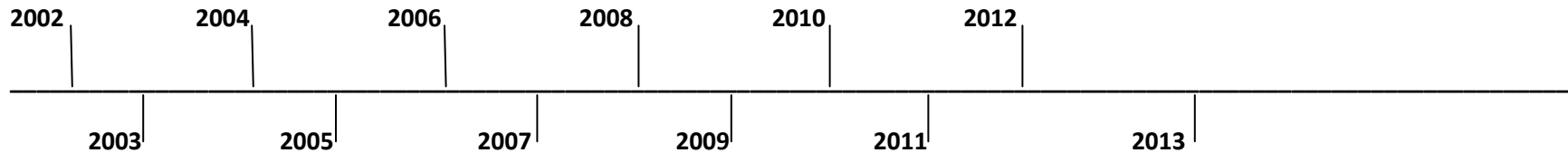


# San Francisco Unified School District's Decade (and more!) of Progress in Improving School Food 2002-2013

where SFUSD started



where SFUSD would like to be



In the beginning, schools overflowed with unhealthy choices; advocates for better food wanted to move schools out of this netherworld and get to the place where all the food was organic, locally grown by small farms where everyone earned comfortable wages, and prepared from scratch while the angels sang above. But in the absence of more money to pay for that vision, a more realistic way to measure progress is to look at where SFUSD was in 2002, and where they are now. It has truly been a Decade (and more!) of Change!

**2002:** Junk food was everywhere! Cafeteria a la carte lines sold soda, chips, snack cakes, Slim Jims, and fatty entrees; vending machines sold nothing but junk. A pilot was planned at San Francisco's Aptos Middle School to remove the junk from the cafeteria a la carte and vending machines and replace it with healthy options. A resolution was introduced at the SF Board of Education to get soda and junk out of all the schools.

**2003:** The Aptos Middle School project was a success, and revenue increased in both the cafeteria and vending machines. The Board of Education resolution passed, and the Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee (SNPAC) was created to implement it. SNPAC wrote the SFUSD's Wellness Policy, removing high calorie, low nutrient food and beverages from a la carte and vending machines; a la carte switched to sandwiches, salads, lowfat entrees, water, milk, and 100% fruit juice. Even as the a la carte items improved, the hot lunches offered through the National School Lunch Program met federal nutrition standards but still contained cheap, fattening carnival-style fare.

**2004:** SNPAC began improving daily hot lunch offered free to low income students; fried foods eliminated; fresh fruit replaced canned most days. The first salad bar was piloted at Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy (K-5).

**2005:** The first Grab n Go breakfast program in the Bay Area was piloted at Balboa High School and immediately doubled the number of students eating school breakfast. MSG, red and yellow dyes were eliminated from school meals.

**2006:** A point-of-sale swipe card system for school meals was piloted at Balboa High School, providing anonymity for those receiving government-paid meals; the number of students eating the Grab n Go breakfast then increased to triple the number who ate school breakfast before the Grab n Go. Grab n Go was expanded to several other schools. Three schools piloted an improved version of the salad bar.

**2007:** Salad bars opened at 25 schools. At the request of SNPAC, the SF Board of Supervisors passed a resolution keeping food vending trucks 1500 feet from the perimeter of public middle and high schools.

**2008:** Salad bars expanded to nearly all middle and high schools. All grains in lunches were whole grains - brown rice, whole wheat pasta, whole grain pizza crust and tortillas - and white bread was completely eliminated. All breakfast cereals were limited to no more than 6g of sugar per serving. Trans fat was eliminated from school meals.

**2009:** "Reimbursable a la carte", offering students on free lunch the same choice of meals as was formerly available only to paying students, was piloted at Balboa High School; the number of students eating school lunch increased; only complete meal with fruit, fresh veg, and milk were offered. Elementary schools without salad bars offered a different fresh raw vegetable most days. Installation of the point-of-sale swipe card system in all schools began. The SF Board of Education passed the Feeding Every Hungry Child resolution, mandating that students coming to the cafeteria not qualified for free lunch, and with no money to pay, be fed anyway.

**2010:** The point-of-sale swipe card installation was completed in all schools, allowing parents to prepay meals online. Reimbursable a la carte expanded to all middle and high schools. Fruit replaced juice in school breakfast. White potatoes were replaced by sweet potatoes in elementary and almost all high school lunches; dark leafy greens like collard were introduced. High fructose corn syrup was removed from chocolate milk.

Almost 50 schools operated salad bars. Audrey Rowe of the USDA visited SF to praise the school meal program for achieving the "Gold Standard" of the Healthier US Schools program.

**2011:** The free meal application was made available online. Reimbursable a la carte continued, with students' most popular entrees featured, but each one only one day per week (ie - no eating pizza every single day.) A vending machine was installed at Lincoln High School which dispenses reimbursable lunches to all students using their swipe card number for payment; the number of students eating school lunch at Lincoln increased. Chocolate milk with just 4 grams more sugar than the 1% white milk also offered, and with less calories than the white milk, is introduced.

**2012:** Compostable packaging for all meals phased in. Grab n Go breakfast expanded to 10 middle and 9 high schools.

**2013:** In January, all 114 schools began serving delicious fresh healthy meals from Revolution Foods; the meals are prepared in Revolution Food's Oakland kitchen and served fresh (never frozen) no more than 24 hours later. The number of students choosing to eat school lunch increased by 11%.

by Dana Woldow

*PEACHSF founder Dana Woldow developed the Aptos Middle School pilot and was co-chair of the SNPAC from fall 2003-spring 2011. SFUSD Student Nutrition Director Ed Wilkins implemented all of the changes described here; none of the progress SFUSD has made would have been possible without his tireless efforts and dedication to the students of the SFUSD.*

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