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COLORADO

Overview of School Food Procurement in Colorado

Spring 2011



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Introduction & Overview.....	2
Background	2
Goals of this Report	2
State of the State: Existing Conditions of School Food.....	4
How is School Food Managed in Colorado?.....	4
What Agencies are Involved in School Food?	7
What is Served in School Meals?	8
Where Does School Food Come From?	10
What Do School Meal Participation Rates Look Like in Colorado?	18
What are Participation Rates in Free and Reduced Price Meal Programs?	19
Who Spends What on School Food in Colorado?.....	19
The Role of the Summer Food Service Program	21
What about Competitive Foods?.....	22
How are Districts Getting More Fresh Foods into Their Meal Programs?.....	24
School Food Efforts & Resources From Across the Country	26
List of All Cited Links	28

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I. Introduction & Overview

Background

In early 2010, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) received a competitive (ARRA Component II) state-based award to advance food systems policy in Colorado. The first two goals of the proposed work plan have been subcontracted to LiveWell Colorado. The goals are:

1. Improve **nutritional standards** of Colorado schools, including operational efficiencies and staff training (e.g., Culinary Boot Camps!).
2. Modify urban and suburban land use policies in order to build a permanent **farm to school** program that supplies fresh and healthy food to Colorado's students while benefiting Colorado's agriculture economy.

One of the tasks to accomplish Goal 2 is to advance regional farm to school efforts and related policy changes by:

- Conducting an overview and “mapping” of school food procurement in Colorado; (this report)
- Developing a “school food primer” that will outline the steps and issues involved with sourcing local foods; and,
- Providing technical assistance to at least 3 regions in the state to support the creation of a regional FtS network.

Goals of this Report

As a first step in these efforts to promote farm to school opportunities, we are undertaking a more general overview and mapping of how school food procurement works in Colorado. The primary goal of this effort is to provide a resource, so no matter what your end goal is, we can all better understand the system, be on the same page, and know where the opportunities for change lie.

This information pulled together throughout this report will also be used throughout a “school food primer” (to be published in Fall 2011) that will describe the status of farm to school efforts and lead readers through a step by step process of establishing locally-relevant, long-term contractual relationships between schools and local/regional producers.

Other goals of this report include:

- Provide an in-depth examination of school food policies and regulations, literally mapping out what agencies are involved with school food in any way
- Bring clarity (and provide a go-to, one-stop resource) for school district staff and help build common understanding, knowledge, and language amongst local and state school food advocacy organizations
- Direct stakeholders to where and how to shift the lever to make the greatest impact
- To provide a clear understanding of the terms used to describe school food procurement, distribution, and processes Click here for a comprehensive glossary of school food and farm to school terms: [Glossary of School Procurement Terms](#).

Intended Users & Uses of this Report

This report is intended to be a reference document for anyone interested in understanding how school food works in Colorado. This report, intentionally, does not include strategy and policy recommendations for change. Rather, it aims to present the current state of the system, in order to ground readers with the same information. We anticipate that a variety of stakeholders could refer to this report, including policymakers interested in supporting legislation and other policy to strengthen school foods and wishing to understand the system a little better; school food advocates and funders looking to understand the greatest “levers” for change in the system; and interested school district administrators and staff to have a one-stop resource for capturing data about the finances and participation rates of school meal programs.

What You Will See in this Report

This report has three main components:

- **State of the state:** This section constitutes the bulk of this report and includes basic data about who is involved with managing, funding, monitoring and distributing school food and what the finances of school food look like and what Colorado’s school meal participation rates look like. For each subject area, you will see an overview of the information included, data tables, and a brief review of why we have included this information, or “why it matters” to know all of the details.
- **Other school food efforts and resources:** This section includes brief overviews of other efforts, similar to this report, from other states, as well as some of our favorite resources and readings related to school food procurement from around the country.
- **Referenced tables and case studies:** You will see hyperlinks to other documents throughout this report. Detailed tables (e.g., inventories of state agencies and their roles in school food, or an inventory of relevant state policies, rules, and regulations); menus; case studies (e.g., case studies of how the commodities program looks like for various school districts); and other resources are linked to this report in order to add detail, illustration, and background information to certain sections of this report.

Coming Soon....

This report presents information from across the state of Colorado, and intentionally emphasizes learning from smaller districts outside of Metro Denver that are not as engaged as often as more urban districts. This is not to underestimate the importance, and significant purchasing power, of larger school districts. Understanding and examining the procurement process for larger districts is an integral part of the mission of School Food FOCUS¹ (www.schoolfoodfocus.org), a national organization that works with Denver Public Schools as one of their partner sites. Additional information and findings concerning school food procurement from FOCUS’s work with DPS as well as other large districts in CO and across the country are expected to be integrated into this and other reports in late winter 2011. We look forward to learning a great deal from our national and local partners!

¹ School Food FOCUS (FOCUS) is a national initiative that supports large school districts with 40,000 or more students in their efforts to procure more healthful, more sustainably produced and regionally sourced food to help children perform better in school and maintain healthier lifestyles.

II. State of the State: Existing Conditions of School Food

How is School Food Managed in Colorado?

Information Included Here: In the 2009-2010 School Year, there were 178 School Food Authorities (SFAs) registered with CDE. For a detailed description of the responsibilities of an SFA, please visit the Colorado Department of Education to review the “Non-Delegable Duties”: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/nutriFSMC-Regis10-11.htm>.

While the vast majority of these SFAs are still individual school districts, several districts opt to contract with a school food services management company. For example, there are currently three entities registered with CDE to act as an SFA for charter schools (two individual charter schools and the Charter School Institute) that together service 19 different charter schools. Also, House Bill 10-1335 authorized Boards of Cooperative Services (BOCES), which help provide and coordinate services for school districts, to serve as SFAs. This allows schools to participate in group purchasing programs, with the goal of making healthier foods more affordable in rural areas. Additionally, for the SY2010-11, there are now six different food management companies registered with CDE (See **Table 1** below for a list of management companies registered with CDE). All contracts are for one year with option to renew annually for up to four additional 1 year terms. Lastly, there are several purchasing co-ops operating throughout the state that are listed here.

Why It Matters: The presence of school food management companies is increasing slightly in Colorado. The Colorado Department of Education Nutrition Unit estimates that 3-4 of the contracts listed in Table 1 are new contracts this year, but does not expect this number to increase significantly in future years. This still signifies a fairly small portion of school food authorities in Colorado, as most districts are still self-operated and the vast majority of charter schools are still served by their district. However, the number of charter schools being served by an SFA outside of their local school district is has increased significantly, due to 2009 legislation that allowed charter schools to “opt” out of their district as their SFA for the first time (see overview of Charter Choice and Charter School Institute, below).

As of this writing, no districts have yet to request or take advantage of the option of enlisting their BOCES to do group purchasing. Additional outreach and education about the opportunity, and ultimately, funding to enable BOCES to do this effectively, are needed.

The simple existence of multiple management companies and companies working with charter schools does signify an opportunity for funders and advocates to work more closely with food service management and catering companies to develop tools and guidance around procuring and providing healthy, fresh, and local foods.

Purchasing co-ops have their pros and cons and not all districts receive the same benefits from the co-op system. For example, districts who join together to purchase school food increase their purchasing power as a whole, allowing them to request certain delivery schedules and particular kinds of food that may not otherwise be available, providing a good deal of flexibility. However, co-ops may also constrain the needs and interests of smaller districts. The co-op trend is an important one to understand in order to be informed about school food purchasing decisions, and districts will join those that provide them the greatest flexibility.

Table 1: Food Service Management Companies with Food Service Contracts 2010-2011

**Note that in most cases in Colorado the school district acts as the School Food Authority; these are the exceptions*

FSMC	SFA	Contract Base Year
Chartwells	Englewood School District	2010-2011
	Cheyenne Mt School District	2010-2011
	Lamar School District	2010-2011
	Westminster School District	2010-2011
	Woodland Park School District	2007-2008
	Brush School District	2009-2010
	Summit School District	2008-2009
	Compass Montessori Charter SFA	2009-2010
	Haxtun School District	2010-2011
	Fremont School District	2010-2011
Aramark	Fountain Fort Carson School District	2007-2008
Revolution Foods	CO-Charter School Institute	2009-2010
	Odyssey Charter School Food Authority	2010-2011
Sodexo	Academy School District	2010-2011
	Rocky Ford School District	2010-2011
	Johnstown Milliken School District	2010-2011
	East Otero School District	2009-2010

Food Buying Co-Operatives in Colorado

The five purchasing co-ops listed here encompass many districts, large and small, across the state of Colorado. Co-ops appear to be a growing trend in Colorado and they are becoming a common way for schools to purchase food. Known co-ops include:

- CC Star (this is the only one co-op that includes commodity ordering)
- Rockies Purchasing Service (with multiple districts and growing annually; previous co-ops such as Northern & Southern collapsed into a local co-op using Summa Group Purchasing Organization contracts)
- Adams-Arapahoe Co-op

Highlight on Charter Schools: The Charter Choice & Charter School Institute SFA Models

Charter Choice

Starting in the fall of 2009, charter schools could “opt out” of working with their school district as their SFA. According to 2009 legislation that created this option, up to four charter schools can operate as their own SFA until 2011, when the programs will be evaluated and the option may become available to more charters. The legislation stipulated that those four charter schools can also operate as the SFA for other charter schools.

Since the vast majority of charter schools lack kitchen and cooking facilities, prior to this legislation many charter schools either worked with catering companies or their district but felt their unique needs were not being met. This led advocates to initiate the 2009 legislation.

One of the four charter schools opting to be their own SFA in the fall of 2009 was Flagstaff Academy in Longmont, CO, and began with contracts to act as the SFA with 16 other charter schools. Charter Choice emerged at the same time to support this effort by handling all Free & Reduced Price meal applications for all schools and conducting site visits to monitor and provide feedback (not enforce) on charters' counting and claiming systems for reimbursable USDA meals, and food safety issues.

As of October 2010, Charter Choice is serving 13 different charters in 4 different districts around metro Denver. This year, Odyssey Charter is the SFA, as contracts are set annually.

While charter schools have a lot of choice -- each individual charter school can choose their own vendor through vended agreements/RFPs that are let out by the Charter SFA and each school offers different meal options (some offer breakfast and lunch, some just lunch) -- all 15 charters currently vend with Revolution Foods of Denver (www.revfoods.com), who does all of the food procurement and catering. In addition to Odyssey, other charters that currently operate as their own SFAs (but do not contract with other charters) include Compass Montessori in Golden/Westminster.

[The Colorado Charter School Institute](#)

The Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) is an SFA which has the ability to provide each charter school authorized under the Institute (and any outside schools interested in having The Charter School Institute as their SFA) options of procuring food service operations that meets the needs of each individual school. For example, the CSI SFA has two schools (Pinnacle Middle and Elementary and Pinnacle High) which have self-operational kitchens. CSI also has two schools that issued RFPs and Revolution Foods was awarded both of their contracts. One school is in their first contract year (Early College of Arvada) and the other in their second contract year (High Point Academy). The remaining schools have chosen to have a neighboring district provide them with food services. There are three different scenarios for the district provided services: All CSI schools participating in the Child Nutrition program in Colorado Springs utilize District 11 for their food services, and all have kitchens which are staffed with D11 employees to provide fresh, hot cooked meals on-site. A school in Fort Collins utilizes Poudre school district, and has a school employee serving meals like a cafeteria setting. Lastly, we have a school that utilizes Jefferson County Food Services and the food is pre-packed at the preparation kitchen in JeffCo and transported to the school before lunchtime. Each school at CSI has an individual contract/agreement so each school can operate in an autonomous fashion.

[Future Trends](#)

It is thus far hard to tell if these will be growing trends the state. This options provided by CSI and Charter Choice offer a good deal of flexibility to charters – they can make their own decisions as to what vendor provides them with what they need and they can opt out of their district at any time of the year and join the charter SFA (given that they do not have an existing contract with the district or someone else). However, with more and more districts all over the state emphasizing scratch cooking, participating in culinary boot camps, embracing concepts such as farm to school and more school food improvements, charters may opt to return to their district, which some are doing. The trend has not yet been established and the because there is legislative potential to expand those charter schools allowed to opt out of their district to more than 4 contracts in 2011, the next year will be telling.

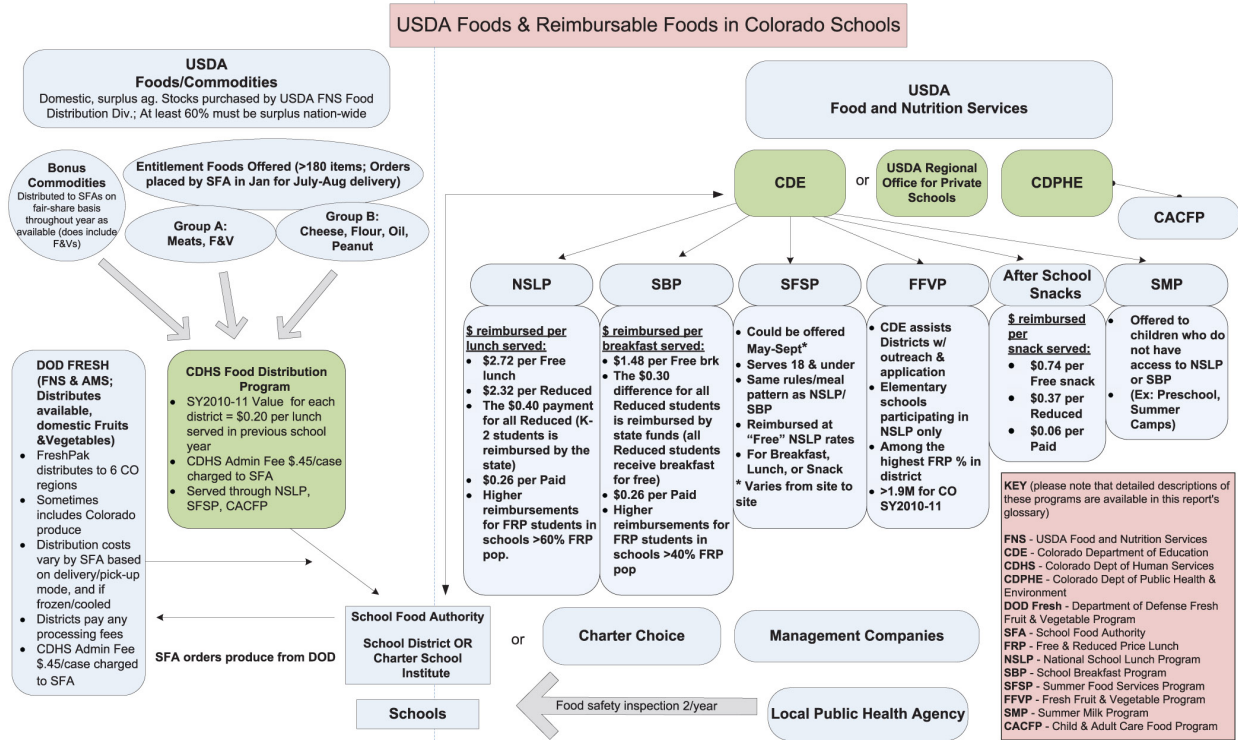
What Agencies are Involved in School Food?

Information Included Here: As [Figure 1](#), below, demonstrates, in addition to the role of the USDA at the federal level, multiple state agencies are involved with funding, distributing, and regulating school food and school food services. To some degree, the Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, as well as the Colorado Department of Agriculture play some role in school food. For a detailed look at these agencies' roles, please visit here to review a table that describes [The Role of State Agencies Involved in School Food](#).

The work of these agencies govern, or are governed by, a plethora of rules and regulations as well. There is a good deal of state-level guidance that impacts school food procurement, specifying everything from nutritional requirements to vending machine options to encouraging Colorado-grown products. For a comprehensive list of Colorado rules, policies, and regulations regarding school food procurement with titles, summaries, and links included, please review the [Table of Relevant State Policies, Rules and Regulations](#).

Why It Matters: The maze of federal and state agencies can be challenging for school food advocates to maneuver and it can be overwhelming to understand all of the players involved. Understanding the very basics – which is all we provide here – of what agencies are primarily responsible for what oversight and where to go to learn more, is essential. The tables and graphics referred to in this section direct interested parties to where they can find even more information -- whether it be about food safety, the commodities program, or school meal reimbursements. Understanding the system may help stakeholders better understand where to support changes in that system or particular agency, if needed.

Figure 1: USDA Foods and Reimbursable Foods in Colorado Schools



What is Served in School Meals?

Information Included Here: This section includes basic information on the types of foods school districts are required and allowed to serve their students. With the outcomes of 2010 Child Nutrition Reauthorization still unclear (see Section III blow), the nutrition standards for Colorado schools are fairly straightforward.

All Colorado school meals should meet the Dietary Guidelines of America. Although districts are not monitored for this on an annual basis, given that the reimbursement system, distribution, and most food service contracts are established to work within the DGA, it is likely that they all do. Through the School Meal Initiative, School Food Authorities are reviewed every 5 years. The reviews include guidance and technical assistance, but do not carry fiscal sanctions.

How schools do menu planning also determines what their meals may look like and contain. School districts can decide to do Food-Based Menu Planning (FBMP)² or Nutrient Standards Menu Planning (NSMP)³. In Colorado, 42 School Food Authorities (representing 789 schools) use NSMP while

² **Food-Based Menu Planning:** Under the Traditional Food-Based Menu Planning Approach, schools must comply with specific component and quantity requirements by offering five food items from four food components. These components are: meat/meat alternate, vegetables and/or fruits, grains/breads, and milk. Minimum portion sizes are established by ages and grade groups.

³ **Nutrient-Based Menu Planning:** Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (sometimes called "NuMenus") is a computer based menu planning system that uses approved computer software to analyze the specific nutrient content of menu items automatically while menus are being planned. It is designed to assist menu planners in choosing food items that create nutritious meals and meet the nutrient standards.

137 SFAs (representing 809 schools) use FBMP and 6 SFAs (representing 28 schools) used Enhanced FBMP. In general, the larger school districts opt for FBMP. It is anticipated that all SFAs currently using NSMP will be required to switch to FBMP with the pending revised nutritional standards from the USDA.

For Food-based (FBMP) planning, the federal government requires that school meals be comprised of the following food groups and related quantities at a **minimum** – with most school districts offering additional choices and variety:

- 2 oz. of Meat/Meat Alternate
- ¾ cup Vegetable/Fruit (2 servings required)
- 1 oz. of Grains/Bread
- 8 oz. of Milk

Actual meals served must include at least the 5 different food items listed above – 2 items coming from Vegetable/Fruit. All schools in Colorado offer fruits and vegetables (canned including sauces, or frozen or fresh).

In high schools and other schools that provide “offer versus serve”, students are not required to select all of the offered food items. Students are allowed to decline 2 of the items, requiring that only 3 food items be selected. For example, students can refuse their milk and their vegetable, and chose only meat, grains, and fruit. Also, some prepared foods count as more than one food item like pepperoni pizza, which counts as a bread item (the crust), a vegetable item (the tomato sauce) and a meat item (the pepperoni). In elementary and middle schools that do not “offer versus serve”, students would be required to take all meal components.

It is important to note that as of this writing new nutritional standards proposed by the USDA are under review and significant changes are anticipated. For an example of how elementary schools meals might look different under the current and proposed standards, please go here:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/cnr_chart.pdf

Each district, their menu planning and meal programs, are reviewed every 5 years by CDE Nutrition Unit staff. CDE Nutrition Unit staff also provide extensive technical assistance and training around the state on menu planning. For more details see CDE’s Traditional Food Based Menu Planning System guidance: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/download/pdf/SEC12TR.pdf> , while keeping in mind that this will be amended in the near future with the emergence of new meal guidelines from the USDA.

Why It Matters: As the above meal guidelines demonstrate, there is a good deal of flexibility for school districts in what they can offer to students. Flexibility and local ownership are important qualities, when districts are provided with adequate tools and resources and an appropriate target or measure to aim for. Without a “higher bar” set by the federal government as well as increasing financial and other resources to arm districts to optimize healthy food options, the system will continue to be geared in a way that allows school meal options that may not meet current scientific research and guidance. There are highly publicized examples of the widely divergent types of meals that could meet school food meal guidelines – a meal could constitute a carton of milk offered with roasted chicken with a fresh vegetable and whole wheat roll, or a hamburger on a 2-oz bun with lettuce and tomato, or french fries with pepperoni pizza or a plate of nachos.

Because of this flexibility, the types of foods provided and the manner in which they are presented can vary considerably from district to district, with the offerings of fruits and vegetables varying considerably in some cases. The sampling of menus from across the state linked to below showcase some of the

Overview of School Food Procurement in Colorado March 2011 Page 9

variety. Follow the links to see monthly menus from various districts across the state to get details on what schools are serving in 2010. Most menus in larger districts are posted on their food or nutrition services website, so many more could be explored. Those listed here only represent a few random selections and are not meant to showcase “best” practices.

For a school food menu from a district that emphasizes fresh produce and less processed ingredients, see these Boulder Valley School District menus.

[BVSD Elementary School Menu](#)

[BVSD Middle School Menu](#)

For more information, visit the BVSD Nutrition Services website at <http://www.bvsvd.org/food/Pages/default.aspx> or contact Nutrition Services Director Ann Cooper at 720-561-6131, ann.cooper@bvsvd.org.

For a school food menu from a district working with a food management company, see this Summit County School District menu.

[Summit County Menu](#)

For more information, visit the Summit School District Food & Nutrition Services website at <http://www.summit.k12.co.us/200010611375650/site/default.asp> or contact Food & Nutrition Services Director Michael Burgess at 970-368-1011, mburgess@summit.k12.co.us.

For school food menus from some districts that emphasize local food, see the Colorado Springs and Durango School District menus.

[Colorado Springs School District Menu](#)

[Durango School District Menu](#)

For more information about Food and Nutrition Services at the Colorado Springs School District 11, visit the Colorado Springs School District’s Food and Nutrition services website at <http://www.d11.org/fns/> or contact Food & Nutrition Services Director Rick Hughes at 719-520-2924, hugherh@d11.org.

For more information about the Durango School District, visit the Durango School District Student Nutrition website at <http://nutrition.durangoschools.org/> or contact Supervisor of Student Nutrition Krista Garand at kgarand@durango.k12.co.us, 970-247-5411 x 1436.

For a school food menu from a district moving to scratch cooking with raw ingredients, see this Denver Public School District menu.

[Denver Public School District Menu](#)

For more information, visit the Denver Public School District’s Food and Nutrition Services website at <http://foodservices.dpsk12.org/index.html> or contact Food and Nutrition Services Executive Director Leo Lesh at 720-423-5609, Leo_Lesh@dpsk12.org.

Where Does School Food Come From?

Information Included Here: The primary two avenues for school food are: 1) revenue of the SFA from meals sold as part USDA-reimbursable National School Lunch (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), or Summer Food Service Program (SFSP); and 2) USDA Foods, otherwise known as Entitlement Foods, or commodity foods, offered to SFAs participating in the NSLP. Also, see again Figure 1 (above): USDA Foods and Reimbursable Foods in Colorado for more details and definitions. For a useful glossary of school procurement, distribution, and related terms, go here to review the [Glossary of School Procurement Terms](#).

Why It Matters: This section includes a great deal of information about the commodities program. While commodity food orders may not be the primary target for some advocates for increasing projects

such as farm to school or fresh produce, how the program is operated at the federal, state, and district level plays a role in what districts provide their students. For example the commodities program may allow some districts to secure a good deal of their protein items (meats and cheeses) in a cost-effective way, therefore allowing those districts to allocate more resources to purchasing fresh produce.

SFA Direct Purchases

How Districts Purchase

Basically, there are federal and local regulations on how SFAs (just like any other entity using federal funds) can purchase, though local rules can only be stricter than federal guidelines, not looser. In any case and any type of purchasing, there must be free and open competition. There are two purchasing methods available to SFAs; the informal procurement method and the formal procurement method. The informal procurement method is formally known as the small purchase or simplified acquisition threshold. The small purchase method is a relatively simple and informal procurement method that is appropriate for a procurement of goods and services of a certain amount. Unlike the formal procurement methods which require public advertisement, when using an informal method an SFA may directly contact potential competitive sources. Currently the federal small purchase threshold is \$100,000. The small purchase threshold determines whether to use the informal or formal procurement method. It is important to note that though the federal threshold is \$100,000, states and school districts can set their own thresholds, and in Colorado, typically do. Districts are required to abide by the lowest threshold, whether it be the federal, state, or district regulation, with the district threshold typically being the lowest – for example, some times as low as \$25,000. Small purchasing thresholds can be helpful when purchasing locally with individual producers though the process must still be open and competitive. Using this method of purchase is simpler and could make local procurement and direct purchasing more accessible – possibly making it easier for SFA's to purchase large amounts directly from local producers.

If the value of an SFA's procurement meets or exceeds the applicable federal, state, or local threshold for small purchases, the SFA must use the formal, more rigorous method of procurement. This is referred to as a formal procurement method. The two formal procurement methods available are Competitive Sealed Bidding, commonly referred to as sealed bidding, and Competitive Proposals. The competitive sealed bids is a method of procurement in which sealed bids are publicly solicited (i.e. through an invitation for bid, IFB) resulting in the award of a firm-fixed price contract, fixed price contract with economic price adjustment or fixed price contract with prospective price redetermination, to the responsible bidder whose bid is responsive to the invitation for bid IFB, conforms with all the material terms and conditions of the invitation for bids, and is lowest in price. A competitive proposal, or a request for proposal (RFP), is a method of procurement whereby a technical proposal is solicited that explains how the prospective contractor will meet the objectives of the solicitation and a cost element that identifies the costs to accomplish the technical proposal.

Most Common Foods Purchased

Due to the significant differences between districts in terms of purchasing, there is no known list of the most commonly purchased foods across all districts. However, some recent state-wide surveys and some examination of bids put forth by some of Colorado's larger districts can provide a sense of what foods are typically purchased in large quantities.

In 2006, the Colorado Institute of Public Policy surveyed all food service directors in Colorado (with over 100 respondents) and compiled the top five *fresh* fruit and vegetable purchases made in the last year:

- **#1 Apples**

- #2 Lettuce
- #3 Oranges
- #4 Carrots
- #5 Bananas

A 2010 review of Northern Colorado school districts’ produce bids revealed the most common produce items that could be purchased *from Colorado*:

- Pears
- Broccoli
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Romaine
- Apples
- Potatoes

How Foods are Served

A June 2010 survey (n=70 respondents) of all food service directors by Colorado Farm to School also asked about how fruits and vegetables are served in schools. The results show that while practically all districts do provide fresh produce, they also typically serve frozen and canned produce as well:

Types of Produce Served by Districts:	Fruits	Vegetables
Frozen	86.3%	92.2%
Fresh	98.0%	98.0%
Canned	96.1%	98.0%
Dried	60.8%	51.0%

Food Growers, Bakeries, Manufacturers, and Distributors

Food served in Colorado schools comes from far and wide and is sourced from many different national, state, and local distributors. For a sampling that demonstrates the diversity in product, size, and location of Colorado school food distributors, please review the results, below, of distributors used throughout the state to provide produce as well as other food items. This information is not comprehensive and represents only the responses collected through the Colorado Farm to School June 2010 survey all of all food service directors around the state (70 districts from all around the state responded to the survey).

Produce Distributors:

Andrews	Food Bank of the Rockies	Valley Meat
Callaway	(Commodities distributor)	Wal-Mart
DOD Fresh	Roma Food	Federal Fruit and Produce
FreshPoint (Sysco)	Sam's Club	Fresh Express
US Foods	Super Foods	Fresh Guys
Shamrock	Thompson Company	FreshPak

Red Hat Produce
Cash-Wa (commodities distributor)

Local Farms, Markets & Farmers:

Full Circle Farms	Wacky Apple	Telck Hillside Orchard
Local Roots	Mattics Orchard	Colon Orchards
Wray Supers	Mrs Condi 's Salad Co	Local Grocers
Zanios/LaBatt (New Mexico)	Palmgren Farms	Local Meat Locker
Aspen Produce	Fossil Creek Farms	Local ground beef supplier
Bausermans Farm Market	Grant Family Farms	Other Individuals
Wise Acres Farms	Growers Organic	
Arkansas Valley Organic	Ranch Foods Direct	

School Food Sources– Non-Produce:

US Foods	JTM	Ranch Foods Direct
Shamrock	Leprino Foods	Rudy's Bakery
Bimbo	Little Caesar's Pizza	Sinton Dairy
Bernard Foods	Meadow Gold Dairy	Robinson's Dairy
Crystal River Meats	McKee Food	Skeffs Food Market
Dawn Foods	Noble Foods/Sysco	Spunkmeyer
Domino's Pizza	Pepsi	Stillman
Earthgrains/Sara Lee	Coke	Strang ranch
Front Range	Premier Vending	United (Commodities)
Grand Valley Foods	Blackjack Pizza	
Intermountain	Rainbow	

Commodities Program⁴

In Colorado, on average in SY2009-10, commodities represented approximately 8% of total food cost. This does vary across districts, however, and has been as high as 20% for some districts. Commodity benefits are calculated from NSLP participation, but any commodity foods received can be used in lunches, summer food, breakfast, catering, and a la carte foods. However, commodity foods are used differently across districts. For example, several summer food programs opt not to receive commodities even though they are eligible. In 2010, 26 programs or SFAs were eligible to receive commodities but only 12 programs took their allocations because for most programs it was not cost effective to drive and pick up what was perhaps only one case of food they were eligible to receive. The Summer Food Service Program commodity funding for summer 2010 was only \$10,771.00. For more information on the commodities program in Colorado, see **Table 2** on the following page as well as several case studies (see links to several case studies, under "The Face of Commodities", below) on how the program operates across Colorado.

The Colorado Department of Human Services Food Distribution Program is responsible for administration and compliance for distribution only. To find out the nutritional information for each specific commodity visit the following website and click on the fact sheet link for each commodity: http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/schfacts/allfacts_rpts_bycode_all.htm

⁴ All data included in this section was provided by the Colorado Department of Human Services Food Distribution Program

While the school districts use the traditional entitlement-based commodities program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) participate in cash in lieu of commodities (CLOC). USDA FNS's Food Distribution Division distributes commodities to ensure that children and adults in approved day care centers receive nutritious meals and snacks. Institutions have the option of receiving cash in lieu of commodities for the CACFP, and most now do so. Less than 20 percent of child care centers now request commodities. For CLOC in schools, see here: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/ppt-slides/whitepaper08-29-07.pdf> (page 6). While this program is no longer widely used in schools in Colorado, it is important to note that the Weld 6 School Districts participates in CLOC and is very happy with the program, and other large districts are interested in such a program.

Commodities: Ordering Timelines

SFA's follow a strict schedule for ordering commodities. Commodity orders must be submitted at the end of January during the previous school year. This means that commodity food items for school year 2011-2012 must be ordered in January of 2011⁵. Even before orders are submitted, SFA's must present their bids for processed items to manufacturers in November in order to secure the bids in time to submit their commodity order by the end of January. Commodity orders that are delivered by state contracted warehouses are received at districts on a monthly basis beginning in July or August and typically ending by April. DoD Fresh Produce is delivered on a weekly or monthly basis depending on the size of the school, their location and their budget. Some larger districts with their own warehouses can take direct delivery of commodities and do not need to use the state warehouse, which means a cost saving for these larger districts as they still pay state administrative fees but can avoid other distribution fees.

Commodities: Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Out of 232 eligible entities in 2010, 44 School Districts are participating in the DoD program to bring fresh produce into schools and other institutions. In Colorado, DoD fresh fruits and vegetables used to be allocated on a first come first serve basis until last year. However, since Colorado schools have historically never used the full DoD Fresh produce entitlement for the state, the system is changing. For SY 2012, The Food Distribution Program at Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) will collect all requests, submit the total number to the USDA, and then award Colorado's DoD Fresh Produce entitlement based on Colorado's fair share amount, and in turn, districts will be allocated DoD Fresh Produce Entitlement dollars.

Moving forward, it actually appears that there may be increased participation in the program. For the current school year, more agencies were interested in participating but because some districts were not aware of this opportunity and the timeline, they did not meet the deadline requirements to set aside a portion of their entitlement for the program -- as DoD Fresh Produce Program elections must be completed before the annual ordering begins. CDHS anticipates participation to be even higher for the coming school year as the DoD Fresh Produce cap for Colorado is expected to be even higher. For example, Colorado received \$1.468 million in DoD Fresh Produce for SY 2009, \$1.537 for SY 2010 (last school year) and \$1.67 for SY 2011 (this school year). Additionally, districts around the state thus far seem more pleased than in years past with the new DoD Produce distributor, FreshPak.

This increase in participation may not include charter schools however. Charters are unlikely to receive their funds if they do not have the kitchen facilities necessary to receive DoD fresh produce. A recent interpretation of "processed" determined that a Food Service Management Company (or catering entity) cannot receive the produce on behalf of the school. If an orange was cut or diced, for example,

⁵ In previous years, some commodity orders like cheese, fruits, and vegetables were required to be ordered 18 months in advance. However, due to increasing efficiencies in the system this is no longer the case.

this is considered “further processing”. Therefore, Charters must forego their entitlement if they do not have the proper facilities to wash, clean, and prepare the DoD produce.

Commodities: What Is Offered to School Districts in Colorado?

In theory, the entire suite of USDA Food items should be available to any district to order from. It is challenging to understand exactly what is offered – the process is more complicated than ordering off of a simple menu. School districts select what they want to order based from a USDA product catalog provided by CDHS. However, there are some limitations as to what districts can order from the catalogue. The size of orders greatly impacts what is actually available to districts. Full truckloads must be purchased of any item, so if only a few schools are interested in a certain commodity, unless there are enough orders to total a full truck or close to a full truck the item will not be purchased.

Typically, deliveries are made to districts once a month, August through April, though many smaller districts report receiving deliveries on a quarterly basis. Most districts do not have a May delivery because they are winding down for summer and do not want to or are not able to store over the summer.

Commodities: What Are Districts Ordering?

Districts can order raw or bulk “brown box” items from the Colorado Department of Human Services Food Distribution Program, and this information is summarized in the table below. This information is not available, however, for processed items, as school districts can order directly from food manufacturers for what they would like for a finished product. Additionally, for the DOD program, funds are simply set aside and districts can order what they choose from approved vendors.

CDHS also anticipates the ordering trends to change significantly in 2011 as agencies have expressed considerable interest in scratch cooking and have unofficially reported interested in ordering different products this year.

Table 2: The Commodity Food Order for all Colorado Districts for School Year 2010-2011

ORDERS BY THE POUND (lbs)	
Food Item	Quantity in Pounds (lbs)
Chicken, Chilled	2,685,898
Potatoes, Bulk	840,000
Turkey (bulk, roast, hams, breasts, taco filling)	755,494
Skim Mozzarella, Shredded, Unfrozen	463,432
Chicken (fajita, diced)	302,040
Flour, Bakers Hard Wheat	225,000
Pork Roast	117,160
Whole Eggs	105,414
Vegetable Oil, Bulk	96,000
Beef, Boneless	68,000
Chicken, Cut Up	39,160
Ham, Frozen	38,560
Beef Bulk, Coarse	15,386
Chicken (fajita, diced, legs, etc)	1,841
ORDERS BY THE BARREL	

Food Item	Quantity (in Barrels- to be processed)
Cheese	1335
ORDERS BY THE VAT/DRUM	
Food Item	Quantity (in Vats/Drums)
Peanut Butter Vat	227
ORDERS BY THE CASE	
Food Item	Quantity in Cases
Potatoes (rounds, wedges, oven)	847,786
Cheese (shredded, frozen, cheddar, mozzarella, etc)	36,804
Peaches (cup, diced, sliced)	17,695
Tomatoes (paste, diced, sauce)	9,801
Fruit Mix	9,649
Beef (patties, crumbles)	7,503
Pears	7,231
Green Beans	7,177
Applesauce	6,907
Beans, Canned (refried, kidney, pinto)	6,788
Corn, Liquid	5,363
Flour, Unbleached	5,327
Strawberries, Cup	4,172
Corn, Frozen	3,958
Peas, Frozen	3,927
Salsa	3,640
Carrots	3,509
Green Beans, Frozen	2,621
Strawberries, Frozen	2,605
Corn on the Cob	2,589
Pancakes	2,026
Orange Juice, Single	1,902
Apple Slices	1,756
Tortillas	1,480
Eggs	1,330
Flour, Whole Wheat	1,069
Ham, Cubbed	980
Cranberry Sauce	864
Vegetable Oil, Bulk	776

Case Studies: The Face of Commodities in Various Colorado School Districts

To better understand how school food works at the district level, read on through the case studies presented here.

To learn about the cost breakdown of commodity foods for a mid-sized Colorado school, the timeline for orders and deliveries, and the challenges presented by the commodity food system: [Case Study 1- Accounting for All Costs of Commodity Foods.](#)

To learn more about the DOD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and the ins-and-outs of on-site processing of commodity food items: [Case Study 2- To Process or Not to Process Commodities?](#)

For insight into the cost of commodities for small districts and the pros and cons of working with a co-op for storage and delivery: [Case Study 3- The Face of Commodities for Small Districts.](#)

For school food options available to large school districts including unique delivery schedules and pros and cons of the DoD Fruit and Vegetable program: [Case Study 4- Weighing the Options for School Food in a Large District.](#)

For information about a school district processing their school food commodities off-site through a manufacturer: [Case Study 5- Off-Site Processing and the Future of School Food.](#)

To
cost

[Commodities Glossary](#)

Entitlement: Entitlements are funds allocated to school districts by the USDA and used by schools to purchase commodity foods for lunch, breakfast, catering, and a la carte foods. Entitlements are determined by the number of lunch meals served in the previous year (year previous to ordering). The total dollar amount for a district's entitlement in SY2011-2012 is \$0.2025 per lunch; funds which are given to the district to purchase USDA commodity food items only.

Group A: Commodity food products including beans, meat, fish, poultry, egg, pork, fruits, and vegetables.

Group B: Commodity food products including cheese, grains, cereals, and oils.

Bonus Commodities: Bonus foods are considered those over and above entitlement foods. They are offered periodically, but only as they become available through agricultural surpluses. They are then offered to States on a fair-share basis, and do not count against a State's regular entitlement dollars.

Bonus Summary Report: After the state provides each district with their entitlement, recalculations may show remaining entitlement funds which are then provided to schools in addition to their original entitlement. This is called a bonus summary report.

learn more about the potential saving measures using bonus

commodities, on-site processing, and on-site storage: [Case Study 6- Making the Most of School Food Commodities.](#)

What Do School Meal Participation Rates Look Like in Colorado?

Information Included Here: Tables 3 and 4 contain participation rates for all students in various meal programs. Colorado schools serve 64.8 million lunches and 18.0 million breakfasts every year. Colorado K-12 public school membership was 843,316 in October 2010 (up slightly from 832,368 in October of 2009). For detailed district information please see pupil membership statistics here: http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stats.htm.

Why It Matters:

Since food and nutrition services also need to be self-sustaining financially, it is important to understand and track full-priced participation rates in the school's meal programs. For those advocates interested in improving school meal quality, equal emphasis needs to be placed on strategies and programs that simultaneously get more kids to the table in the first place, balanced with a strong and realistic understanding of how long it can take to increase (or simply sustain) participation rates in school meals when changes are introduced to the cafeterias.

Table 3: Participation Rates in School Breakfast

School Breakfast Program	Source: Colorado Department of Education Nutrition Unit from point-in-time October 2010 Average Daily Participation Rates
Number of Participating Schools in Colorado	1,385 (out of 1,748 schools in 178 Districts)
Number of Students in Colorado	843,316
Average number of breakfasts served	111,061 Average Daily Participation
Percentage of children eating school breakfast	13.20% (up from 12.20% in SY2009)

Table 4: Participation Rates in School Lunch

National School Lunch Program	Source: Colorado Department of Education Nutrition Unit from point-in-time October 2010 Average Daily Participation Rates
Number of Participating Schools in Colorado	1,640 (out of 1,748 schools in 178 Districts)
Number of Students in Colorado	843,316
Average number of lunches served (ADP)	384,504
Percentage of children eating school lunch	45.5% (Colorado ADP)

What are Participation Rates in Free and Reduced Price Meal Programs?

Information Included Here: Eligibility in Free and Reduced Price Meal programs is determined by total gross household income of the student’s family. According to guidelines released by the Food and Nutrition Service of the USDA, to be eligible for Free meals, the household must report an income of 130% or less of the Federal Poverty Level (which is adjusted by household size) and to be eligible for Reduced-price meals the household must report an income of 185% or less of the Federal Poverty Level. In 2008 (the last year we have reliable, year-long data from the American Community Survey) of 818,443 students, 384,927 were eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals in Colorado, meaning their families reported an income below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. In 2008 therefore, approximately 47% of the state-wide student population were FRP eligible, though this number likely varies throughout the year.

The total number of students approved, state-wide, for Free meals in 2010 is 279,275 (33% of students), based on point-in-time data from the Colorado Department of Education Nutrition Unit, October 2010. The number of students approved for Reduced-price meals in is 57,168 (7% of students). This represents an increase in participation rates of 7.9% from October 2009 to October 2010. It is important to note that this may not represent all students actually eligible for participation in these programs, but rather represents those approved for participation in the programs.

In Colorado, Reduced-price lunches cost the student \$0.40 and breakfasts are free for all Reduced-price eligible students due to recent Colorado legislation eliminating the “reduced” category for breakfasts.

Why It Matters: In addition to signifying how well we are doing as a state in providing consistent, healthy meals to students who need it most, participation rates in both meal programs and in Free and Reduce Priced Meal programs have significant financial impacts on school districts. The percentage of FRP-eligible students in a district, and that district’s track record in getting them fed, determine what grant and funding opportunities districts might be eligible and competitive for.

Who Spends What on School Food in Colorado?

Information Included Here: Table 5 includes some basic financial data about who – from students to the state to the federal government - spends what on school food. The information presented following the table includes data about districts that are financially self-sufficient or are supported by their district’s General Fund.

Why It Matters: The information here provides only annual averages, but demonstrates how much the school food program is subsidized by state and federal governments as well as individual districts. The

average costs of school meals demonstrates how even students who pay “full price” for their meals can benefit from participating in their school food services – especially with more and more districts moving to fresh and scratch cooking in SY2010-11, parents would be hard-pressed to provide a meal with the same nutritional value for the same price. This kind of information is critical to share with parents in particular, as high participation rates in school meal programs are essential for districts to maintain the ability to provide healthier foods for their students and maintain eligibility for federal programs and other resources. Additionally, there may be financial details of a district and the school food program that are unknown to the food service director themselves. Working with districts across the state to assess the finances of their program as well as the entire district could help identify potential means for increasing school food staff training and equipment.

Table 5⁶ : Cost of the School Food Program

Cost of School Food Program	
Total Spent by Entire State	\$248,200,000 (SY2009-10)
Average cost to provide lunch	U/K
Average cost to provide breakfast	U/K
Amount charged students for lunch (Statewide Average for SY2010-11)	Elementary: \$1.76 Middle School: \$2.06 High School: \$2.09
Amount charged students for breakfast (Statewide Average for SY2010-11)	Elementary: \$1.00 Middle School \$1.10 High School \$1.11
Who pays for the programs (For all CDE – administered programs – NSLP, SBP, SFSP)	Federal: >\$139,700,000 State: > \$4,500,000
How is the money spent (supplies, other, food cost, labor)	U/K

CDE Nutrition Unit 2010

What do District and Food Services Finances Look Like?⁷

Listed below are the significant financial facts for school food services in Colorado. Use the following information to learn more about school food General Funds and school food finances across the state. Federal and state regulations require food service operations to be self sufficient annually. When necessary, however, some districts are allowed to transfer general (or other) funds to food service to eliminate any deficit that may have occurred from operating the program. The causes of these deficits vary from program to program and are not “tracked” by the CDE.

What Food Service Funds Can Be Used For: 7 CFR 210.14(a) requires that Food Service funds cannot be used to purchase land or buildings or to construct buildings. Additionally USDA memo SP 23-2009 specifically prohibits food service funds to be used for kitchen renovations. When new facilities are

⁶ December 2010, Colorado Department of Education Nutrition Unit; Colorado Fast Facts from Colorado School Nutrition Association, 2010-11

⁷ All data included in this section was collected by the Colorado Department of Education Nutrition Unit from the 2009-10 school year and reported in November 2010.

constructed the only items that food service funds can be used for is the purchase and installation of food service equipment. For more information on guidance regarding equipment purchasing see page two of this report: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/download/pdf/SEC6_09_.pdf.

Programs not supported by the General Fund: 52 districts either perform no General Fund Transfer or transfer funds from the Food Service Fund to the General Fund. The transfer from the Food Service Fund to the General Fund is called indirect cost recovery. The funds are limited, but the effect is to reduce funds in the Food Service Fund, which could reduce a food service program’s ability to upgrade equipment or improve food items because food services would have to pay the district for "operating overhead".

Programs supported by General Fund: 127 districts made transfers from the General Fund to the Food Service Fund in FY 08-09. These transfers ranged from \$676 to over \$200,000 depending on the district.

The Role of the Summer Food Service Program

Information about the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is touched upon separately here given that it is managed differently from the breakfast (SBP) and lunch (NSLP) meal programs. While some districts manage all of their own summer food service program meals on-site, in other areas community organizations play a significant role in providing location and management of summer food programs. Given that participation rates in this program are severely low in Colorado, given the role that summer food services programs can play in providing consistent access to healthy foods for families in need, and given the opportunity summer meals can offer school districts in working more with local farmers and ranchers, it is important to provide some basic information about this program in Colorado. **Table 6** below provides the information about this program known to date, as collected by the Food Research & Action Center and reported by Hunger Free Colorado. As of this writing, CDE was still calculating final numbers for participation rates in June, July, and August of 2010 (and participation rates do tend to vary significantly across months). The story below provides some more insight into how the program looks in one district.

Table 6: Participation Rates in Summer Food

Summer Food Service Program	Colorado Department of Education Nutrition Unit (Summer 2010)
SFSP site participation (total meals / number of serving days)	10,584 (July 2010); An increase of 20.3% from 8,798
% of eligible children participating in summer food program	3.4% (July 2010) of NSLP participants who qualify as FRL participated in a July 2010 SFSP
Number of free lunches in SFSP	U/K

Highlight on St Vrain: Using the Summer Food Services Program to Integrate Local Foods

For an example of how one district, St Vrain Valley, has used their Summer Food Services Program to increase partnerships with local producers, read on for an article from July 2010 in the Longmont Times.

A slice of community, *By Victoria A.F. Camron, © 2010 Longmont Times-Call*

http://www.timescall.com/news_story.asp?ID=22837

Publish Date: 7/27/2010

LONGMONT — Pizza featuring cheese from a Denver cheesemaker, made with milk from a Fort Lupton dairy. A salad with romaine lettuce and cherry tomatoes harvested in Wellington. Watermelon grown in Fort Collins. It almost reads like a menu from an oh-so-trendy farm-to-kitchen restaurant, doesn't it?

It's actually what summer school students at Spangler Elementary ate for lunch on Monday.

Pizza is Markissa Lindquist's favorite school lunch, she said. "It's easy to eat. It's not all messy like spaghetti or macaroni and cheese," the 10-year-old said. And it tastes good, she added.

The pizza — prepared by Domino's in Longmont — met the school district's nutrition guidelines because it was made with low-fat mozzarella, low-sodium sauce and a multi-grain crust, said nutrition services director Shelly Allen. The fresh pizza program started in the St. Vrain district, but Domino's is rolling it out nationwide with its Smart Slice program for schools.

"It's really geared toward getting a fresh, healthy product to the kids," said Joe Romano, who owns the Domino's franchises in Longmont, Frederick and Erie that make pizzas for the school district. The three locations employ a total of about 20 people, who make between 200 and 300 pizzas in 60 to 90 minutes during the school year, Romano said. After St. Vrain commissioned Leprino Foods in Denver to make the low-fat cheese, Domino's took on the task of making and delivering the pizzas. Fresh pizza replaced the frozen in 2005, and pizza sales have increased 39 percent, according to Allen.

"Your (hot lunch) participation will always go up on pizza day," Allen said, estimating the increase is between 15 percent and 25 percent.

Ashley Nitzel, 9, said she, too, likes the pizza. When lunch was over, the Spangler students threw away very little pizza, and most of what was tossed was pieces of crust.

The Western Dairy Association and the school district worked together to make a video to show other school districts how to create their own pizza program. Filmed at Erie Middle School, the video won a Heartland Emmy in the instructional category. In part because its partnership with Domino's has worked so well, the St. Vrain Valley School District is working with more partners to provide Colorado-grown food in its lunchrooms.

For August, September and October, Allen committed to buying \$60,000 of local, organic produce, including peaches and apples from the Western Slope, she said. Allen believes that nutrition services supports education by helping the students eat properly so they are ready to learn, and she asks that her department's partners believe that, too. "Each and every person who touched that piece of pizza impacted a child that day," Allen said.

What about Competitive Foods?

This section closes with a note on "competitive foods". Any discussion of school food, and the finances of school food, would be incomplete without an overview of the role competitive foods play in schools. A "competitive" food is any food or beverage available to students that is separate from the district's non-profit, federally-reimbursed food service program, and it provided by a school-approved organizations or outside vendor. This includes food items from an a la carte source such as vending, a la carte lines or kiosks, school stores or snack bars located anywhere on the entire school campus, including the cafeteria and athletic events.

Based on previous studies that document how competitive and a la carte items often replace more nutritionally dense school meals, the Colorado Children’s Campaign published the report, “School Wellness in Colorado: Findings from a Survey of Large School Districts” in September 2010 (http://www.coloradokids.org/file_download/inline/78e364c1-2db4-481f-bb7a-eb5367ac3399) that highlights the significant role competitive foods play in school food and nutrition.

Also, while there currently are no federal or state nutritional standards for snacks or competitive foods (though this will be changing due to the recently passed Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act), Colorado does allow individual districts to set or adopt their own nutritional standards⁸. However, the Children’s Campaign report points out that:

“Only a few of Colorado’s large school districts require nutritional standards for all snacks for all students. Although most of these districts require nutritional standards for some snacks for some of their students, the result of this local control is that some or all students in a vast majority of the state’s large school districts have access to non-nutritious snacks in school.”

For one example of how a district established their own a la cart standards in Colorado, go here: <http://www.d11.org/fns/download/HealthySnackCriteria.pdf>

For some detailed case studies of how other states are changing competitive foods and the effect this is having on the meal program, visit the Center for Science in the Public Interest:

<http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/ImproveSchoolFoods.html>

http://www.cspinet.org/schoolfoodkit/school_foods_kit_part3.pdf

In addition to their nutritional impact, more information is also needed on the financial role of competitive foods. To better understand the role competitive foods play in a district’s financial bottom line as well as their affect on participation rates in the school meal programs, additional information would need to be gathered from districts, including:

- How much money is spent each year on competitive foods by students/staff?
- How does this compare to money spent on school meals in that same year?
- General analysis of how competitive offerings affect the district’s coffers—how much do districts really make and where do proceeds from competitive foods go? Is this information that CDE can collect and document?
- General analysis of what happens when you take them away or apply the same nutritional standards – what affects does this have on the meal program and food services’ financial bottom line?

⁸ Colorado also has regulations that restrict competitive foods in order to promote nutritious foods and protect the financial integrity of the food and nutrition services program. The Code of Colorado Regulations 1 CCR301-3 2202-R-203.00 (see www.sos.state.co.us/CCR) stipulate that competitive foods shall be closed on campus for a period of a ½ hour before and after breakfast and lunch, though this can be waived for beverage vending machines in senior high schools.

III. How are Districts Getting More Fresh Foods into Their Meal Programs?

Given the vast amount of information included throughout this report, it is critical to end with some examples of how districts are managing to increase fresh foods in their programs. Below we take a look at one Northern Colorado school district and some of their recent efforts to increase fresh produce into their schools.

Highlight on Weld 6: Receiving Fresh, Local Food in a Centralized Warehouse

This step-by-step process explains how one Colorado district receives fresh, local produce at a centralized warehouse and how the produce makes its way to all the school cafeterias in the district.

1. The produce is ordered from the farm and the delivery date is set.
2. On the delivery day, the farm trucks arrive at the centralized warehouse.
3. A safety inspection of the fresh produce is conducted by the trained warehouse staff.
4. The produce is unloaded into the warehouse where it is sorted; produce which requires processing is unloaded in the centralized kitchen and produce which does not require processing is set aside (in the cooler if required) for direct delivery.
5. The trained staff at the centralized warehouse processes the produce. Examples of produce items that are processed by the centralized kitchen include: red cabbage (washed and shredded for salad mix), bell peppers (washed and sliced for sandwiches and chili), onions (washed and sliced for sandwiches and chili). Examples of produce items that do not require processing are: apples, pears, peaches, cherry tomatoes and cucumbers—these items require little prep work and can be prepared by each individual site.
6. The fresh produce, both processed and unprocessed, is loaded onto two district-owned trucks and delivered to all schools throughout the district based on their orders for that day. Deliveries are done on a daily basis.
7. All other food deliveries including those from Federal Produce, FreshPak, and US Foods are also received at the centralized warehouse and delivered to schools with the fresh, local produce in the district-owned trucks.

What tools do districts need to have in order to pursue this successful model?

1. The centralized warehouse itself, with a well-equipped kitchen and plenty of cooler and freezer storage.
2. Warehouse staff training for the safety inspections, processing, and delivery expertise.

What are the challenges that districts might come up against when using this centralized kitchen model?

1. Labor challenges. A small warehouse staff must be trained to work efficiently and effectively to process fresh produce for all the schools in the district in a short amount of time.
2. Staff training. Training the warehouse staff takes commitment and willingness from the district to invest in the Farm to School project. Staff training is expensive and time consuming and can be a challenge to developing a centralized warehouse system.
3. Assuring that the produce is still fresh upon arrival to each school. The district first attempted to cut and wash lettuce in the centralized kitchen, but by the time the lettuce arrived at the schools, it was often wilted and spoiled. They learned that the best way to keep the lettuce fresh was to cut and wash it at the individual school cafeterias. This involved training and equipment, but in the end, it solved both the spoiled lettuce problem and the labor challenges by taking a small load off of the centralized kitchen staff.

4. Having the right equipment. The district also had to invest in new kitchen supplies. For instance, all schools needed salad spinners for processing the lettuce on-site.

IV. School Food Efforts & Resources From Across the Country

The Role of Federal Rules & Regulations

Federal regulations play a significantly large role in school food by establishing and continually updating programs such as the National School Lunch Program, specifying nutritional requirements for school food, appropriating entitlement funds, and more. For a comprehensive list of Federal rules, policies, and regulations regarding school food procurement with titles, summaries, and links included, read through [Table of Relevant Federal Polices, Rules and Regulations](#).

Other School Food Mapping Efforts

For a school food supply chain map, provided by Saint Paul Public Schools, which demonstrates the distribution process for various producers: [Saint Paul Public School Supply Chain Map for Produce](#).

To view a distribution model developed by UC Davis which maps the farm to institution process, including farmers, shippers, distributors, and buyers: [Farm to Institution Distribution Models](#).

Resources from Around the Country

See the summaries below to learn more about school food procurement nation-wide. Each report listed provides further insight into school food procurement, using case studies and examples from around the country and covering subjects ranging from nutritional standards to stakeholder insights. Follow the provided links to access the full reports.

Alderman, Jess, Marlo R. Miura, Jason A. Smith. "Mapping School Food: A Policy Guide." *Public Health Advocacy Institute*. 2007 <http://www.phaionline.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/mapping_schoolfood.pdf>.

"Mapping School Food: A Policy Guide" uses the Potter Box (see the Appendix) to help break down the legal regulations in regards to school food. It helps to identify laws associated with school food and the interests of the stakeholders involved. It can be used to develop policy briefs and to make plans for effective change in school food policy. Four case studies from four different states are used to highlight state policies, the interests of stakeholders, and the interplay between state and federal policies. It is a policy guide which provides facts, values and tools, rules, and loyalties and interests that impact school food and advises readers on how stakeholders can work within this structure to make change.

Boyle, Maria et al. "The Federal Child Nutrition Commodity Program: A Report on Nutritional Quality." *California Food Policy Advocates and Samuels & Associates*. Sept. 2008 <http://www.cfpa.net/School_Food/commodities_full.pdf>.

This report is based upon a study conducted by California Food Policy Advocates which investigated the effects of USDA commodities in school food on child nutrition. The report includes an analysis of the nutritional quality of commodities offered by the USDA and purchased by schools across the nation. The key findings of the report include important statistics about commodities in schools nation-wide and concerns that commodities purchased by schools may be contributing to childhood obesity. Policy recommendations are provided on how to improve the nutrition of USDA commodities. Though this study took place in California, its findings are applicable nation-wide. This report would be useful in making an argument for healthier, whole foods within the commodities program and school food in general.

Mulheron, Joyal, and Kara Vonasek. "Issue Brief: State Strategies to Help Schools Make the Best of Their National School Lunch Program." *NGA Center for Best Practices*. 11, Jan. 2010 <<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/1001SCHOOLLUNCH.PDF>>.

This issue brief discusses the ways in which states can improve the health of children by working with the National School Lunch Program. Three main issues are analyzed; 1. improving the nutritional quality of meal offerings, 2. increasing NSLP enrollment, and 3. making the most of limited NSLP funds. For each issue, state-level strategies are provided for improving the health of children through NSLP. Though this brief is directed at state level policy-makers, it can also be helpful for School Food Authorities and school administrations in understanding the ways in which local policy affects school food and the possibilities for improvement.

“School Food 101: The Cost of School Lunch.” *School Food Focus*. <<http://www.schoolfoodfocus.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/School-Food-101-Cost-of-School-Lunch1.pdf>>.

The purpose of the School Food 101 briefs is to describe school food for a variety of stakeholders, many who are uninformed about the way school food works but who have a growing interest in its future. This particular brief explains the cost breakdown of school food using an example of a large school district in Oregon which purchases local, whole foods but to remain in budget, also purchases commodity chicken. The brief introduces the National School Lunch program and the commodities program through a cost breakdown example of a school lunch. This brief can be used to help parents, teachers, administrators, and community members understand the complexities of purchasing school lunch while also providing insight into how local, whole foods can start to make their way into the system. This brief is geared mostly for large districts and may not apply to smaller districts.

“School Food 101: USDA Commodity Foods in School Lunch.” *School Food Focus*. <<http://www.schoolfoodfocus.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/School-Food-101-USDA-Commodity-Foods-in-School-Lunch-FINAL.pdf>>.

The purpose of the School Food 101 briefs is to describe school food for a variety of stakeholders, many who are uninformed about the way school food works but who have a growing interest in its future. This particular brief explains the ins and outs of the school food USDA commodities program including its history, purpose, and how it works on a day to day basis in districts across the country. The questions addressed in the article are “how does it work?”, “what do schools order?”, and “is it effective?”. This brief can be used to help parents, teachers, administrators, and community members understand the complexities of USDA commodities in school lunch.

A Note on Child Nutrition Reauthorization

As of this writing, S. 3307, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (the Child Nutrition & WIC Reauthorization bill, reauthorized every 5 years) was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on a 264 to 157 vote (The Senate passed the same version of the bill unanimously in August) and was signed into law by President Obama.

This bill carries several significant changes for school food and child nutrition, including:

- Expansion of the Afterschool Meal program
- Elimination of the cap on the number of summer meal sites a nonprofit sponsor may have
- Increase in school meal reimbursement rates by six cents per meal
- Stronger nutrition standards for school meals and preschool meals
- Stricter policies on food provided in vending machines, school stores and more
- Provisions to simplify the process for enrolling in Free and Reduced Price Meals
- Pilot programs for the expansion of farm-to-school programs as well as the use of organic foods through competitive grant programs and increased technical assistance

For a comprehensive summary of each Title of the bill by the Congressional Research Service go here: [Overview of School Food Procurement in Colorado March 2011](#)

<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=s111-3307&tab=summary>

V. List of All Cited Links

Table of Relevant State Polices, Rules, and Regulations
Role of State Agencies Involved in School Food
BVSD Elementary School Menu
BVSD Middle School Menu
Summit County Menu
Colorado Springs School District Menu
Durango School District Menu
Denver Public School District Menu
Glossary of School Procurement Terms
Case Study 1- Accounting for All Costs of Commodity Foods
Case Study 2- To Process or Not To Process Commodities?
Case Study 3- The Face of Commodities for Small Districts
Case Study 4- Weighing the Options for School Food in a Large District
Case Study 5- Off-Site Processing and the Future of School Food
Case Study 6- Making the Most of School Food Commodities
Table of Relevant Federal Polices, Rules and Regulations
Saint Paul Public School Supply Chain Map for Produce
Farm to Institution Distribution Models