

**WELCOME**

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**The Lunch Line:  
The Impact & Potential  
of Quality School Food Jobs**

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**Thursday, October 3, 2024**



## PANELISTS

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**Jennifer Gaddis, PhD**

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# ADVISORY TEAM

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Thank you to the From Now On Fund  
for making this report possible.



# Greater Good

The Economic Case for More Local, Resilient, and Equitable Food Systems

Date: December 11, 2023  
Submitted to Center for Good Food Purchasing



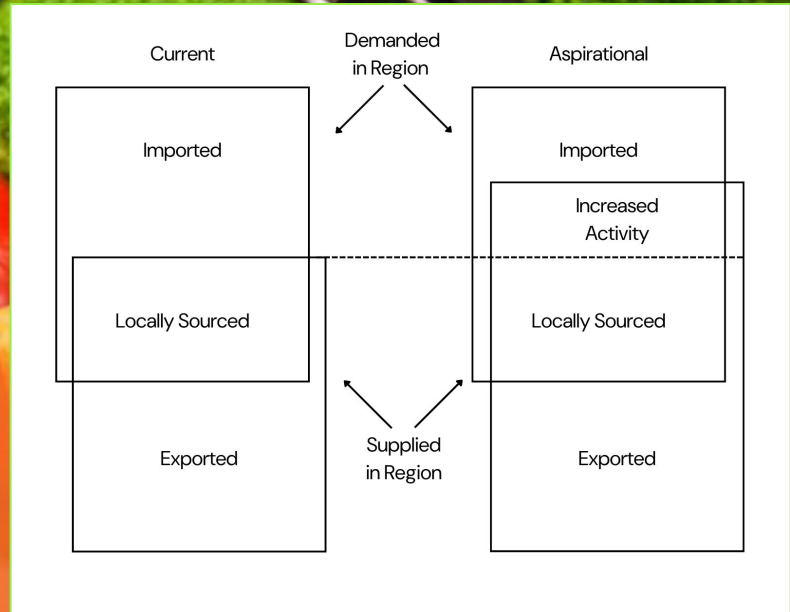
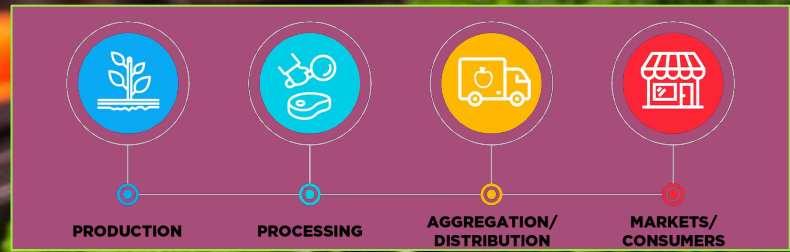
Investments Needed for Greater Localization of Regional Food Systems



### BENEFITS GENERATED

- ✓ More Economic Activity
- ✓ More Jobs Supported
- ✓ More Tax Revenues Generated
- ✓ Greater Resiliency
- ✓ Greater Sustainability
- ✓ Greater Equity

Source: Econsult Solutions (2023)





# Projected Total Impact of Greater Local Sourcing Levels, by Region

## AUSTIN, TX

CURRENT	ACHIEVABLE INCREASE	PROJECTED IMPACT
\$252.5B	+12.24%	\$283.4B
1.69M Jobs	+172,000 Jobs	1.86M Jobs

## CHICAGO, IL

CURRENT	ACHIEVABLE INCREASE	PROJECTED IMPACT
\$388.6B	+22.62%	\$476.5B
2.24M Jobs	+417,000 Jobs	2.65M Jobs

## DENVER, CO

CURRENT	ACHIEVABLE INCREASE	PROJECTED IMPACT
\$78.1B	+13.44%	\$88.6B
455K Jobs	+50,000 Jobs	505K Jobs

## GAINESVILLE, FL

CURRENT	ACHIEVABLE INCREASE	PROJECTED IMPACT
\$127.9B	+11.42%	\$142.5B
887K Jobs	+91,000 Jobs	978K Jobs

## NEW YORK CITY, NY

CURRENT	ACHIEVABLE INCREASE	PROJECTED IMPACT
\$583.2B	+12.00%	\$653.2B
3.34M Jobs	+341,000 Jobs	3.68M Jobs

## SAN FRANCISCO, CA

CURRENT	ACHIEVABLE INCREASE	PROJECTED IMPACT
\$154.1B	+18.82%	\$183.1B
1.82M Jobs	+128,000 Jobs	1.95M Jobs



# Jennifer Gaddis, PhD

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**Author, Professor,  
University of  
Wisconsin-Madison**



# HUNGRY FOR GOOD JOBS



THE STATE OF THE SCHOOL NUTRITION  
WORKFORCE IN WISCONSIN



JUNE 2023

HEALTHY WI  
SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL

To access the full report:



[tinyurl.com/HungryforGoodJobsWI](https://tinyurl.com/HungryforGoodJobsWI)

(Link will be included in post-webinar email.)



### POVERTY- WAGE JOBS:

Jobs paying \$12.74 an hour or less

### LOW- WAGE JOBS:

Jobs paying \$12.75 - \$19.11 an hour

### GOOD- WAGE JOBS:

Jobs paying \$19.12 an hour or more



24%

of schools offer poverty-level starting wages

Only one school district in the state



provides good-wage jobs

- Part-time workers make up the backbone of school nutrition programs. 4 out of 5 non-managerial employees work part-time.
- Seasonal employment significantly reduces annual earnings. Non-managerial employees at roughly 80% of schools work 9 months or less annually.
- Full-time work at \$12.74 an hour pays \$26,500 annually, assuming year-round work.
- Full-time jobs have a wage premium, but schools are not offering strong seniority or incentive pay to retain employees.





# School Food vs. Comparable Jobs

Mean wages for cooks, nationally



elementary & secondary schools

\$13.60/ HR



retirement & assisted living

\$15.54/ HR



general medical & surgical hospitals

\$17.55/ HR

Wage differences in elementary & secondary schools, nationally



cooks

\$13.60/ HR



custodial

\$16.76/ HR

"[School foodservice] is not like cooking at home...Like, sure you make meals, you know, at home for your family of five or whatever. But **we cook meals for 500 kids instead of five. I compare it to planning a wedding every day...** And all the details that goes into it, all of the regulations. [Our staff] have to learn what a meal is, they have to learn whether that child has a meal on their tray or not...get all those kids through line in 12 minutes [and] have a pleasant conversation with every child. And when we are done with that...all the paperwork!" -WI school food director

"Working the long hours to keep up with the paperwork would not be as bad if we got paid more. I **could go to Culver's and make more per hour there and wouldn't have to worry about all the reports, contracts, surveys, etc...** I'm doing a whole series of classes this week from DPI and the detail they want you to go into with each recipe and our production records just about made me want to cry..." - WI school food director

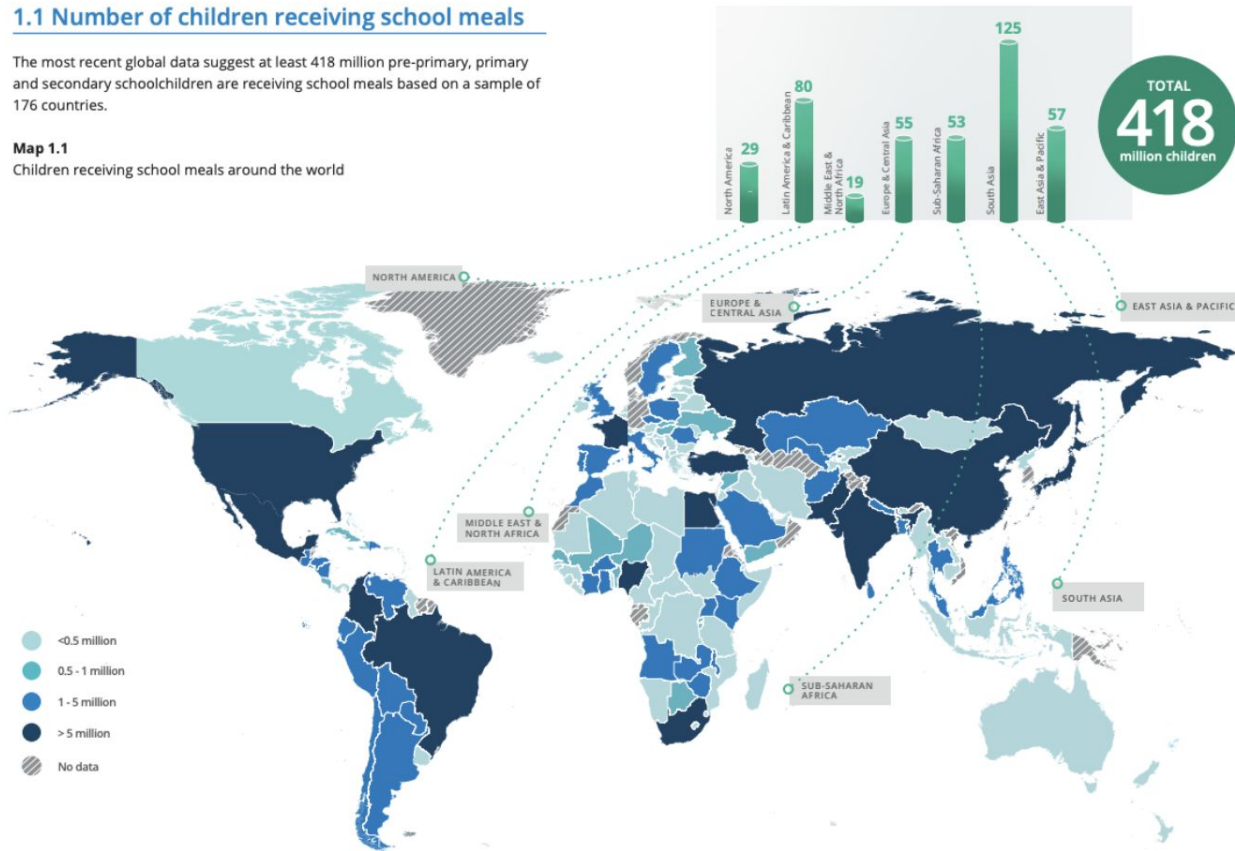


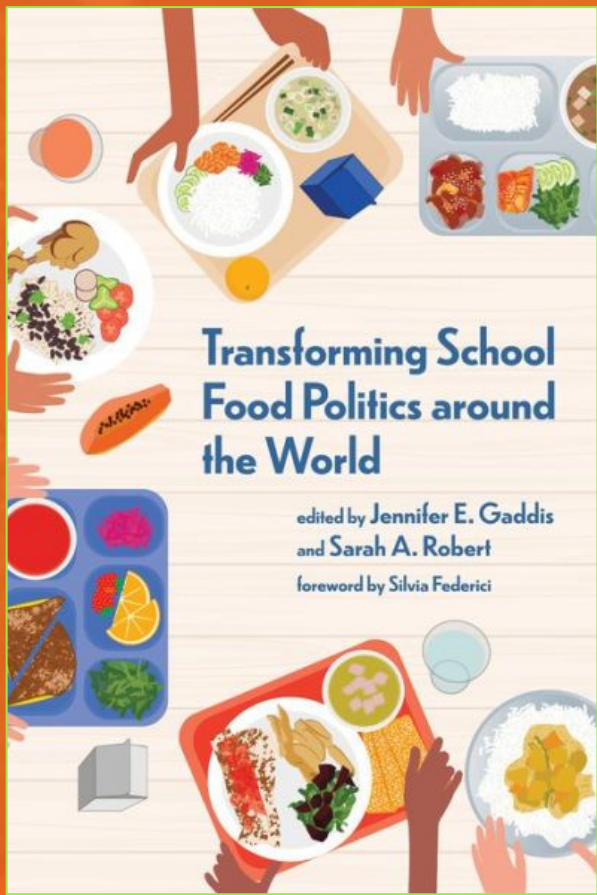
## 1.1 Number of children receiving school meals

The most recent global data suggest at least 418 million pre-primary, primary and secondary schoolchildren are receiving school meals based on a sample of 176 countries.

**Map 1.1**

Children receiving school meals around the world





## School Food Workers around the World

- 1,668 jobs created for every 100,000 children fed, most filled by women whose labor is low-paid or unpaid.
- They do multiple types of care work:
  - Direct care of students physical and emotional needs
  - Maintaining physical spaces like the cafeteria and kitchens
  - “Community mothering,” fostering relationships and social connections
  - Care for nature and sustainable healthy futures (Gaddis and Robert, forthcoming)



# Global Lessons for U.S. Solutions

- School meals should be free for all students.
- Food should be cooked (not just reheated) in school kitchens.
- Local and sustainable purchasing should be mandatory and strongly supported by the federal government.
- Mealtimes should be joyful, care-centered educational experiences.

Organic cheese and free lunch for all: what the US can learn from other nations about better school meals

*Jennifer Gaddis and Sarah A Robert*

Brazil, Finland and South Korea have figured out how to pay for nutritious meals for students. The US can, too



📷 'Treating school meals as a public good means fighting for systems of food preparation, sourcing and education.' Photograph: Nicolas Tucet/AFP via Getty Images





# Brazil's universal free school meal program



*Featuring crops of: Papaya, banana, coriander, scallion, sugar cane, cassava, and poultry*



Sônia Fátima Schwendler, Cristiane Coradin, and Islandia Bezerra, "Agroecology and Feminist Praxis in Brazilian School Food Politics," in *Transforming School Food Politics around the World*, eds. Jennifer E. Gaddis and Sarah A. Robert (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2024).



## Brazilian chefs work for school meals

*Women like Morena Leite and Lidiane Barbosa, each with their own project, strive for children to eat better in schools all over the country*

Rafaela Polo

Anyone who knows the Brazilian schools reality is aware that they unfortunately do not always provide quality food to students. In general, the rule is an excess of ultra-processed foods and a small variety of ingredients and preparations, especially in public institutions. But some chefs have been trying to change that reality in public and private schools across the country.

### **COOKS FOR EDUCATION – COZINHEIROS PELA EDUCAÇÃO**

Janaína Rueda, chef from Bar da Dona Onça in downtown São Paulo, did one of the most recognized works in this area. For two years, the chef commanded a project called Cooks for Education alongside the São Paulo state government. In the project, she started to redesign the menu of part of the public schools in the city of São Paulo and to train



Goats and Soda STORIES OF LIFE IN A CHANGING WORLD

GOATS AND SODA

## School lunches are Brazil's secret — and delicious — weapon in halting hunger

JANUARY 8, 2024 · 7:01 AM ET

By Jill Langlois



A student at Professor Lourdes Heredia Mello Municipal School in São Paulo enjoys an apple for dessert after lunch. Brazil's school lunch program, enshrined in its constitution, is a pillar of the country's anti-poverty efforts. *Tyana Fernandes for NPR*

The kindergartners sing at the top of their lungs as they hop and skip their way around the corner and into the small cafeteria at São Paulo's Professor Lourdes Heredia Mello Municipal School.

"Twenty-four, 25, 26" they shout, counting the number of steps they take before lining up single-file to serve themselves lunch at the buffet-style steam table that, just like the tables and chairs where they sit to eat, is kid-sized.



Apples are this day's dessert at Professor Lourdes Heredia Mello Municipal School. *Tyana Fernandes for NPR*

In São Paulo, where Davi Lucas goes to school, the government has set two goals: sourcing all school food supplies from producers who practice sustainable farming by 2026 and serving 100% organic meals by 2030.

The goals may seem ambitious, but experts say they are attainable for this city of more than 12 million.

"São Paulo is a city that's basically a country," says Juliana Tângari, director of Brazilian food think tank Comida do Amanhã. "It has the capacity to solve problems that the other 26 capital cities in Brazil don't have. It can make big purchases from larger cooperatives of small-scale farmers that will have good fresh ingredients at prices that fit its budget."





# South Korea's universal free, eco-friendly school lunch program





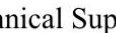


Rural Farmers

Supply



Subsidies



Technical Support

Rural Towns  
(local food hubs)

Subsidies



Local Town,  
Provincial  
Governments

Transport



Contract  
Knowledge Exchange

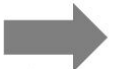


Contract



Local Facilities with  
public meal service

Order



Distribution  
Subsidies

Education Program

Urban Districts  
(District Public  
Meal Centers)

Subsidies



Seoul Metropolitan  
Government



# Labor Tensions within South Korea's program

Korea JoongAng Daily

National Business Culture Enter

National Politics Social Affairs North Korea Diplomacy Defense People Environment K-campus G

## Lunches suffer as schools battle cafeteria worker shortages

Published: 15 May, 2024, 14:07 Updated: 14 Aug, 2024, 08:54



A photo of a school lunch tray was uploaded to Seocho District Office's website from the parent of a middle school student complaining about the poor quality of school lunches. [SEOCHO CITY OFFICE]



Irregular workers in the public sector hold a rally at Gwanghwamun Square in central Seoul, Wednesday, to demand a wage hike and a change in status to regular employees. School cafeteria workers took part in the rally, preventing the serving of school meals at 3,500 schools nationwide. Korea Times photo by Shim Hyun-chul



# To sum up...

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- Developing what I referred to in *The Labor of Lunch* (UC Press, 2019) as “community-based culinary capacity”– the ability, time, skills, and infrastructure to cook from scratch – is critical for increasing quality jobs across the school food system.
  - However, community-based culinary capacity isn’t enough to ensure quality school food jobs!
- We must value care, food, and education differently and ensure that school food workers in the US and globally are compensated fairly with wages and comprehensive benefits that recognize the true public value of their labor.
  - We cannot continue squeezing workers – through privatization, outsourcing hiring, allowing vacancies to remain unfilled – and justify it by pitting financial needs against one another – i.e., free meals for students, higher quality ingredients and/or prices for values-aligned producers, or quality jobs for school food workers.





# Mara Fleishman

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**Chief Executive Officer,  
Chef Ann Foundation**





# A Lack of Focus on Workforce



Policies, programs, reform, administration, rules have long focused on nutrition, food quality, eligibility, and procurement.

- Nearly half of federal meal reimbursements are used for labor costs.
- Without staff, there are no school food programs.
- Without trained & skilled staff, there is no reforming federal school meals or program administration.

# Healthy School Meals for All

- Ensure that all kids have the nutrition they need to learn and thrive
- Critical for advancing food access, equity, and justice
- Need to make sure workforce solutions are a piece in this puzzle

Increased Average Daily Participation +  
Underemployment Rates for School Food Programs =  
**More Processed Food for Our Students**



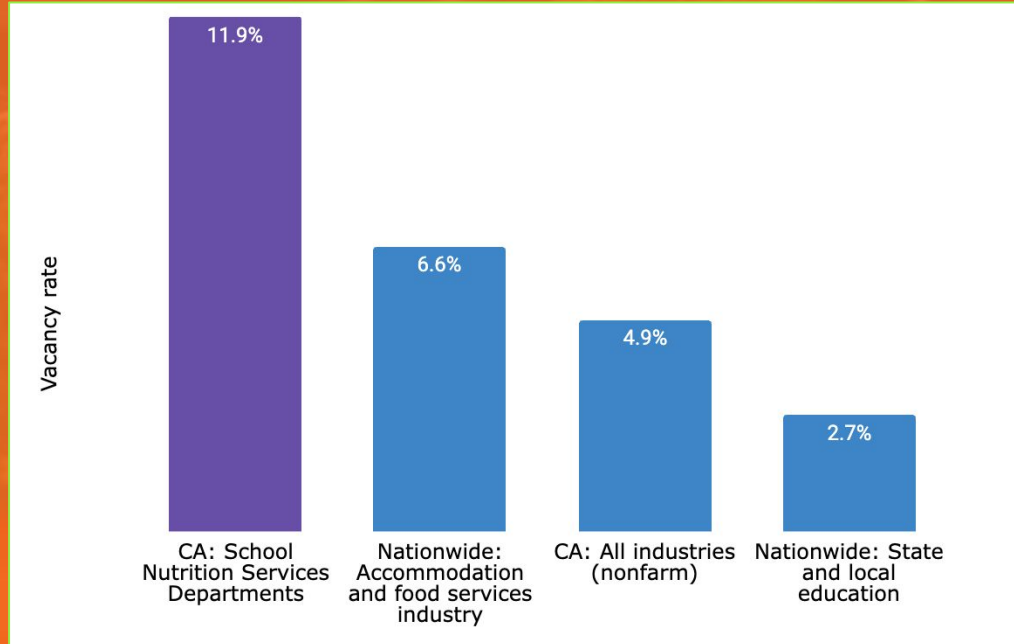
# 11.9%

vacancy rate of responding School Food Authorities,  
at the close of the 2022–2023 school year

representing 1,186 vacancies out of 9,969 positions  
if fully staffed



# Vacancy Rate Comparisons

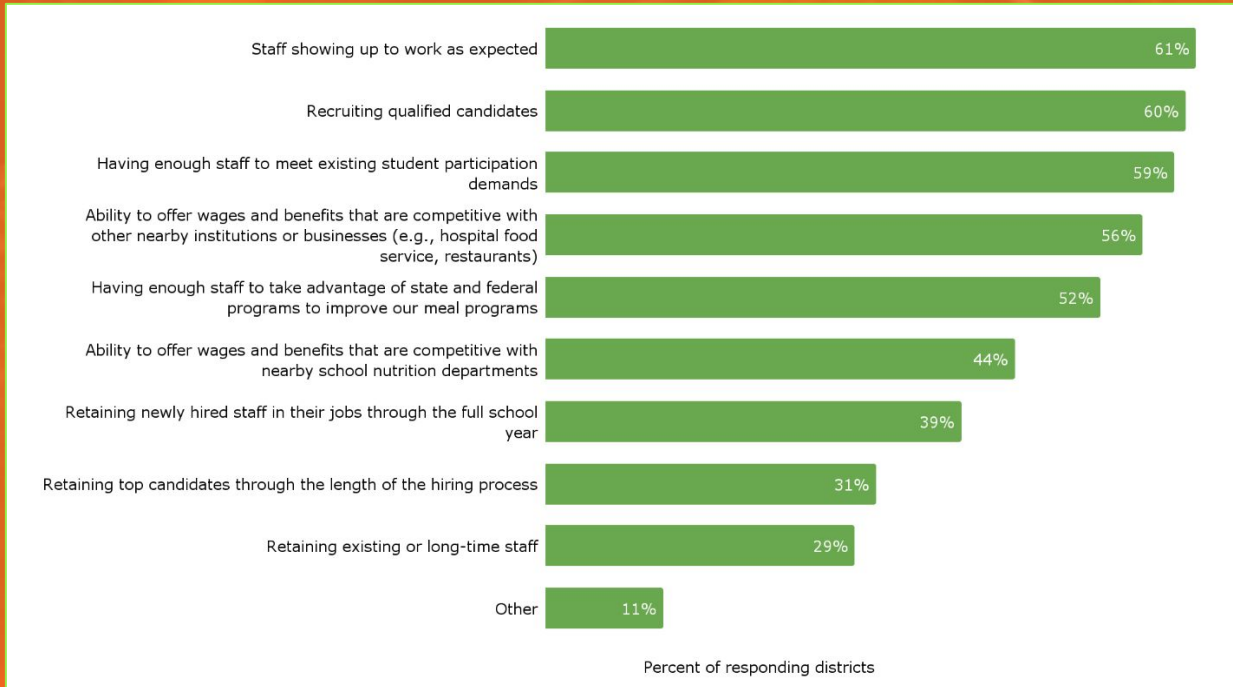


Note: The survey reference period is the end of the 2022-23 school year.  
For comparison, the JOLTS data reference period is June 2023.  
Source: California School Nutrition Vacancy Rate Survey (CAF, CSNA, FIG 2023);  
Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 2023 data).





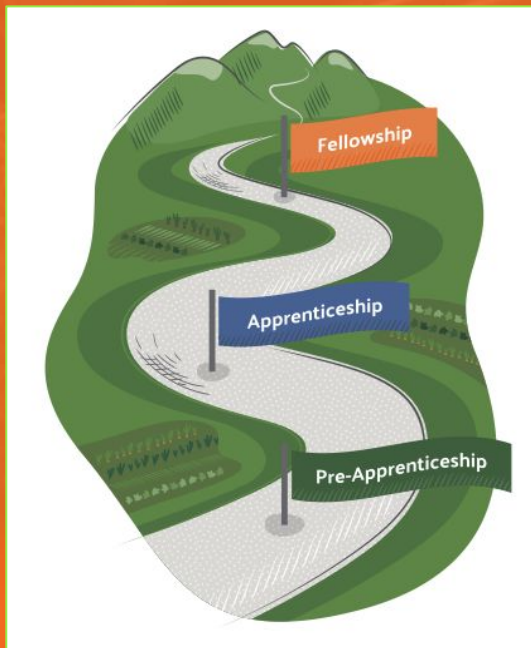
# School nutrition departments anticipate widespread staffing challenges this school year



Source: California School Nutrition Vacancy Rate Survey (CAF, CSNA, FIG 2023).  
140 respondents answered the question:  
“What are the top staffing challenges you anticipate in the 2023–2024 school year?”



# Workforce Development for Public Sector Jobs



# Healthy School Food Pathway

Maximizing Impact  
Through Workforce Development

## Pre-Apprenticeship

Online courses and paid on-the-job-learning to expand the pipeline for careers in healthy school food

## Apprenticeship

Additional virtual learning and paid on-the-job-learning to train the next generation of school food changemakers

## Fellowship

Onsite learning, virtual courses and a capstone project to support a successful transition into school food leadership

## Pre-Apprenticeship (7 Weeks)

- 3 School Food Institute courses: **15 hours**
- 2 virtual learning sessions: **3 hours**
- On-the-job learning: **84 hours** (12 hours a week)

## Apprenticeship (~9 months)

- 8 School Food Institute (SFI) courses: **40 hours**
- Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) courses: **59 hours**
- 18 virtual learning sessions: **45 hours**
- On-the-job learning: **24 hours a week**

## Fellowship (13 months)

- 5 School Food Institute (SFI) courses: **11 hours**
- Virtual learning sessions: **144 hours**
- 2 site visits: **60 hours**
- Hands-on culinary training: **24 hours**
- Operators convening: **24 hours**
- Policy project: **25 hours**
- Capstone project: **50 hours**



# Healthy School Food Pathways by the Numbers

Program/Program Component	Total Number of Program Participants to Date	Estimated Number of Participants through 2025	Total Goal	Estimated Goal Performance through 2025
Pre-Apprenticeship	209	1237	1488	83%
Apprenticeship	16	272	322	85%
Fellowship	24	36	36	100%
K-12 District Partners	70	92	92	100%

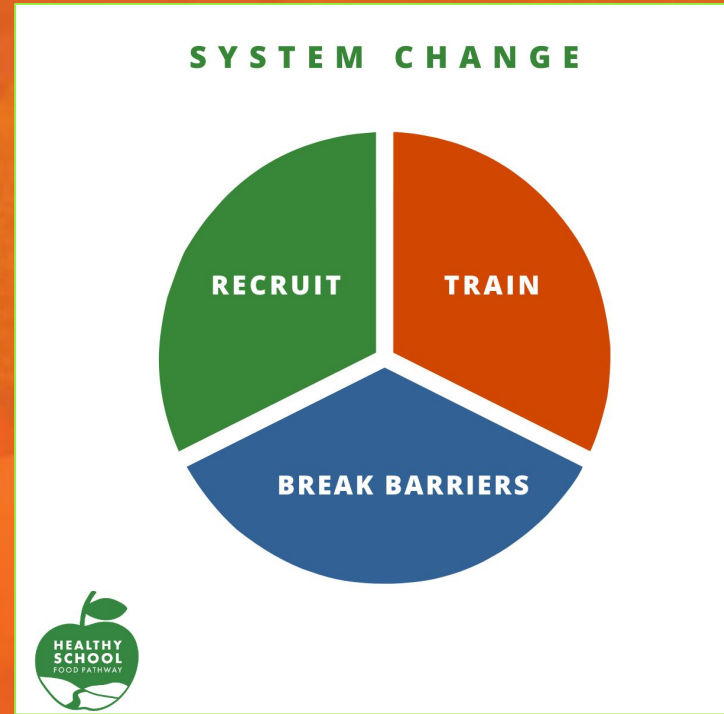




# Supporting Wage Equity as part of HSFP

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- Post Apprenticeship Retention Program
- Wage Differential Working Group
- Wage Study and Advocacy



POWERED BY SCHOOL FOOD PROFESSIONALS:

# INTRODUCING CALIFORNIANS TO THE MAGIC BEHIND SCHOOL MEALS

First-of-its-kind, statewide public education campaign to change perceptions and win hearts and minds

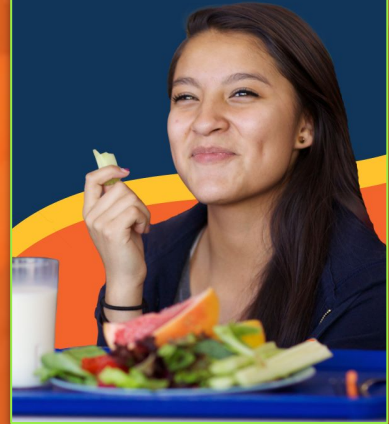
- Pushes parents and other audiences to see the value of School Food Professionals.
- Spotlights their skill, creativity, and commitment.
- Demonstrates how School Food Professionals are leading changes to improve school meals.

Telling Our Story, Our Way in Our Voice

- Better school food is powered by the professionals who make it.
- Features real profiles of school food workers from school districts across California.

**BETTER FOOD =  
BETTER DAYS**

School Food Professionals  
are cooking up success  
for California kids.



# National school food workforce study

## U.S. Department of Agriculture grants Jennifer Gaddis \$1.5 million for study of K-12 school food service workforce

April 29, 2024, Hannah Black



Jennifer Gaddis, an associate professor of Civil Society & Community Studies and Jane Rafferty Thiele Faculty Fellow (Graduate Teaching), has received a \$1.5 million cooperative award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to study the K-12 school food service workforce.

Gaddis will lead a team of researchers in examining the state of school food service in the U.S. and exploring strategies to create “a stable and respected child nutrition workforce that can provide nutritious meals to students while supporting resilient local and regional food systems.”

This national study builds on Gaddis’ recent work, funded by a [Wisconsin Idea Collaboration Grant](#), which included a community-based participatory research project on the [Wisconsin school food workforce](#).

- UW-Madison, Food Insight Group, Chef Ann Foundation
- Three major research questions:
  - What is the current state of the school food workforce?
  - How, if at all, are recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction impacted by school/school food authority (SFA) characteristics and employment structure?
  - What are the most promising strategies for creating a stable and respected child nutrition workforce that can provide nutritious meals to students while supporting resilient local and regional food systems?
- Held listening sessions over summer 2024 with key stakeholder groups
  - School food operators
  - Non-managerial workers and unions representing hourly school food workers
  - Systems-focused organizations
  - Culinary training and other professional development providers
  - K-12 administrators, state agency personnel, and researchers
- RFP will be issued in early December 2024 to regrant \$800K to other researchers for 18-month projects (min \$50K, max \$250K award).





# The Lunch Line: The Impact & Potential of Quality School Food Jobs

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Questions?







**Thank you for joining us!**

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**Recording and resources  
will be emailed to  
registrants.**

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**Questions:**  
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