

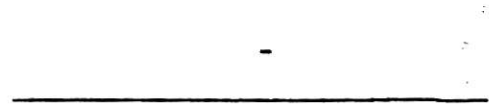
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AN ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH AND NUTRITION
EDUCATION PROGRAMS: A PROPOSAL FOR A COMMUNITY BASED APPROACH

by

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Chapter I
Historial Background
Through 1959

Early Beginnings

Nutrition programs in schools began in this country in the early 1900's in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City (1). Other cities soon followed their lead (2). Serving food at school was not unique to the United States. Several years earlier the practice had been established in France, England, Holland, Italy, and Switzerland (1). Although information on the European programs was available, the United States school food programs had disorganized, sporadic beginnings. The school lunch program, as we know it today, was initiated individually and collectively by school administrators, mothers, and private associations, especially parent-teacher organizations (1, 2).

In 1932 the first Federal aid to school feeding programs was granted by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to communities in southwestern Missouri. A year later, Federal assistance was made available from the Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Administration (2).

The Great Depression

The depression of the 1930's was significant in the development of the school lunch programs. To relieve the desperate situations caused by plummeting farm prices and wide-spread unemployment, two federal assistance programs were developed which aided school lunch programs as well (3).

To remove price-depressing surplus foods from the market P.L. 74-320, authorized the creation of the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation which set up a program through which surplus foods were purchased by the government and distributed through domestic donations. School lunch programs benefited from these donations (4).

To ease wide-spread unemployment, the Public Works Administration was created in 1935 to provide unemployed persons jobs on public works projects. Unemployed, needy women were assigned to the preparation and serving of school lunches. A second program, the National Youth Administration (NYA), also provided assistance to the school lunch program by training unemployed youth and then providing them with part-time work. Some NYA employees worked in the school lunch kitchens while others made equipment and furniture (1, 2, 5).

Lunch prices were held to a minimum during the depression because much of the labor was provided without cost to the school district and surplus foods were donated. The number of children participating in the school lunch program soared (2).

World War II

World War II years produced a major setback and a major stimulus for school lunches (6). Farm surpluses were eliminated because donated commodities were needed to support U. S. troops and allies. The kinds and quantity of foods available for distribution to schools dropped from a high of 454 million pounds in 1942 to 93 million pounds in 1944. Additionally, Public Works Administration labor was eliminated. Consequently,

the number of schools serving lunches declined and student participation dropped from 6 million to 5 million. The decline in student participation would have been more severe if the 78th Congress had not enacted legislation creating a cash assistance program, making funds available to maintain the school lunch and milk programs during fiscal year 1943-44 (2).

Following the war, school boards were hesitant to initiate school lunch programs because of the past experiences of uncertainty of Federal support. Funding based on yearly appropriations rather than specific legislation assuring continuation of the program was a limiting factor. Without some guarantee of the program's future, it was regarded by some school officials as a high risk venture (1). However, as World War II drew to a close, members of Congress were receiving two important types of information. First, they were informed by the Pentagon that approximately 40 percent of the men inducted during the war were rejected for service because of lack of physical fitness (7). The need for better nutrition was implicated. Secondly, Congress was concerned that farmers would be left with large surpluses resulting from their increased production during the war (3).

The National School Lunch Act

In 1946 the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) was passed. The stated purpose was "as a measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities" (8). The NSLA

stabilized Federal aid to schools. The Act made the program more secure and enabled it to expand (9). This expansion was possible because the Federal government encouraged and assisted public and non-profit private schools to serve well-balanced lunches to children.

Under the Act, Federal assistance includes:

- ...a basic cash and donated food subsidy for all lunches, with additional reimbursements for meals served free or at a reduced price to children who cannot pay the full price.
- ...nonfood assistance funds to help needy schools acquire food service equipment.
- ...a state administrative expense fund to partially reimburse States for undertaking the additional administrative activities required by the legislation.
- ...limited funds to undertake program-related nutrition education training projects, studies and surveys of food service requirements, and special development projects. (10)

The Department of Agriculture, through the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) headquarters and regional offices (a) supervises States' administration of the program, (b) administers the program for private schools in those States where the State educational agencies are prohibited from disbursing funds to private schools, (c) distributes commodities to the States and private schools where applicable, (d) reviews State and local school operations, (e) apportions funds to the States, and (f) sets standards for nutritious meals (11).

At the State level, the State educational agency administers the program in public schools and in private schools where permitted. The

education agency (a) submits a State plan of child nutrition operations for each fiscal year for FNS approval, (b) establishes a system of accounting under which school food authorities report program information, (c) maintains current records on school's operations and accounts for program funds, (d) determines whether the matching requirements of the Act are being met, (e) provides supervisory assistance to local schools, (f) provides the schools with monthly information on foods determined by the Department of Agriculture to be in plentiful supply, and (g) investigates complaints. It is the responsibility of FNS and the State education agency to extend the program to all schools. The States are responsible for assisting local schools to increase their school lunch participation (11).

At the local level, schools who participate are required to sign agreements with the state education agency which state that meals will be served to meet the minimum nutritional requirements as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture; meals will be served without cost or at a reduced cost to children who are determined by local school authorities to be unable to pay the full cost of the lunch; and such children are not to be segregated or discriminated against in any way; programs will be operated on a non-profit basis; donated commodities will be utilized; and proper records and reports will be maintained and submitted to the state agency as required (2, 3).

States must match the Federal grants for general cash-for-food assistance from sources within the state at a ratio of 3 to 1. In States with below-average per capita incomes, this ratio may be decreased (11).

Three types of meals were acceptable under the NSLA. Type A lunches were to meet one-third to one-half of the minimum daily nutritional requirements of children age 10-12. By adjusting amounts of food, the meal pattern could be adopted to meet the nutritional needs for children of all ages. A Type A lunch must include: one-half pint of whole milk; 2 oz. of a protein-rich food with specifications for dried peas and beans, peanut butter and eggs; 3/4 cup of a combination of vegetables and fruits; 1 portion of enriched or whole grain bread; and two teaspoons of butter or fortified margarine (2, 3, 12).

Type B lunches were considered supplemental. They were designed for schools who did not have adequate kitchen facilities to prepare Type A lunches. Type B lunches required smaller amounts of the same foods from a Type A meal (2).

Type C lunches were one-half pint of whole milk which was intended to be served as a beverage to accompany foods brought from home (2).

Three notable changes have been made in the Type A meal pattern since it was implemented in 1946:

...the definition of milk was changed in 1973 from whole fluid milk to include forms of whole, lowfat, skim, cultured buttermilk and flavored forms of these milks.

...the definition of bread was expanded in 1974 to include crackers, taco shells and pizza crust.

...the butter/or fortified margarine requirement was completely removed from the meal pattern in 1976 (10).

With the exception of a few amendments to the NSLA and the enactment of other separate legislation, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) operated without basic change through 1959. The first amendment to the

NSLA in 1952 changed the apportionment of funds between States and Territories to serve needy children better (2). The Special Milk Act of 1954 replaced the Type C lunch under the NSLP. The Act enabled USDA to reimburse schools for milk served in addition to that available with the Type A lunch (3).

Two pieces of separate legislation dealing with agricultural commodities have been vital to the expansion of the NSLP. In 1935, prior to the passage of the NSLA, the Department of Agriculture acquired the authority to purchase agricultural commodities through Section 32 of P.L. 74-320. Funds for the purchase of commodities were provided from 30 percent of the U.S. customs receipts from duties collected under customs legislation during each calendar year (4). The authority of the Secretary of Agriculture was expanded again in 1949 with the passage of P.L. 81-439. Section 416 of the Agriculture Act provided for the Secretary of Agriculture to donate commodities purchased under the price support of the Commodities Credit Corporation. Priority was to be given to the school lunch program (13).

Chapter II
1960's Through Early 1970's:
Socially Motivating Forces
Behind New Legislation

Introduction

During the 1960's and early 1970's the school lunch program became very closely aligned with the growing social concerns of that period. No longer was the primary purpose of the NSLP to improve the quality of future U.S. soldiers or to relieve farmers' surplus commodity problems. The NSLP became a major weapon in the war on hunger and malnutrition.

Hunger and malnutrition became an issue of moral and pragmatic concern to all Americans. United States with its abundant food resources had no excuse for not assuring that all American children have an adequate diet. Legislators felt that because strong and healthy people are more productive, it would be in the national interest to assure an adequate diet for all American children. The youth of America were viewed as its most precious resource (14). Priorities were set on reaching all needy children with free and reduced-price meals -- making school lunches available to all children in all schools (15).

In the early 1960's legislative emphasis was on expanding participation in the school lunch program. In 1962 an amendment to the NSLA changed the Federal assistance to states serving free and reduced-price

lunches (16). The added Section 11, Special Assistance, allowed Federal assistance to be based on each state's need and school lunch participation rather than the state's need and school-aged population (17). Higher cash reimbursements would go to needy areas to assist these schools in serving lunches to students unable to pay the full cost of the school lunch. At the end of the 1961-62 school year, 270 especially needy schools were benefiting from the legislation. Approximately 25,000 children were served free and reduced-price lunches (18). Also in 1962, Congress authorized the annual National School Lunch Week. The week of ceremonies and activities were designed to begin on the second Sunday of October each year (19).

Four years later, P.L. 89-642, the Child Nutrition Act, as signed into law on October 11, 1966, made the first major additions to the Federal child nutrition programs since the inauguration of the Special Milk Program in 1954. The original 1966 Act contained major provisions which expanded the concept of nutrition for needy children. The Special Milk Program was extended and made a part of the Act. Funds were provided for a two year pilot breakfast program in economically poor areas or in schools where children had to travel long distances to school. A permanent program of non-food assistance was established where Federal funding was made available for the purchase of equipment for the child nutrition programs (20).

In the late 1960's a combination of events catapulted hunger into the public spotlight. T.V. documentaries, nutrition surveys, people's

marches, and nutrition conferences made the nation conscious that hunger and malnutrition existed in this country. These factors helped to create the most widespread awareness and interest in human nutrition in any period in history (9).

Whatever complacency U. S. citizens had was shattered by widely publicized reports of hunger among many large sectors of the United States' population. Several of the major and sweeping changes that have occurred in school food service and those changes being made today, can be attributed to the following motivating forces.

Hunger first gained national notoriety in April, 1967, when Senators Robert Kennedy of New York and Joseph Clark of Pennsylvania went to Cleveland, Mississippi, to study poverty programs. Their visit prompted the first congressional hearings on federal food programs outside the confines of the agriculture committees (21, 22).

Although the discovery of hunger and malnutrition in the South commanded national attention, citizen's groups were already concerned about hunger in America. Both the Citizen's Crusade Against Poverty and the Field Foundation were involved in projects to help hungry poor. The Citizen's Crusade Against Poverty had been created in 1965 in support of poverty legislation. In 1967, the Citizen's Crusade formed a special "Citizen's Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition in the United States" with the objective of focusing national attention on the problem of hunger. Teams of researchers went into the ghettos of Boston and New York, to Indian Reservations, to Appalachia and other rural pockets of poverty, to migrant camps, and to the Mexican-American barrios. The

Board was performing a function that Congress had long neglected. (22, 23). Their report, "Hunger, U.S.A.", was a study of the inadequacies of food distribution programs among the poor. The report charged that all institutions had failed the hungry poor (24).

The Field Foundation, financed by Chicago's Marshall Field Department Store family, which often invests money in risky, politically unpopular issues, found impetus in the Senators' visit to Mississippi. The Foundation sponsored a project for medical and food evaluations for Head Start children in the South (22).

The most dramatic presentation of malnutrition was the CBS network television program "Hunger in America" which first aired in May, 1968. Both the food-related professionals and lay people were shocked and alarmed to learn that the United States, an affluent country, had an apparent food shortage (22).

The Poor People's Campaign, sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of the then recently assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., took the elimination of hunger as one of its issues. They had an encampment in Washington and made the satisfaction of hunger one of its major demands (9, 22, 23). The Reverend Ralph Abernathy, President of the Southern Leadership Conference, testified before the Labor and Public Welfare Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower and Poverty on May 29, 1968, said "We cannot let Americans starve because the Agriculture Committees chose to dislike the poor." (23).

Privately conducted studies continued to highlight the need for better nutrition. "Their Daily Bread" (1968) by the Committee on School Lunch Participation, documented the failure of the National School Lunch Program to reach hungry children. They cited a need for more free and reduced-price meals (25). "Let Them Eat Promises" (1969) described the politics involved in Federal feeding programs (22). "Still Hungry in America" (1973), jointly sponsored by the Southern Regional Council, Inc. and the Robert Kennedy Memorial Foundation, made yet another mark on taxpayers and legislators (26).

Surveys Indicate Need

Between 1965 and 1972 four major nutrition surveys were conducted. The Department of Agriculture's 1965 Household Food Consumption Survey of food intake and nutritive value of family diets in the United States showed a drop in the quality of diets as compared with the 1955 survey. During that ten year period, there was an increase in the consumption of snack foods, bakery products, and other processed foods, and a drop in vegetable consumption. Nutrient intakes were lower, with a substantially higher percentage of families failing to meet the Recommended Dietary Allowances in 1965 as compared with statistics compiled in 1955 (29).

The Ten State Nutrition Survey was the largest, most comprehensive ever conducted in the United States and focused on the lower income populations in ten selected states. The Survey found a significant proportion of this population either malnourished or at risk of developing nutritional problems. Children in the 10-16 year old group had the

worst nutritional patterns. As educational levels rose, nutritional inadequacies diminished. Inadequate diets were found largely due to poor food choices. School lunches were found to provide a substantial percentage of recommended nutrients, contributing at least one-third of the calories, calcium, iron, and vitamin A for children participating in the lunch program (28).

The Preschool Nutrition Survey, comprised of a random sample of the U.S. preschool-aged population, was designed to determine the nutritional status of a cross-section of preschool children. Researchers hoped to ascertain how various programs, particularly federally supported ones, influenced childhood health and nutrition. Their results, like those found in the USDA Household Food Consumption Survey and the Ten-State Nutrition Survey, indicated that the nutritional quality of the diet correlates poorly with socioeconomic status (29).

The most recent survey, the Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HANES), also found that nutritional problems were not isolated to lower income populations. Samplings of individuals spanning the socioeconomic spectrum demonstrated frequent iron inadequacies and for significant numbers of persons, low intakes of calcium and vitamins A and C (30).

These major surveys tend to support one another. The inevitable conclusion of these reports and surveys was that the eating habits of Americans leave much to be desired. The problems of inadequate nutrition exist in the suburbs as well as in the ghettos. Many children simply are not eating properly, nor are they developing good life-long food/nutrition habits.

Legislative Action

The House Agriculture Committee issued a "Hunger Study", June 16, 1968, in response to the Citizen's Board of Inquiry's report. Statements made in the Agriculture's study were highly critical of the Board's report. According to the Agriculture Committee, there was very little actual hunger in the United States. However, they agreed that wide-spread malnutrition existed, but it was largely caused by ignorance as to what constitutes a balanced diet (21).

The Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs was established by Senate Resolution 281, July 20, 1968. Legislators recognized the need for Congressional response to the major governmental and privately conducted studies on hunger. The purpose of the Select Committee was to study the food, medical and other related basic needs among people in the United States and report their findings to appropriate Committees of the Senate. Senator George McGovern, (D.-S.D.) was appointed as chairman of the newly formed committee (19).

President Johnson signed P.L. 90-302, an amendment to the Child Nutrition Act in 1968, which extended and expanded food service programs to children. The Special Food Service Program for Children authorized lunches for children in day care centers, centers for handicapped children, settlement houses and summer day camps for three years. The new program applied to children from impoverished areas or those areas with a high percentage of working mothers (23, 31, 32).

President Nixon, in a message to Congress May 6, 1969, directed that the Urban Affairs Council consider the establishment of a new Agency, the Food and Nutrition Service. Nixon also called for a White House Conference on hunger and malnutrition to involve the private sector (33). The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) was established on August 8, 1969, by the Secretary of Agriculture. The exclusive concern of the agency was administration of Federal food program. The creation of this agency was to permit greater specialization within the food program (34). The White House Conference on Food Nutrition and Health was called for December 1969. The Conference recommended that school lunch programs be expanded to include more free and reduced-price meals to all children through secondary schools (35).

Legislation passed in the early 1970's continued to expand the school lunch program as an anti-hunger program. In 1970, Congress passed four bills providing food to needy children. P.L. 91-248 established minimum national income eligibility standards for free and reduced-price lunches, mandating that children from families below that level "shall be served meals" (36). P.L. 91-207 authorized the transfer of additional money from Section 32 (customs receipts) during the fiscal year to provide more free and reduced-price lunches to children not already being aided by the existing program (37). P.L. 91-295 made the Special Milk Act a permanent one (38). P.L. 91-233 amended the Agriculture Act of 1949 to remove the elimination of dairy products supplied to the school lunch program through the Commodity Credit Corporation (39).

August 13, 1971, three weeks before most schools opened, the Nixon Administration recommended a reduction in the Federal reimbursements from 60 cents per lunch to 35 cents. The savings to the Federal government would have been nearly 300 million dollars. Theoretically, the States would have made up the difference in the reimbursement rates to individual schools. The cuts were called for by the Office of Management and Budget (40). The recommendation was not popular. Yielding to Congressional pressure, the Department of Agriculture increased spending on free and reduced-price lunches by 135 million dollars. However, it tightened the eligibility standards which eliminated a number of needy children from participating in the program. The new law established a minimum 40 cents per meal reimbursement for free lunches. All regularly priced lunches had a 6 cents reimbursement (41). That same year, P.L. 92-32 authorized the transfer of Section 32 funds of P.L. 74-320 to provide even more free and reduced-price lunches (42).

After the May 1970 enactment of P.L. 91-248 (36), which clarified responsibility for providing free or reduced-price lunches, the number of students eating such lunches increased from about 5 million to 8.1 million children in April 1972, a 60 percent increase. However, a Food and Nutrition Service survey showed that nearly 1.5 million needy children were not eating free or reduced-price lunches. The General Accounting Office (GAO) reviewed the administration of the NSLP to determine if the objectives of making nutritious lunches available to all school children and providing them at free and reduced-prices to needy children

were being achieved effectively. The GAO found many school officials were not interested in participating in the NSLP for many reasons, particularly because the schools preferred to operate their own lunch program or the schools did not have the facilities or equipment to prepare and serve lunches. The GAO noted administrative weaknesses in the implementation of the free and reduced-price programs (11).

Public Law 93-422 passed in 1972 increased the Federal reimbursement to schools to relieve schools of the inflationary cost of food by raising the "general assistance" reimbursement to 8 cents per meal. It authorized free lunch eligibility standards at 125 percent of the federal minimum standard. Minimum levels of funding were made available for non-food assistance, to be used solely in schools without food service who were determined to be especially needy. Those schools determined to be especially needy would not be required to supply matching funds for the non-food assistance (43).

In 1973, almost two million so called "economically needy" children did not receive lunch - a step backwards from 1972, when 1.2 million needy children did not receive lunch. These figures only cover eligible children in public and private schools that were participating in the NSLP. There are about five million children attending approximately 17,000 schools that have no food service. Supposedly, about 15 percent of these children are needy in economic terms (44). In other words, in spite of the fact that 80 percent of the children have access to school lunch on a national average and 50 percent participate, i.e., get lunch,

there are 15 million children who have access to a school lunch program and 5 million who don't have access to a lunch program, who could be in nutritional jeopardy (45).

Early in 1974 it was disclosed that the Nixon administration intended to phase out all commodity assistance to the NSLP by June 30, 1975. Replacing the commodity donations with cash payments would supposedly reduce the federal cost of aiding the school lunch program, especially when there were limited crop surpluses available for government purchases (46). P.L. 93-326 was enacted in 1974 to extend the Secretary of Agriculture's authority to purchase food commodities for school lunch programs at non-surplus prices through 1975 (47).

Congress enacted into law P.L. 94-105 (48) over President Ford's veto, a bill to amend and extend the school lunch and other child nutrition programs. It included major provisions that made the school breakfast program permanent and required breakfast be available in all eligible schools, extended the summer food program, revised eligibility for reduced-price meals, required schools participating in the NSLP to offer reduced-price meals to students, and extended the Secretary of Agriculture's authority to purchase agricultural commodities. States who had phased out their commodities distribution facilities could choose to receive cash in lieu of commodities (49).

Chapter III
Congress Reevaluates Current Issues
Of Importance To The National School Lunch Program

Introduction

In the middle 1970's Congress began a period of re-evaluating the so called "poverty programs" of the 1960's. One of these programs was the school lunch program. The scrutiny of the program was to be expected. Over thirty years had been spent developing, implementing and securing the program's operation. Both student participation and Federal support had increased since 1946. Nearly 26.6 million children were being fed annually at a yearly cost to taxpayers of over \$2.7 billion (50). School food service had become the third largest away-from-home food market in the United States (3, 5). It was the largest feeding program of its type in the world (3). It clearly had economic impact with a market value of \$4.2 billion in fiscal 1976. Total food expenditures alone were estimated at \$1.3 billion (51). Congress wanted to see that the program was functioning as intended (50). They wanted answers in terms of accountability (52).

Special government reports and investigations and private and university affiliated research, dealing with aspects of the NSLP are flourishing. The Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education of the Committee of Education and Labor and the Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition of the Committee

of Agriculture, both in the U. S. House of Representatives, and the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs have held hearings to obtain information on key issues related to the school lunch program. School food service directors, health department officials, representatives of school administration university professors, nutrition researchers and government personnel have given testimony identifying problems with the NSLP.

Plate Waste

Plate waste became the most explosive issue in the public and government arena. In February, 1975, Congressman William Goodling (D-PA) voiced concern on the food wasted in the lunch program, "it is the most wasteful program I have ever seen in my life." As a former school administrator, he noted a lot of food going into the garbage cans, and "we are wasting food simply because we have not learned that we can try to improve the nutrition, try to improve the diet of a youngster, but we cannot force them to eat that food." (53).

The problem of food preference and food quality as it affects acceptance and plate waste gained notoriety. A project taken on by reporters of the Chicago Tribune had far-reaching impact. The purpose of the investigation was to determine the effectiveness of the NSLP in Chicago, by determining the quality of the lunches as served and as eaten. In all schools in the investigation, the calories as served, were considerably less than the standard. The average caloric value was only two-thirds of the selected standard of 933 calories. The amount of