



TIME FOR LUNCH Lesson Plan

September 2009

Dear Teachers,

To start, we'd like to say thank you. Thank you for all you do for our children and for our nation. You are the front line in what is too often a *fight* for their opportunity to succeed and their ability to thrive.

That fight has come to the lunchroom. The National School Lunch Program does not provide school nutrition directors with the resources they need to serve kids good food. The result is that in many schools (as in many homes), kids are eating the food that causes obesity and diabetes instead of the food that benefits their health. That is unacceptable: there's no excuse for federal policy that hurts kids.

Time for Lunch is a citizens' campaign with the goal to give schools the ability to serve real food for lunch. When Congress updates the Child Nutrition Act this fall, we're urging them to (1) raise meal reimbursement rates by \$1 per child per day; (2) establish strong standards for all the food sold at school, including in vending machines; and (3) link local schools to local farms by funding grants for Farm to School programs.

It's not going to be easy to get Congress to listen. We'd like to work with you and the teachers and administrators at your school to make sure our elected officials hear our message loud and clear. Here's how:

- **Help kids write letters to Congress.** In this packet, we're including a sample lesson plan with suggestions – but we're not experts on teaching kids, so please consider these *suggestions* and adapt the activity to your classroom.
- **Write your own letter!** The most compelling letters are the ones that have a memorable story – one that shows why this issue is so important.
- **Spread the word.** Circulate this lesson plan, pass out the Time for Lunch petition (at the end of this packet) and tell colleagues and parents about this campaign. You can learn more at <http://slowfoodusa.org/timeforlunch>.

Thank you!



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Speak Out for School Food!

Part One: Lead a whole-group discussion on students' feelings towards their current school lunch. Chart all responses so they can reference their ideas later for letter writing. Older students can take their own notes or meet in small groups if preferred.

Sample Questions for Discussion:

- 1) What do you think of the food served at your school? Is it healthy? Does it taste good? Is it fresh?
- 2) What can you buy with \$1? Can you buy a healthy lunch?
- 3) If you could change something specific about the food at your school, what would you change?
- 4) If the food at school were improved, how could it change your life?

Part Two: Discuss how the government decides what food will be served through the Child Nutrition Act. Explain that legislators will be able to change the current Child Nutrition Act later this year.

Who decides on what is served at my school?

This fall, the United States Congress will be re-considering the Child Nutrition Act, which determines how much is spent on lunch at schools across the country. It also influences what type of food is served and where that food comes from.

Part Three: Have each child write a letter to a legislator. Have them include the details charted in Part One.

How can I make a difference?

Your opinion matters! Legislators (people in the government involved in making and passing laws) want to know what is important to the people they represent,



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like you. Legislators especially like to hear from young people. As few as ten letters or phone calls can make a big difference in what they pass.

Find out who your Representative and your Senators are at www.congress.org.

What should I write in a letter?

- Say your name, age, where you live and what school you go to.
- Explain why healthy food is important, and give examples of your favorite healthy foods.
- Feel free to draw pictures or include photos.
- Thank them for the time they took to read your letter.

Part Four: Have each child address an envelope to one of their legislators **OR** collect all the letters and mail them together. To avoid security delays and make sure the letters arrive on time, send them to the legislators' local offices in your area (not to Washington D.C., where letters have to go through a lengthy screening process).



THE TIME FOR LUNCH PETITION & PLATFORM

This packet contains ready-to-print copies of our petition (available in both English and Spanish) and our platform. **These are different documents, and when you're gathering signatures in public, you'll want to have copies of both on hand.** Here's why:

The petition is a one-sentence statement that we're asking people to sign in order to show their support for the goal of our campaign: to get real food in schools. The purpose of a petition is to be able to show legislators how many people our movement represents, e.g. "5,000 people in your state have shown their support, alongside 100,000 people nationwide." **Signing a petition is also the simplest and quickest way for supporters to get involved**—by sharing their email addresses, petition-signers give us the opportunity to follow up with them and offer them more ways to support the campaign.

The platform, on the other hand, is the full document explaining the policy changes we're asking Congress to make in order to give schools the ability to serve real food. **When you're asking someone to sign the petition, it's a good idea to have a copy of the platform on hand, so you can show people what they're supporting.** When you're writing or calling a legislator, use the language in the platform to make your point.

Here are some ideas for gathering signatures in public:

- Setup a table at farmers' markets, food events and film screenings.
- Get kids involved.
- Reach out to schools and like-minded organizations in your area that may be able to share the petition with their networks (or in the case of schools, with parents).
- Keep copies in your backpack and at your desk at work, in case someone you meet someone wants to get involved.
- Remember that people can sign the petition online at <http://slowfoodusa.org/timeforlunch>.



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to get **REAL FOOD** in schools · Labor Day, Sept. 7, 2009

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The Time for Lunch Policy Platform

Every school day, we have an opportunity to build a strong foundation for our children's health by serving them **real food at school**. Children who grow up enjoying food that is both delicious and good for them learn healthy habits that last throughout their lives. Each year that we fail to satisfy our children's right to real food is another year we deny our children good health, we diminish their ability to learn and we close the door on their opportunity to succeed.

The need for real school food has never been greater. Today, one in four children is overweight or obese, and one in three will develop diabetes in his or her lifetime. In the face of this crisis, our schools are financially struggling to feed children anything but the overly processed fast food that endangers their health. For many children, school lunch is their only guaranteed meal of the day. Right now, those children are forced to choose between going hungry and being unhealthy.

We can do better.

The **National School Lunch Program** provides a meal to more than 30 million children every school day. By giving schools the resources to serve real food, we can grant 30 million children the freedom to be healthy. By teaching children to eat well, we can make a down payment on health care reform. By providing children with locally grown fruits and vegetables, we can support local farmers and create green jobs in our communities. By purchasing local food, we can stop wasting oil needed to transport food and reduce the impact on our environment. By raising children who enjoy real food, we can start laying the foundation for America's future prosperity.

This fall, the **Child Nutrition Act**, which is the bill that governs the National School Lunch Program, is up for reauthorization in Congress. By passing a Child Nutrition Act that works for children, our nation can take the first step towards a future where no child is denied his or her right to be healthy and where every child enjoys real food.

That's why it's time for Congress and the Obama Administration to:

1. INVEST IN CHILDREN'S HEALTH.

Give schools just one dollar more per day for each child's lunch. Under the National School Lunch Program, the USDA reimburses schools for every meal served: \$2.57 for a free lunch, \$2.17 for a reduced-price lunch and 24 cents for a paid lunch. Since these reimbursements must also pay for labor, equipment and overhead costs, schools are left with only \$1.00 to spend on food. How can schools be expected to feed our children and protect their health with only a dollar a day? It's time to build a strong foundation for our children's health by raising the reimbursement rate to \$3.57.



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2. PROTECT AGAINST FOODS THAT PUT CHILDREN AT RISK.

Establish strong standards for all food sold at school, including food from vending machines and school fast food. At most schools, children can buy junk food in vending machines, at on-campus stores and in the cafeteria as “a la carte” items. These overly processed, high-calorie “fast” foods sneak under the radar of federal nutrition standards. They undermine the National School Lunch Program’s investment in children’s health and allow food companies to profit from selling obesity. It’s time to take the first step towards making real food the standard by approving Rep. Woolsey’s and Sen. Harkin’s Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act of 2009.

3. TEACH CHILDREN HEALTHY HABITS THAT WILL LAST THROUGH LIFE.

Fund grants for innovative Farm to School programs and school gardens. This spring, 30 fifth-graders joined Michelle Obama in planting a vegetable garden on the White House lawn. “What I found with my kids [is that] if they were involved in planting and picking it, they were much more curious to give it a try,” Mrs. Obama says. Every child deserves the opportunity to learn healthy eating habits at school. In 2004, a section was added to the Child Nutrition Act to provide schools with grants to cover one-time grants that enable them to purchase local foods and to teach lessons on healthy eating in kitchen and garden classrooms – but Congress never appropriated funds for it. This year, it’s time for Congress to guarantee \$50 million of mandatory funding for Farm to School programs.

We also ask that Congress and the Obama Administration:

4. GIVE SCHOOLS THE INCENTIVE TO BUY LOCAL.

Establish financial incentives that encourage schools to buy food from local farms for all child nutrition programs. Buying fruits and vegetables from local farms is an economic engine for creating jobs in our communities, rebuilding rural economies, and supporting family farmers. By shortening the distance food travels – from farm to table – it also saves oil and ensures school foods are as fresh and healthy as possible.

5. CREATE GREEN JOBS WITH A SCHOOL LUNCH CORPS.

Train underemployed Americans to be the teachers, farmers, cooks, and administrators our school cafeterias need. We can’t serve real food in schools without investing in school kitchens and the people who prepare and serve lunch. This spring, President Obama signed the Serve America Act, which expanded Americorps and reinforced his call for Americans to serve their country. Right now, our nation has an opportunity to train young and unemployed Americans to be the teachers, farmers, cooks and administrators we need to ensure the National School Lunch Program is protecting children’s health. President Obama has called for an end to childhood hunger by 2015; let’s answer that call by putting Americans to work building and working in school kitchens nationwide.