

# CENTRAL KITCHEN, INSTRUCTIONAL FARM, AND EDUCATION CENTER

## FAST FACTS: Healthy Food and Student Achievement



### THE CENTER: THE CHALLENGE -- AND OPPORTUNITY

Today in Oakland, **one in four children** does not have access to affordable, healthy food. Within the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), this issue is even more urgent, with **72 percent** of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. By creating The Center, a Central Kitchen, Instructional Farm, and Education Center, OUSD has the unique opportunity to dramatically improve the meals we serve in our schools. Through The Center, we aim to boost student achievement and support mental, emotional, and physical health, all of which are closely tied to healthy eating.

Beyond promoting healthy eating, The Center will offer real-world learning opportunities through its Instructional Farm and Education Center, and add a new branch to West Oakland's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Corridor.





## HOW MANY STUDENTS WITHIN OUSD EAT SCHOOL MEALS?

Roughly 58% of OUSD students currently eat school lunches daily. Some students eat breakfast, lunch, snacks, and supper at school. 70% of our students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunches, and some of those same students are at risk for being hungry and rely on school meals for the majority of their weekly meals.

## HOW CAN SCHOOL MEALS IMPACT A STUDENT'S OVERALL EATING HABITS?

Because students consume, on average, nearly half of their calories at school (Action for Healthy Kids, 2012), school meals impact students' overall eating habits. For example, students who consume school meals through the National School Lunch Program and National School Breakfast program are more likely to consume fruit, vegetables, and milk and less likely to consume desserts and snack food (Clark & Fox, 2009), and are less likely to gain weight during the school year (Journal of American Dietetic Association, 2009).

## WHY DOES OUSD NEED A NEW CENTRAL KITCHEN TO IMPROVE OUSD'S MEALS?

Nutrition Services' current kitchen system still cannot support scratch cooking for most meals. Also, even when meals are prepared from scratch, the current kitchen system requires that food service staff prepare most meals several days in advance of service, then pack these same meals in plastic. OUSD has received feedback that despite efforts to make the food healthier and more appealing, students (even those that need the meals) will reject reheated food wrapped in plastic. The new central kitchen facility will be the hub of a kitchen system that will eliminate nearly all prepackaged food and allow students to eat meals freshly prepared at their school sites, the same day.

## HOW DO THE INSTRUCTIONAL FARM AND EDUCATION CENTER SUPPORT STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS?

The Instructional Farm and Education Center will allow OUSD to incorporate nutrition into the curriculum and integrate career pathways and linked learning into this project.

## WHY IS OUSD PRIORITIZING HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS?

For more than a decade, research has demonstrated that a malnourished or hungry child will have a much harder time succeeding in school. For example, we know that:

- Undernourished children are more likely to be hyperactive, absent, or tardy, have more behavioral problems, repeat a grade, and require more special education and mental health services (Food Research & Action Center, 2011).
- Food-insecure children learn at a slower rate than their peers, leaving them further and further behind as they progress through the educational system (Alaimo, et al, 2001).

Because OUSD's mission is to focus on high academic achievement while serving the whole child, improving our school meals is critical to making sure that Every Student Thrives.

## WOULD YOU LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

Please go to [www.ousdthecenter.org](http://www.ousdthecenter.org) to see images of the award-winning design. Would you like to give OUSD feedback about this project? Do you have additional questions? If so, please email [thecenter@ousd.org](mailto:thecenter@ousd.org) or call 510-761-8360.

