Not only does their support of government-paid school meals for low income students help burnish the corporate image, it seems to be a necessary part of their business model, which includes paying such low wages that its employees often must rely on government assistance programs to get by.

**September 6, 2012** Beyond Chron [Can school food ever be too fresh or too local?](#)

Once upon a time, school meals were characterized by limp, gray, overcooked vegetables, and fruit out of a can diced and awash in high fructose corn syrup. Now, more schools have moved to salad bars filled with fresh crisp veggies and whole fresh fruit; new school meal regulations will ensure that students put at least a half cup of either one on their plates every day. As a believer in the idea that kids need an apple and not an apple turnover, I applaud the movement to serve more and fresher produce at school, but is it possible to take that idea too far?

**August 27, 2012** Beyond Chron [The "target" approach to better school meals](#)

Wouldn't it be great if many good causes - feeding hungry kids, organic farming, fighting global warming, growing small local businesses - could all be supported by school meal programs? In a perfect world, every worthy goal could benefit from these government funds. In the real world, underfunding of school meals by Congress means that schools must prioritize to ensure scarce resources are going towards feeding the most kids, and that means student needs trump other noble causes.

**August 20, 2012** Beyond Chron [SFUSD Superintendent makes student nutrition a priority](#)

As students in San Francisco head back to school this week, there is a veritable buffet of school food news, and like every buffet, some items taste better than others. But among the choicest morsels, one item stands out. For years, those of us working towards better school food have tried to raise the issue to a higher priority with SFUSD top leadership. Now it appears that those efforts have paid off.

**August 13, 2012** Beyond Chron [Choicelunch founder explains new USDA school lunch rules](#)

"That's the problem with the USDA – they think they can force all of these things together and compile a ridiculous menu combination and somehow they'll get the kids to like it if they only "market it" correctly. Then the school district sits there and wonders why they can't get paid participation up to get the foodservice operation into the black. Here's a hint – it's because no one but the US government actually wants to spend money on what they define as a "meal". And so the disadvantaged kids get the government lunch and the rest of the kids pack lunch from home and raid the a la carte shelves." - Justin Gagnon, Choicelunch

**August 7, 2012** Beyond Chron [New USDA school lunch rules limit even healthy choices](#)

If the goal was to make sure kids aren't putting just pizza, cheeseburgers, or hot dogs and french fries on their tray each day, the new rules make sense. Between the tight limits on grains and meat, the enforced variety in vegetables, and the requirement to take at least a minimum serving of fruit or veg each day, we may have seen the last of the daily pizza-and-french-fries school lunch. However, if the goal was to help students learn how to make healthy choices, and to have some say over what they put on their lunch tray, then the new rules leave something to be desired.

**July 31, 2012** Beyond Chron [Do school bake sales really bring in the dough?](#)

Are bake sales really an effective way to fundraise at school? To find out, I calculated the total cost to make a batch of chocolate chip cookies to be donated to a school bake sale, as compared to how much money the sale of those cookies would generate for the school. The results might surprise you.

**July 24, 2012** Beyond Chron [A new tale of two cities](#)

Two school districts are located less than 12 miles apart; they are of similar size, and have similar percentages of low-income kids. Their school meal programs operate at the same number of school sites, serve the same number of lunches, and receive the same federal payment for meals served. Both programs are managed by experienced and well-respected nutrition department directors who have spent virtually their entire professional lives in food service. Since Program A is able to operate at break even, does it follow that Program B should also?

**July 17, 2012** Beyond Chron [What is a school food advocate?](#)

Lawyers never want me on their jury, despite the fact that they should. I can make their job easier, because all they have to do is convince me that their side should prevail. No matter what the other jurors' opinions are going into deliberations, I can pretty much guarantee that, by the end, they are all going to think the way I do.

Who am I, that I wield such power? I am a school food advocate.

**July 10, 2012** Beyond Chron [Fixing school food - what helps, what doesn't](#)

Those of us who want to help need to accept that the issue is far more complex than it appears, and that unless we have managed a child nutrition program for years, our beliefs are likely based more on opinion, and possibly wishful thinking, than on fact. It's hard to help when we don't even realize how much we don't know; sometimes it turns out that "helping" doesn't really help.

**June 25, 2012** Beyond Chron [Should Parents Backfill Public Education Cuts?](#)

A recent article in the New York Times about public elementary school PTA's raising over \$1 million to fund what parents used to consider the "basics" of a good public education - computers, dictionaries, desk chairs - touched a nerve with some San Francisco parents. SF resident Carol Kocivar, a longtime PTA parent and now president of the California State PTA (CAPTA) remembers when her children were in elementary school in the 1980s, their school fundraised \$1,000. Last year, that school raised \$450,000. Can parents really pick up the slack in public education funding, and should they have to?

**June 14, 2012** Beyond Chron [Finding More Money for School Meal Programs](#)

Two main strategies help a school nutrition department move toward solvency: bringing in more revenue, and cutting expenses. While consultants charge six figures to do detailed studies for school districts on how to pursue these two strategies, there are many common sense solutions which parents and advocates can promote to their school district for free.

**June 7, 2012** Beyond Chron [On Soda Ban, What would Mary Poppins do?](#)

As with any other proposed legislation that would impact, even in an incremental way, Americans' freedom to do things that are bad for them, like smoke, ride motorcycles without a helmet, or eat obscene portion sizes of junk food, the knee-jerk response from the soda industry was to proclaim this yet another example of a "nanny state." But is it really? What would the world's most famous nanny, Mary Poppins, heroine of British author P.L. Travers' eponymous children's classic, do to change an unwanted behavior?

**June 5, 2012** Beyond Chron [SF Board of Education lacks vision on school meals](#)

On May 22nd, the SF Board of Education held its first in-depth discussion of student nutrition since passing the "Feeding Every Hungry Child" resolution in spring 2009. The discussion was triggered by a study, intended to help identify ways that SFUSD could feed more kids better food, which was commissioned by the SF Food Bank, conducted by Prismatic Services Inc., and presented at the meeting. But reports from consultants are not likely to drive meaningful change. The BOE needs to articulate a vision for school meals and demand that the district embrace it.

**May 29, 2012** Beyond Chron [School Food Regulation Won't Take the Cake](#)

There has to be a middle ground between never allowing students to have any kind of food-based party at school, and the junk food free-for-alls which happen all too often. No one wants to be the Grinch who stole parties, but many parents are fed up with having other adults, some of whom they have never even met, constantly putting junk food in front of their kids.

**May 22, 2012** Beyond Chron [An Open Letter to the San Francisco Board of Education](#)

It is time for the Board of Education to recommit to prioritizing school meal programs, and to articulate a vision for what they want those programs to look like, so that moving forward, Student Nutrition Services, and the entire community, will have clear goals for which to aim, and a shared understanding of what an optimal school meal program should look like. That vision must come from the Board of Education, and be embraced by the Superintendent and all top district staff. Will the Board of Education and the new Superintendent have the courage to take up this challenge? The health, well being, and academic success of our students depends on it.

**April 19, 2012** Beyond Chron [Chef Ann Cooper Explains School Lunch](#)

The world's most famous school lunch lady, Chef Ann Cooper, does not pull her punches. In the April 16th episode of Ovation Network's new season of *In Search of Food* (repeating April 21st), host and award-winning chef Scott Pampuch heads to Boulder, Colorado, where Chef Ann runs the school meals program for Boulder Valley School District. Early on in the episode, Chef Ann heatedly tells us, "We need to live in a world where we're not spending more on our daily coffee than on school lunch." Here, she answers some questions about her work.

**April 10, 2012** Beyond Chron [Lunch Money Comes Up Short](#)

Don't you hate it when you are excited to see a movie because the preview was great, only to discover those are the only good scenes in the movie ? That was my reaction to school lunch reformer Kate Adamick's new book, *Lunch Money: Serving Healthy School Food in a Sick Economy*. Adamick's best suggestions sound intriguing enough to justify \$19.95 for a book promising to show how these ideas could save our student nutrition department zillions of dollars. Sadly, for a school district like San Francisco, where the high cost of living drives labor expenses to among the highest in the nation, where school kitchens that can actually cook are few and far between, and where providing meals that meet the USDA's Gold Standard drives a \$3 million deficit for the school meal program, there are no easy fixes to be found in Adamick's book.

**April 4, 2012** Beyond Chron ["Upstanders" Lessen the Stigma of School Meals](#)

The traditional image of a school bully was the kid threatening other kids into handing over their lunch money – but these days, bullying and school lunch have a whole other connection. While overt bullying of poor students by wealthier students is a problem at lunchtime in some communities, in other schools with multicultural populations, "lunchbox bullying" may occur when students bring food from their own culture which is unfamiliar to others. Then there is a less obvious, but still painful, kind of bullying in which students make loud derogatory (and often baseless) comments about the school's hot lunch, even as other students are lining up to get that free meal. The stigma attached to school lunch, and its effect on students, continues to be a problem in our public schools. Is it that kids don't want to eat the food, or that they don't want to be ridiculed for eating it?

**April 3, 2012** Edible Schoolyard Project [How I Became a School Food Advocate](#)

Among the most important lessons I've learned about fixing school food are that just because one school can do something doesn't mean everyone can do it; that you need to make friends with your student nutrition director; that school food has its own language and you need to know how to talk the talk; and that fixing school food is a team sport and no one should try to do it alone. But most importantly, I've learned that just one person really can make a difference by finding other people who believe in your cause; by providing organization and leadership; and by overcoming obstacles rather than letting them defeat you. If you make the decision at the start that, no matter what happens, you will never give up until you reach your goal, then there is nothing you can't do.

**March 28, 2012** Beyond Chron [How Do School Meal Policies Affect JoJo?](#)

I am haunted by the image of one of my children's school friends whom we'll call JoJo, for privacy purposes. JoJo and a sibling were raised by a single parent in one of the roughest public housing projects in the city. The kids got free school meals, and they ate school breakfast and

lunch every day because, most days, it was the only food they could count on for sure. In any discussion of issues that impact school meals, my first thought is always: “How does this affect JoJo?”

**March 21, 2012** Beyond Chron [Food Trucks Near Schools: School Food Experts Weigh In](#)  
Several years ago, San Francisco Unified School District began taking steps to combat the stigma. A swipe card system was installed in the cafeterias, so no one can tell just by looking who is getting free lunch. Cash a la carte choices were eliminated, and a wider choice of complete meals is now offered to all students. Fundraising food sales that competed with the school lunch program were eliminated and even the City got on board. In 2007, an SF city ordinance was passed keeping mobile food vendors 1,500 feet (about three blocks) from public middle and high schools. But now, “The City that Knows How” may be poised to reverse course. Proposed legislation before the Board of Supervisors would shorten that distance mobile to just one block. But don’t take my word for it that bringing mobile food vendors closer to schools is a bad idea. I spoke with a number of the nation's leading authorities on school lunch programs to get their opinion on the proposed San Francisco ordinance change.

**March 14, 2012** Beyond Chron [Parents Hungry for Information on “Pink Slime”](#)  
It was recently reported that the USDA plans to allow its vendors to add 7 million pounds of “pink slime - a mix of fatty beef by-products and connective tissue, ground up and soaked in ammonium hydroxide” - to hamburger for use in the school lunch program. Now, parents all over the country are wondering, “is this stuff in my child’s school lunch?” As a result, school districts all around the country have been issuing statements to the media to assure parents that there is no “pink slime” hidden in their child's school lunch. Not in San Francisco, though, where school district officials dragged their heels about informing parents, even though the district is pink slime free.

**March 13, 2012** Beyond Chron [Mobile Vendor PR Straight From Big Soda Playbook](#)  
When most San Franciscans hear “food trucks,” they probably think of the burgeoning trade in artisan Korean tacos and local organic bahn mi, of enterprising immigrant vendors offering handcrafted ethnic specialties from colorful vehicles. But “food trucks” also include “roach coaches,” purveyors of junk food, candy and sodas. That might be one reason why those fighting proposed state legislation limiting how close to schools mobile food vendors can park are sounding a lot like they’re reading straight from Big Soda’s play book. Could it be that the soda industry is actually lurking in the shadows, quietly orchestrating the opposition effort?

**March 12, 2012** Beyond Chron [Proposed State Food Truck Legislation Modified](#)  
A proposed state bill by Assemblyman Bill Monning (Carmel) which originally sought to keep mobile food vending trucks from parking 1,500 feet from all K-12 schools, and which drew the ire of the burgeoning gourmet food truck movement, has been modified by its author.

**March 6, 2012** Beyond Chron [Wiener’s Half-Baked Response to State Food Truck Bill](#)  
Junk food was banned from SFUSD meal programs and vending machines by the SF Board of Education in 2003, but no sooner had that happened than "roach coaches" began arriving at schools as early as 7am to sell to kids; it was common to see students entering school with a breakfast of a Coke in one hand and a giant bag of Flamin' Hot Cheetos in the other. That’s one

reason why State Assembly member Bill Monning (Carmel) introduced AB1678 - because not every truck is selling the kind of healthful, organic and artisan food for which some San Francisco trucks are justly renowned. Even in San Francisco, "roach coaches" still exist, and they are sure to return to close proximity to the schools if they are legally allowed to do so.

**February 21, 2012** Beyond Chron [Should Big Food Fund School Meal Studies?](#)

In the world of San Francisco school food, one of this year's most hotly anticipated events is the upcoming release of a study commissioned by the SF Food Bank; the purpose of the study is to find ways to get more kids to choose school meals. Many parents, students, and school food advocates hope the study will recommend the building of a bond-financed central kitchen, enabling scratch cooking right here in SF with seasonal ingredients procured from local farms; the facility could be staffed by workers trained to do more than just reheat frozen meals, and be headed by highly trained culinary professionals from SF's burgeoning stock of aspiring chefs. The vision of fresh, healthy, all natural scratch cooked school meals is one shared by nearly everyone interviewed for the study last year, so it may come as a shock to learn that much of the cost of the study was paid for with a grant from the ConAgra Foods Foundation.

**February 14, 2012** Beyond Chron [Small Company Has a Big Heart](#)

So many of the recent stories about the American food system are depressing, from the elected officials who think schools shouldn't offer free lunches to needy kids, to the Big Food companies laying off thousands of workers to plow more money into advertising junk food. That's why this article about The Fruit Guys and their founder, Chris Mittelstaedt is so refreshing - it's a story about a Small Food company, one with a conscience, headed by a guy who isn't afraid to step up and help those in need, even when it isn't necessarily the wisest decision from a strictly business point of view. Junk food companies love to describe their offerings as "better for you", when in reality their baked chips and diet sodas are "better for you" only in the sense that it is "better for you" to be hit in the head with a brick twice rather than three times. Doing business with The Fruit Guys, whose sole products are fresh seasonal produce, really is "better for you."

**February 6, 2012** Beyond Chron [Klout Clobbers Facebook Phobia](#)

It is hard to imagine doing advocacy work today without taking full advantage of social media, and yet, I have what Facebook "power users" tell me may be the world's only Facebook page that intentionally has no friends. The only reason I have an account at all is because it was mandatory for becoming an administrator of the Facebook page for PEACHSF, my better-school-food advocacy website. Having no desire to reconnect with people I knew in elementary school, and already spending far too much time at my computer each day, it seemed like a sane decision to shun my personal page. But now, thanks to yet another social media experience called Klout, I am reconsidering.

**January 30, 2012** Civil Eats [The Conundrum of the New School Lunch Regulations](#)

The six cents per lunch additional funding being offered is not enough to offset the increased cost, which has been estimated by the USDA as about 11 cents per meal. In San Francisco, our schools will just have to absorb the shortfall, as they always have, driving the deficit for our Student Nutrition department even higher. That's the conundrum. We want healthy food served at school—including the larger servings of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains mandated by the new regulations—but should we have to pay for them with our children's classroom funds?

**January 20, 2012** Civil Eats [USDA's MyPlate Should Step Up to Marketing Plate](#)

Wouldn't it be great if eight-year-olds immediately thought of a banana, instead of a bag of chips, when they wanted a snack? My son and I made a video, entered it in the USDA MyPlate Fresh Fruit & Veggies Video Challenge, and won first prize. We were excited to win and had high hopes that our little video might be used to help encourage kids to eat more fruits and vegetables. But when I contacted the USDA to ask if the videos would ever be shown anywhere apart from the ChooseMyPlate website, I was told that while the videos would likely be used by other USDA departments, budget constraints prevented any further marketing efforts.

**January 9, 2012** Beyond Chron [What Can We Learn From the LAUSD School Lunch Fiasco?](#)

The recent *Los Angeles Times* article revealing that LA Unified School District's new healthier lunch menu was being rejected by many students generated a tidal wave of snark from those who believe schools shouldn't be feeding hungry kids at all, let alone trying to offer them healthy food. It seemed like LAUSD was trying to do everything right: they spent over a year creating the new menu, developed a variety of new offerings drawn from the multitude of cultures represented by their students, taste tested it with kids, and promoted it heavily. How could it all have gone so wrong, and what lessons can be learned from the LA experience?

**January 4, 2012** Civil Eats [Asking The Right Questions About School Food "Miracles" of 2011](#)

Every now and then, a story appears in the media gushing about a "school food miracle worker" apparently serving healthier, higher quality food than usually found in school lunch programs, and costing no more than what a typical school district spends on a less healthy meal. The reader is left wondering why all schools don't just do what the "miracle worker" does. But things are not always as they appear in the media. The "miracle worker" who seems to do more with less is usually doing more with more. Additional funding, student demographics, labor issues, and facilities are just some of the factors that can make or break a pilot innovation, and which get short shrift in media gushfests. How can you tell if your school can do what the "miracle" school does?

**November 21, 2011** Beyond Chron ["Pizza is a Vegetable" Just One Slice of School Meal Regulation Pie](#)

Amid the snark-inducing "Pizza as vegetable" headlines caused by Congress gutting the USDA's new nutrition requirements for school meals, the headline the NY Daily News slapped on the widely-reported Associated Press article got very little play, but more accurately described the problem. "GOP says healthier school lunches are too expensive" really captures the essence of the problem – not that tomato paste will still be considered to be the nutritional equivalent of a serving of broccoli or carrots, not that potatoes will continue to appear in many school cafeterias four or more days a week, but rather that the positive changes to school food which had been put forth by the USDA came without sufficient funding to cover their own cost.

**October 24, 2011** Beyond Chron [The Real Cost of Serving Real Food](#)

It was only just two years ago that Alice Waters was pilloried in the court of public opinion for daring to suggest that \$5 was a reasonable amount for the Federal government to spend to cover

the cost of a healthy school lunch for a low income child. The lunch Water envisioned would be full of locally grown, preferably organic fruits and vegetables from nearby farms, and cooked mostly from scratch right at school, or close by. Critics howled - five dollars? For a child's school lunch? And yet, it turns out that \$5 may have been an underestimate of what a healthy school lunch really costs.

**October 24, 2011** SF Chronicle [S.F.'s schools need central kitchen](#)

Did you skip lunch today? If so, then you may have experienced dizziness, headache, irritability, agitation, lack of concentration, even nausea in the early afternoon; all are beginning symptoms of hunger. Imagine being in 4th grade and feeling that way while trying to understand how to convert 32/68 to a percent, or the difference between "there", "their" and "they're". It's hard to learn with a growling stomach.

This article also ran in a slightly different form here:

**October 11, 2011** Beyond Chron [Let's Do Lunch](#)

**October 7, 2011** Beyond Chron [Measuring the "Success" of Healthy School Meals](#)

Higher school meal participation would be beneficial from a financial perspective, from an anti-hunger perspective and also from a social justice perspective. However, too much focus on increasing participation can come around to bite you in the end. It would be great to get more kids to choose school meals, but even if they don't, isn't it enough that the kids who were eating before, and who are continuing to rely on the school meals for most of their daily nourishment, are now getting a vastly better meal? After all, these are often the kids from the most challenged circumstances, the ones whose families don't have something at home to tuck into a brown bag and send to school in their child's backpack.

**September 8, 2011** Beyond Chron [Even With a Central Kitchen, Can SFUSD Afford to Cook?](#)

It has been said that you can't put a price on children's health, but you can put a price on good nutrition at school. Cafeterias moving back to scratch cooking their meals is all the rage these days, and for good reason. Scratch cooking is the only way for a school district to be able to control completely how much sugar, salt, and other additives go into the food; it is the most efficient way to make use of locally grown produce; and, scratch cooked meals look better, smell better, and often taste better than plastic-encased prefab meals. But the question remains - is this something the financially strapped SFUSD can afford to do?

**August 23, 2011** Beyond Chron [Central Kitchen for SFUSD is Preferred Solution for Better School Meals](#)

On Monday August 15th, students at San Francisco's public schools got an unfriendly welcome back after summer vacation, when poor management at the production site of SFUSD's meal provider left most schools with no hot lunches for the first day of class. As a result, once again well-meaning voices are asking, "Why can't they just scratch cook at every school?" Like so many other obvious "fixes" for the perceived shortcomings of school meal programs, the solution is never that simple.

**August 10, 2011** Beyond Chron [SFUSD Can't Afford Chipotle Menu on a McDonalds Budget](#)

Despite the salad bars, the fresh fruit and whole grains, reduced sugar, no trans fat, MSG, artificial colors and little to no HFCS, some SFUSD families still feel that the frozen, reheated meals from Preferred Meal Systems are not good enough. They would rather have meals cooked from scratch at every school, or at least a fresher meal from a vendor like Kid Chow, that can offer organic fruit and other higher quality ingredients. The problem is, with labor and overhead taking up such a large portion of the budget, SF schools can't afford Kid Chow, whose price for the summer lunch was almost twice what Preferred charges.

**July 11, 2011** Beyond Chron [Unfunded Water Mandate Leaves Students High and Dry](#)

How long does it take to get a drink of water around here? For cafeteria patrons at some San Francisco public schools, the answer might be "Four years." The federal Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act requires schools to provide free drinking water with meals beginning at the start of the 2011-12 school year, but it is just another unfunded mandate. Do the Congressional budgeting geniuses really expect that financially dehydrated school districts will just use a divining rod to locate the money for prompt installation of water stations in all cafeterias?

**June 23, 2011** Beyond Chron [Unpaid Meal Charges Cost SFUSD Over Half a Million Dollars](#)

In order to feed every child, SFUSD can't afford to continue paying for meals for students who should be receiving government-paid meals – and would be, if only they had a completed meal application on file – or for those whose parents can afford to pay, but don't. With the SFUSD still facing a budget deficit in the millions of dollars, and hundreds of teachers being laid off, schools must do a better job of reducing meal charges.

**June 14, 2011** Beyond Chron [Jamie Oliver, You Should Be Ashamed of Yourself!](#)

To publicly attack and belittle a lifelong educator, a man who twice came out of retirement to help ailing school districts, and whose career serves as the very definition of "public service", just because that man had the courage to try to shield his school district from exactly the kind of staged melodrama and manipulation which viewers have pinpointed as the weakest aspect of this show, is unconscionable.

**May 16 2011** Beyond Chron [Chocolate Milk in Schools: Ban it, Keep it, or Change it?](#)

It's time for a truce in the chocolate milk wars. Taking an inflexible hard line on chocolate milk – pro or con – only serves to divide advocates who need to support each other. School districts are big customers, and they can use their buying power to force the dairies they do business with to dial back the sugar.

**April 11, 2011** Beyond Chron [He can cook, but can he fix education?](#)

When the second season of Food Revolution begins in mid-April, here's what I would like to see: Jamie dressed in his giant vegetable costume marching into the halls of Congress with a tray of precooked frozen and reheated meals from a nearby public school. Let Jamie chase our Senators through the halls of the Capitol Building and insist that they eat the kind of school lunch served to millions of children every day.

**April 11, 2011** USA Today [Pay now, or pay more later](#)

Too many school cafeterias are forced to rely on corn dogs, Tater Tots and canned fruit because the money the government provides is not enough to buy the fresh wholesome food students

need for good health. It's great that the new law sets higher standards, but how will schools cover the cost? Better nourished children learn better, but educators shouldn't have to choose between subsidizing student nutrition and paying for students' academic needs.

**January 21, 2011** Beyond Chron [Liars and Bullies and Clueless Reporters, Oh My!](#)

Why won't Revolution Foods just tell the truth, that their better food costs more, and join the chorus of people calling for the federal government to fund the school meal program at a level which would make these kinds of meals possible for all kids? How does it help improve school food when Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution viewers are encouraged to blame the people who have no say at all over the program, but who are forced to operate within the constraints of the program?

**November 16, 2010** Beyond Chron [Don't Balance Rec & Park's Budget On the Backs of Low-Income Students](#)

For those who find irony delicious, here's a tasty bite – the very same San Francisco Board of Supervisors which just passed the groundbreaking Healthy Meals legislation requiring children's meals with toys to meet certain minimal nutrition standards is also poised to approve new legislation today which could make it even easier for fast food vendors to sell their wares every school day to students as young as 11 years old.

**September 15, 2010** Beyond Chron [USDA Needs a Taste of Reality About School Lunches](#)

The vigilance with which the USDA enforces the required “counting and claiming” of school meals seems extreme given that it is unlikely anyone is getting rich by scamming a free school lunch for their child, but this is just one of the ways in which the USDA appears out of touch with the realities of school cafeterias.

**March 25, 2010** Beyond Chron [SFUSD Brings Equity to the Table](#)

For years there has been a stigma associated with eating school meals. The shame and embarrassment students feel when lining up for what their classmates may derisively refer to as “welfare food” discourages some from eating. It is heartening to see that even in the face of one of the largest budget disasters in recent memory, facing a two year deficit of \$113 million, the SFUSD is now piloting a new lunch setup - called the Super Choice Menu - aimed at banishing the stigma and removing the barriers keeping all students from having all choices available to them.

**January 26, 2010** Beyond Chron [How Sweet is Advocates' Chocolate Milk Victory?](#)

Getting the local dairy to remove an unpopular substance from their chocolate milk may seem like a small victory, but for parents and students who wanted this change, it is very empowering. It proves that it is possible to get a large food company to change their product in response to consumer preference, and that is a victory to be savored.

**August 30, 2009** SF Chronicle [Time for lunch - for kids' health](#)

On Labor Day, Sept. 7, every American is invited to take a stand for kids' health and send the message to Congress that our children deserve real food in their school meals. Slow Food USA has organized "Time for Lunch," a nationwide potluck to bring people together to share food and take action in support of better school lunches. There has never been a better time for anyone

who has a child, wants a child, knows a child or ever was a child to come together with friends and neighbors and bring about change. It's time to share a meal, to sign a petition, to make your voice heard. It's Time for Lunch.

**August 12, 2009** Beyond Chron [Let's Talk Honestly About Improving School Food](#)

When we talk about how much it would cost to do a farm to school model for procuring locally grown fruits and vegetables, let's be sure we add in all of the costs, not just the price paid to Farmer Brown. And when we talk about what it would cost to offer all of our students a freshly prepared organic meal, let's not use magical thinking and say that it can be done for little more than a typical school lunch, because it can't.

**May 12, 2009** Beyond Chron [Dear Congress, We Would Like Better School Lunches](#)

A group of seniors in an American Democracy class at San Francisco's Abraham Lincoln High School have taken on a project to try to improve school meals. They began writing letters to their elected officials to ask for more funding for better school food; the students attended a town hall meeting held by Congresswoman Jackie Speier at a local elementary school. The efforts they have made to help every student at their school, especially at a time in their lives when they could just be coasting until graduation, deserve recognition and support.

**April 15, 2009** Beyond Chron [Truancy and Obesity: Two Issues of Equity](#)

Both obesity and truancy disproportionately affect low income students of color, making both issues about equity. There is no one silver bullet that will prevent obesity, just as there is no one silver bullet that will fix the dropout problem, but does that mean because no one individual thing alone will fix the problem, we should not do each individual thing?

**August 24, 2008** SF Chronicle [Now is time to fight for better school food](#)

Years ago, the city of Berkeley made a commitment to improve school food, with guidance and support from Waters and her Chez Panisse Foundation. Today, Berkeley school food is cooked from scratch using only fresh ingredients, often locally produced. Across the bay in San Francisco, junk food was expelled from schools in 2003, replaced with whole grains, fresh fruit and salad bars. But these improvements have been possible only because our school districts were willing to dip into their budgets, and our local communities also ponied up extra money, to fund better food.

**August 12, 2008** Beyond Chron [City May Discontinue Kids' Free Summer Lunch Program](#)

For generations, students have complained about school food, calling it "mystery meat." More recently, their elders have begun complaining too, as rates of childhood obesity and Type 2 diabetes reach new highs, and unhealthy school lunches are targeted as one cause. As Congress gets ready to debate possible changes to federal child nutrition programs, criticism of the byzantine structure of children's meal program regulations is starting to be heard as well. But is anyone listening?

**June 5, 2008** Beyond Chron [Speak Up for Better School Food](#)

Better nourished students are better able to learn, but school districts shouldn't have to choose between subsidizing student nutrition and paying for students' other academic needs. For years, school food advocates have moaned about the lack of money, about how government

reimbursement goes up by pennies each year, while expenses for the meal program increase by dollars. Finally, there is a chance to complain to those who can do something to change the situation.

**February 21, 2008** Beyond Chron [The 10 Dumbest Things About the National School Lunch Program](#)

If you thought the recent news about possibly tainted beef in school cafeterias indicated some problems with the NSLP and its overseer, the USDA, you'd be right. Failure to guarantee the safety of food served to schoolchildren is merely the latest problem to surface. The USDA devotes an enormous amount of effort to trying to make sure that families don't "cheat" – as if anyone could get rich scamming free school meals for their kids! Wouldn't it make more sense to forget the meal applications, forget verifying the accuracy of the income information on them, forget the lunch cards, and the counting and claiming, and the search for "cheaters", and just feed the kids?

**November 15, 2007** Beyond Chron [The Power of One Voice](#)

On Halloween, with the City focused on whether the Castro would explode, a minor miracle was unfolding across town in the Presidio, where a preschool was planning its first ever Halloween celebration - without candy! Almost as noteworthy as the absence of Snickers bars was the fact that this healthy holiday celebration came about entirely because of the unwavering commitment of one parent.

**October 11, 2007** Beyond Chron [A Tale of Two Cities--Why School Food is Better in Berkeley](#)

Berkeley students have enjoyed fresher, healthier school lunches in the past couple of years, since celebrity chef Ann Cooper took over their meal program. San Francisco's school food has improved in recent years too, but our schools can't feed kids as well as Berkeley does. The reason is simple: Berkeley has much more money to spend on school food. One school district can afford to feed needy students organic food and freshly cooked meals, while another just across the bay cannot, because of an obscure funding stream from a property tax override that some communities approved in the late '70s, called Meals for Needy Pupils.

**September 7, 2007** Beyond Chron [Salad Days](#)

The shamefully low government reimbursement for meals served to low income students (57% of SFUSD students in 06-07), combined with the highest labor costs in the state (because it is expensive to live here!) means that there is just not enough money available to pay for better food. Happily, Mayor Gavin Newsom and the Department of Children, Youth and their Families have provided grant money to open salad bars in up to 25 schools later this year.

**February 8, 2007** Beyond Chron [Got Breakfast? Grab n Go Triples Participation at Balboa High School](#)

San Francisco's Balboa High School is in the second year of a pilot Grab n Go breakfast program which has succeeded in increasing participation in school breakfast among a population which is notoriously averse to starting the day with a healthy meal – teenagers. The convenience of Grab n Go makes it a winner with kids.

**October 13, 2005** Beyond Chron [Mythbusters](#)

There is plenty of conventional wisdom about kids and food. "You can lead kids to water but you can't make them drink it." "Kids don't want to eat healthy food; they only like junk food." "High school kids won't eat breakfast." One by one, the San Francisco Unified School District is proving that these "truths" are just myths.

**November 24, 2004** Beyond Chron [School Beat \(part 2\)](#)

Raising money for school activities by selling donuts to children already suffering from poor nutrition is no way to deal with the problem of underfunding. It hurts kids, and in the long run, it hurts schools too. Parents and students should form one great big extra-curricular club, and lobby our government for more money for schools. As an old bumper sticker from the 60s used to say, 'It will be a fine day when schools have all the money they need, and the military has to hold a bake sale to buy a bomber.'

**November 17, 2004** Beyond Chron [School Beat \(part 1\)](#)

If the phrase "school lunch" conjures images of lumpy "mystery meat", soggy grey vegetables, and jello, think again. How about Mandarin chicken and vegetables or sweet and sour meatballs with green beans? Improving school lunches may seem like a no-brainer, but in the San Francisco schools, any change comes with its own politics.

**April 4, 2003** SF Chronicle [One school's uncanny success with junk-food ban](#)

San Francisco's Aptos Middle School banished soda sales three months ago. Since then, our "a la carte" student cafe has gradually eliminated the rest of the junk food from the menu and replaced it with healthy choices. Conventional wisdom told us to await both student rebellion and financial disaster. Neither happened.

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