

# Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities

INGREDIENTS FOR BUILDING A HOLISTIC SCHOOL MEAL  
PROGRAM IN SPRINGFIELD, MA



JUNE 2020



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“I’d love for the lunches to be the reason our kids come to school every day” - SPS leader*

Young people’s health is fundamental to their ability to learn, grow, and thrive. Yet, in communities across the country families struggle to access healthy food. Springfield Public Schools (SPS) and their partners acknowledge that eating well during the day increases readiness to learn, capacity to engage, and long term cognitive, social, and emotional development. Through the Springfield Culinary and Nutrition Center (CNC) and the Home Grown Springfield (HGS) program, SPS along with its partnerships and networks, have developed and implemented a unique and innovative strategy to address health equity and opportunity by changing school food.

Located in Hampden county, in the Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts, the city of Springfield is the largest urban center in the region, and the third-largest city in the state. A regional cultural, economic, and transportation hub, the majority of Springfield residents, and students in the SPS district, are people of color. Springfield residents, particularly those of color, experience a legacy of structural barriers rooted in systemic racism (e.g., access to economic resources, safe and affordable housing, healthy food, safe outdoors spaces, affordable healthcare, transportation, and political empowerment) which obstruct access to opportunities for achieving full health, economic, and education potential<sup>i</sup> and building whole, healthy communities<sup>ii</sup>.

In Springfield, impacting the health of children and families through an innovative new school meal program is contributing directly to shaping new systems, which are instead rooted in equity, sustainability, and community. SPS hopes that the CNC and the HGS program will cultivate a new geography of opportunity<sup>iii</sup> for Springfield and change the lives of its residents.

Early on, with contracted food service provider Sodexo, SPS established its goal to eliminate student hunger. The district identified objectives around increasing participation in the existing breakfast and lunch programs, as well as expanding its after school snack and dinner programs in order to impact student hunger. Through collaboration with their core partners at the Springfield Food Policy Council (SFPC) and Mercy Medical Center, the district also acknowledged that students learn a lot about food, health, community, and culture by engaging in hands-on learning in school gardens, taste tests, and nutrition activities. Together with their

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

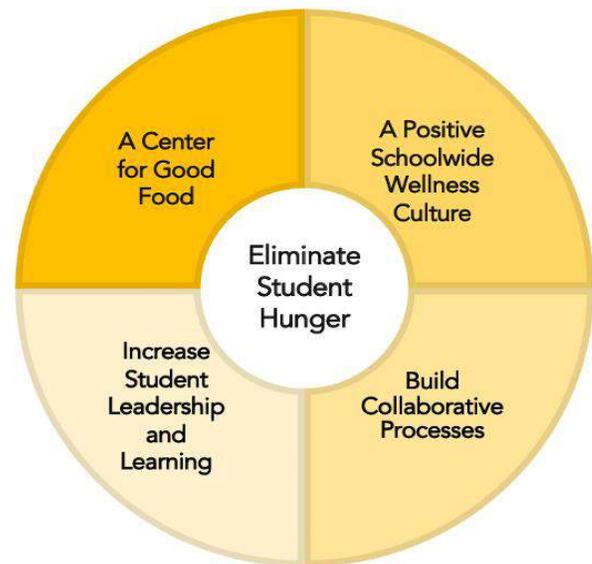
partners, SPS developed a three-pronged approach for reaching their goal: 1) Produce delicious, healthy, scratch cooked meals at its path breaking Culinary and Nutrition Center (CNC), 2) Offer free breakfast and lunch to all students, 3) Offer comprehensive food, nutrition, and garden education.

***Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*** is a “systems change evaluation” and follows the framework established in *Cooking Outside the Box*, a recent school meal evaluation of New York City Public Schools conducted by the Tisch Center for Food, Education, and Policy at Columbia University.<sup>iv</sup> During the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years, we – Catherine Sands and Kristen Whitmore of Fertile Ground – spent a lot of time with SPS and Sodexo staff and partners who were directly engaged in changing menus, developing new systems for fresh local food procurement, testing recipes with students, teaching nutrition and wellness to students, parents, and families. We documented what changed and how change happened, as well as some of the stories that participants conveyed to us. We organized our observations into four elements (or ingredients) of change:

**A CENTER FOR GOOD FOOD** showed us what ingredients, production chain adaptations, new protocols, and relationships were needed to bring healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced, and culturally relevant meals to students.

**A POSITIVE SCHOOL WELLNESS CULTURE** helped us understand the necessary factors for shifting district wellness culture administratively and in day to day classroom and cafeteria culture. Examination of participation rate changes showed us the successes of structural changes like Breakfast in the Classroom, the challenges to affording to purchase locally, and how communication of the changes reached the wider school community.

**INCREASED STUDENT LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP** helped us see how garden and nutrition education, taste tests and events, and daily lunchroom conversations built a buzz around the new food being served in the cafeterias, by following seven FoodCorps members in 11 schools and their efforts to gather anecdotal evidence about student preferences.



## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

**BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS** through facilitation of the CNC Advisory Council, which showed us that when intentional space for partners, staff and advisors is created to share day to day insights and realities, these partnerships grow opportunities for innovation and expansion.

During the 2019-2020 school year, the timeframe in which this evaluation primarily focuses, the world was shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic. A public health crisis that at the time of publication has infected over 3.3 million and taken the lives of over 135,000 people in the United States,<sup>v</sup> the pandemic forced the closure of all Springfield schools on March 12, 2020. Deeply aware that without school meals, many Springfield students may not have access to enough food, SPS, Sodexo, and the SFPC rapidly responded by securing policy changes and innovating an on-the-spot communications plan for 14 grab-and-go style meal pick up sites across the city, where families receive breakfast, lunch, and sometimes dinner, for their school-aged children. Shortly thereafter, the district expanded meal pick-ups to 17 sites, and finally to 19 total sites. As of publication, SPS and Sodexo have served over 1 million meals, free of charge for children in the city.

SPS and Sodexo's response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that decade-long efforts to build relationships have paid off in the ability to swiftly shift focus, designate meal sites, engage state and federal policy makers in broadening protocols, call on partners, and communicate quickly with families about multiple daily and weekend meal availability. The pandemic response demonstrated ability to innovate and act on long term goals that weave together food and health systems and policy changes for community resiliency. A more detailed discussion of how SPS and Sodexo responded to the COVID-19 pandemic is included in the section called *COVID-19 Pandemic Response*.

In ***Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities***, we set out to answer the following questions:

- Is the district serving scratch cooked, healthy, locally sourced, culturally relevant food?
- Are students, families, and the school community engaged in guiding the program?
- Is student participation in the meal program increasing?
- Is the district wellness culture changing?
- Are students more knowledgeable about healthy eating?
- Are students gaining leadership skills and pathways to job?
- How is the Advisory Committee impacting systems and policy change?

We also asked, how is school food a driver of health and racial equity? How is a school meal program a community development strategy? What are the long term impacts of investing in school food, especially in a city made up primarily of low income communities of color? How can a school meal program impart generational impact? How does this program fit into the wider health equity and racial justice work going on in Springfield and the region?

## KEY FINDINGS

### RELATIONSHIPS IN PLACE

A decade of collaborative prototypes to engage families, students, teachers, policy makers, school administrators, community-based organizations, and funders, were leveraged to develop and fund a facilitated Advisory Council, creating a cross-sector space for ideation and strategizing.

### INNOVATION BUILDS ON A STRONG FOUNDATION

Innovative and strategic collaborations mobilized over the past decade to develop school gardens and education programs, Breakfast in the Classroom, and universal free meals as a result of the Community Eligibility Program, laying the foundation for this venture.

### HEALTH AND WELLNESS POLICY COMMITMENTS

SPS committed to instituting a Wellness Policy and implementing it across 61 schools; Sodexo staff committed to navigating corporate protocols to procure local produce and cook scratch meals.

### RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

SPS committed to partnership with the SFPC to ensure that programs were developed for long term systems, environment, and policy change; SPS committed to incorporating processes for student, family, teacher, and cafeteria staff engagement.

## FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

SPS financial leaders committed to innovative and creative funding structures to secure a bond from the city for the construction of the CNC, as well as funding for student and family engagement and Advisory Council facilitation.

## HOLISTIC APPROACH

Project leaders and partners recognize that affecting change in health and wellness requires a holistic approach that includes both physical and programmatic investments which address food quality, food access, community-wide learning, and engagement of young people, families, and leaders across the region.

## INTRODUCTION

### CNC RIBBON CUTTING, APRIL 12, 2019

*“This is an amazing day that will not sink in for us until probably ten years from now. Springfield has been a leader with Breakfast in the Classroom not only in our city but across the state. People have started to dream about feeding every kid in their city because we do it. And what that looks like, for those of you who haven’t been close in, is that the kids come to school hungry. Hunger visits (to the nurse) are now down 90% with Breakfast in the Classroom.*

*The reason that I know this is going to be a success is because of the people behind it. They haven’t just built the building, we’ve built committees, a committee of stakeholders and subcommittees, that are focused on health and wellness, parent and student engagement, and on procurement. Sodexo employees sit down with people like Phil Korman from CISA, and Mass Farm to School, and they talk about which farms can we buy from...Next year they are going to have sauce that comes from tomatoes that grow from farms right up the road. And all of this is happening in a city that is majority people of color who are majority poor. That’s why it matters.*

*What that does is, it changes how people think their city feels about them, it changes the possibility in their minds of what can change, and it changes the possibility of their lives.*

*We are showing the Commonwealth of MA that we are not just the sickest and poorest city, but we’re one of the darn smartest, hardest working groups of people and organizations in this Commonwealth and we are the heart of the Commonwealth, as far as I’m concerned.”*

*-Liz O’Gilvie, Springfield Food Policy Council*

## THE CULINARY AND NUTRITION CENTER

Opened in April 2019, the Springfield Culinary and Nutrition Center (CNC) is a 62,000 square-foot full-service commercial kitchen, bakery, processing center, storage facility, and training center, which prepares healthy, locally-sourced, scratch-cooked meals for Springfield's 30,000 students. Developed through an innovative financing partnership between the city of Springfield and the school district, the CNC comes as the result of over 15 years of partnership-building to increase access to fresh food in the city of Springfield, reduce hunger among the city's residents, and build a culture of healthy living.

At the CNC, Sodexo staff make scratch cooked meal components, such as sandwich rolls, sauces, salad dressings, and house-roasted meats, which are sent to school cafeterias for assembly and finishing touches. For example, on spaghetti day, a school cafeteria may receive a homemade Bolognese sauce made with locally grown tomatoes and house-cooked beef, along with scratch cooked dinner rolls, and pasta, all ready for assembly into a hot spaghetti lunch in the cafeteria kitchen. The delivery will also include prepared entrée sandwiches and salads, cooked entirely at the CNC and shipped in sealed containers, ready to eat. Entrée sandwiches and salads are fully reimbursable by USDA standards. In addition, Springfield is able to serve healthier school meals by fulfilling USDA meal components with higher quality products. For example, the district has re-directed funds that used to go toward sourcing chicken nuggets to instead sourcing whole muscle meats including bone-in chicken, pork, and turkey. The new offerings satisfy the same USDA meal component requirements yet are higher quality and healthier. While the primary goal of the CNC is to reduce student hunger, the CNC aims to provide food that is nutritious, locally sourced and sustainably produced, culturally appropriate, and of course, delicious.

While the CNC alone will not transform Springfield's food opportunities, it provides critical infrastructure to launch from: cutting-edge design; high-end processing equipment; training and community workshop space; and capacity to serve two and a half times the current number of students who participate in the school meal program.



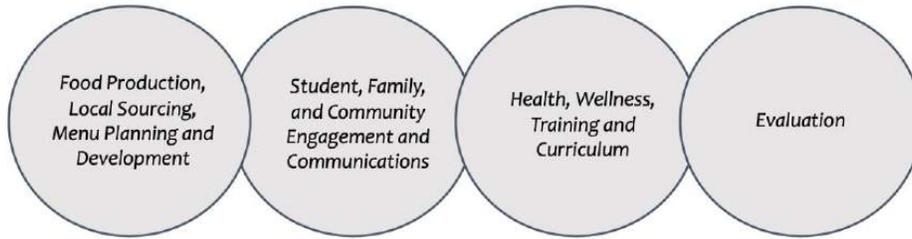
*Sodexo employee working in the CNC*

## THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

SPS recognizes that while its brand new CNC will support its innovative new food service model, the facility alone is not the solution to reducing hunger in the city; they recognize that the model will only thrive if students, teachers, parents, and the community are engaged in the school food transformation process and most importantly, that they have real ownership over it. The Springfield Food Policy Council (SFPC) and Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) supported SPS and Sodexo to secure a three-year grant from the Henry P. Kendall Foundation to hire a facilitator (Catherine Sands of Fertile Ground) to support a collaborative multi-stakeholder engagement process to guide the launch of the CNC and build out a program that would operationalize the CNC as a hub for city-wide food systems change.

Through this process, the Advisory Council was established. Composed of approximately 40 partners, the Advisory Council represents a wide array of organizations and institutions engaged in the food systems, economic development, and public health work in the region (see section 4, Collaborative Partnerships).

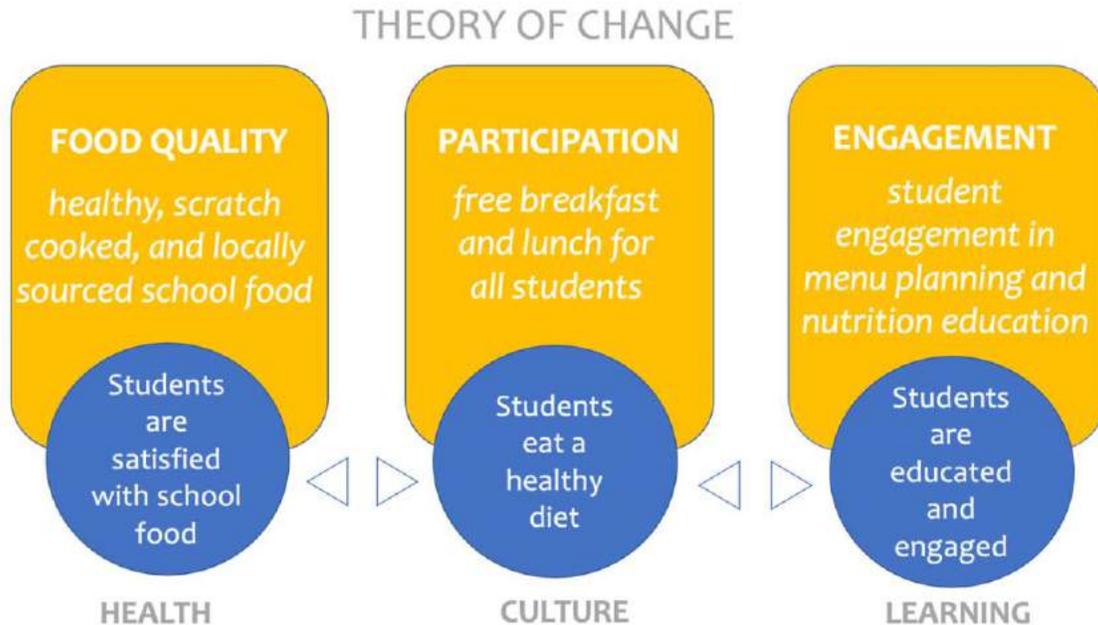
### Advisory Council Sub-Committees



## HOME GROWN SPRINGFIELD

*"What started as a vision to improve the quality of foods served in our breakfast program has resulted in the building of the Culinary and Nutrition Center, designed to improve not only food quality but the total student and community school food service experience." - Mark Jeffrey, Sodexo District Manager*

Home Grown Springfield (HGS) is an innovative, comprehensive school food program that was designed by SPS, Sodexo, and a team of strategic advisors to address food quality, food access, and student learning in Springfield through its three program goals: 1) Improve the quality of food served to students, 2) Increase student participation in meal programs, 3) Increase student learning opportunities. The HGS theory of change is summarized in the figure below. For additional information on HGS program theory, see Appendix A: Home Grown Springfield Logic Model.



HGS addresses the first goal by serving students healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced meals through the CNC. At the CNC, staff have developed over 150 scratch recipes, including muffins, rolls, breads, sauces, soups, sandwiches, and salads. The CNC sources 16% of its ingredients locally (see further information about local procurement in the section called A Center for Good Food), including fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, fish, granola, and baked goods.

HGS addresses the second goal by offering breakfast and lunch to all students in the district every day, regardless of income, at no cost. This is made possible by the district's participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a federal program for under-resourced school districts, adopted in 2015 with support from the SFPC, as well as a district-wide Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) program adopted in 2018. With school meal program participation rates over 80% in the district (and reaching beyond 90% in some schools), HGS ensures that Springfield's 30,000 students access fresh, healthy breakfast and lunch daily.

HGS addresses the third goal by engaging students directly in menu planning, nutrition education, and school gardening curriculum. Through partnerships with the SFPC, UMASS Extension Nutrition Education, Mercy Medical Center, FoodCorps, and a team of Sodexo dietitians and student/community engagement coordinators, HGS expands nutrition education, gardening, and health and wellness programming in all Springfield public schools. Through this program students learn about healthy living, gardening, and food systems through hands-on

curriculum integrated into their courses. In addition, students participate in taste tests and focus groups to inform menu planning for the meal program and are engaged in field trips, and cooking workshops. A testament to the program's commitment to engaging student and community ownership over the program, the district hosted a competition among students to design the Home Grown Springfield logo. TaMya Romero, a Putnam Vocational Technical Visual Arts student won the competition and her design was used to create the program's logo, shown here.



## WHY THIS MODEL FOR SPRINGFIELD?

*“Our health disparities, the highest childhood diabetes rates in the state, the highest childhood obesity rates in the state, are...related to food. I deeply believe both in my head and in my soul that two, and potentially three, healthier meals a day could change health outcomes.” – Liz O’Gilvie, Springfield Food Policy Council*

Springfield is a city where residents, particularly those of color, disproportionately experience numerous socioeconomic challenges (housing instability, food insecurity, limited economic resources) which limit opportunities to achieve their full potential. Systemic oppression and structural racism, including structural residential segregation, limit opportunities for many people of color in Springfield to access the resources they need to live healthful lives (Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts. (2019).vi Springfield residents have a median income of \$41,485, which is less than half the statewide median income, and almost 30% of Springfield residents live below the Federal poverty line (US Census, ACS, 2013-2017). The COVID-19 pandemic has hit Springfield particularly hard, with some of the higher death rates in the state, due to these social determinants, health outcomes, and life challenges.

The primary goal of the CNC and HGS programs is to eliminate child hunger in Springfield. SPS and Sodexo understand that food access is a social justice issue; by ensuring all Springfield students can eat high quality healthy meals, every school day, at no cost, they are intervening in food and health systems that otherwise exclude low income communities of color. By investing

in food quality, meal culture, and student learning, they are creating new opportunities for Springfield students to thrive.

## BACKGROUND

Envisioning the Springfield Culinary and Nutrition Center and the Home Grown Springfield program was a decade-long process that was built on partnerships throughout the city and the region. In 2010 the city adopted the Springfield Food Policy Implementation Plan, which included the formal establishment of the Springfield Food Policy Council (SFPC). Led by Springfield residents of color, including Liz O’Gilvie, Chair, the SFPC has become a critical lever in the city, weaving together on-the-ground work making fresh food accessible with advocacy work aimed at changing food policy. SFPC’s ongoing partnership with SPS has become essential in developing a new school meal program that is rooted in community, equity, and systems-change, as well as engaging other community partners and raising funds to expand the impact of SPS programs.

It was also in the early 2000s that Springfield Public School (SPS) entered into a partnership with the food service and facilities management company Sodexo. After many years of operating their own food service program, SPS hired Sodexo with the hope of increasing efficiency, reducing spending, and improving the quality of their school meal program. In addition, SPS requested that Sodexo contribute to district’s nascent School Garden program. Sodexo agreed to hire contracted and salaried staff to support school garden infrastructure and curriculum. In 2010, food service leaders at SPS and Sodexo began conversations about relocating the food service warehouse, which was growing increasingly insufficient for their needs.

Meanwhile, in its ongoing effort to address student hunger in the district, SPS and Sodexo partnered in 2014 to launch the district’s first Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) program. Recognizing that many students were coming to school hungry, the district began BIC as a pilot program with a handful of elementary schools, serving students breakfast in their classrooms. The program was immediately successful. Between 2014 and 2016 the district saw participation in its breakfast program increase from 44% to 64%. By 2019 BIC participation reached 84%, almost doubling the number of students eating breakfast at school and resulting in many more students beginning their school day ready to learn and grow. In 2018, the district expanded the BIC program to all schools. School nurses recorded a 70% drop in hunger-related visits; hunger-related nurse visits have continued to drop throughout the district. To date, no other district in Massachusetts has offered BIC district-wide, making Springfield a leader in the healthy school food movement.

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The success of Springfield's BIC program is also credited to its participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which the district adopted in 2015 with support from the SFPC. CEP provides federal funding to serve breakfast and lunch to all students at school, regardless of income, at no charge. The introduction of the BIC program in 2014 coincided with SPS's first USDA Farm to School Grant to increase local procurement and enhance hands-on garden education. This resulted in the ability to expand the School Garden program in partnership with SFPC.

These early investments in food access and garden education by SPS established the district's commitment to taking responsibility for addressing hunger among its student population, recognizing the central connections between student health and their ability to learn and thrive. In a city where over 77% of students are economically disadvantaged and over 83% are considered high-needs, this commitment from a school district has monumental potential to change the lives of young people and families. Furthermore, SPS did not settle for a goal to simply attempt to reduce child hunger. Through these early commitments to increasing local sourcing and hands-on garden education, the district displayed its growing commitment to treating children and families with dignity; to providing school meals that are healthy, locally sourced, and delicious.

In its quest to expand the BIC program, grow its commitment to feeding kids good school food, and re-locate its food service hub, SPS and Sodexo recognized an ongoing and critical challenge - they struggled to source fresh, healthy breakfast options. Working toward an innovative solution to serve SPS students healthy, delicious, whole-foods breakfast, the district considered how to leverage its school food program revenue, which had increased from \$15.4 million in 2014 to \$22.1 million in 2017, an increase of about 44%, due to increased participation in the meal program. District leaders began to wonder if it might be possible to cook their own healthy breakfast foods, from scratch. Instead of a new food service warehouse, could they build a state-of-the-art scratch kitchen, scaled to serve its over 25,000 students healthy, scratch-cooked, and locally-sourced school food? Could this facility become a hub for learning and community engagement? Could this hub transform health and wellness culture across all 60 schools and educational sites? Could this transformation reach across the city, changing the lives of Springfield residents? They thought it could.

With funding from the Eos Foundation, SPS launched into an exploratory phase, conducting research about central kitchen food service models in large public school districts, and visiting similar operations across the country. Taking what they learned from their field trips and research, the operations team began to formulate a new food service model for SPS.

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To realize their nascent vision for the Culinary and Nutrition Center, SPS needed financing. After negotiations with the USDA that lasted over a year, they finally settled on another innovative solution to make their dream food service hub a reality. The city of Springfield issued a capital bond to cover the cost of building the Culinary and Nutrition Center, which SPS pays back through a combination of its USDA school food funds, revenue generated through participation in the school meal program, and food service savings generated through consolidating food preparation in-house. In December 2017, SPS broke ground on the its new Culinary and Nutrition Center.

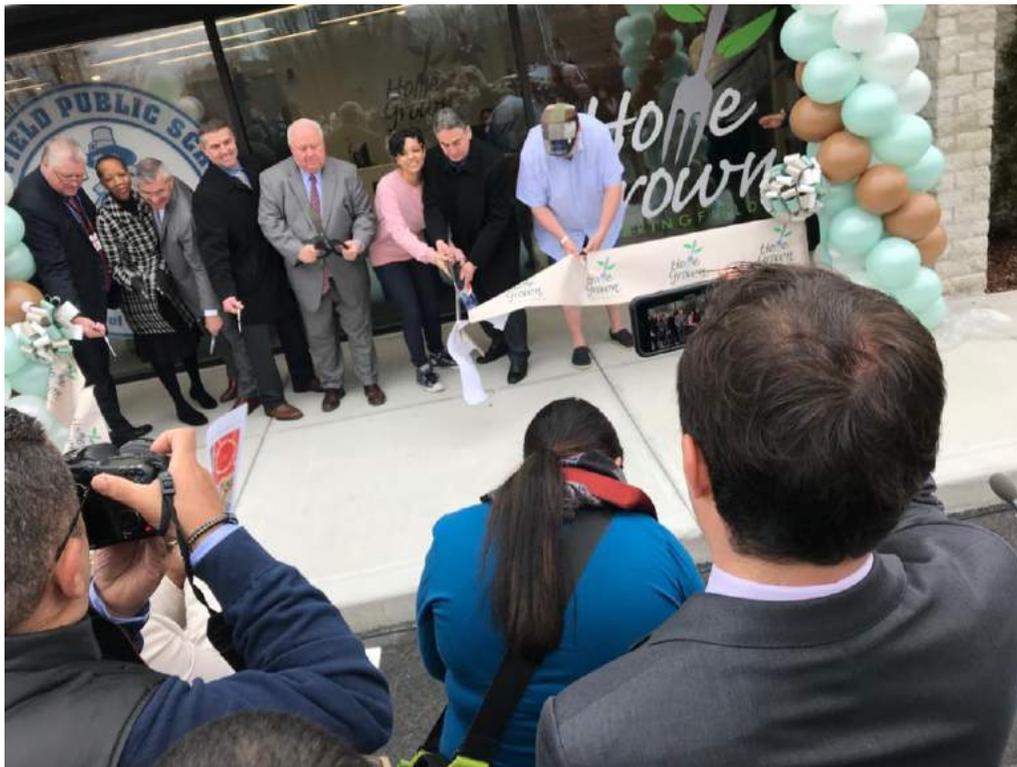
That year, with leadership from the SFPC, the district again expanded the possibilities for what this project could mean to the city of Springfield by establishing the Advisory Council, a multi-stakeholder group of leaders engaged in the food systems, economic development, and public health work in the region, to guide the project. Over the past several years the Advisory Council has worked to support the creation of a program that would operationalize the CNC as a hub for city-wide food systems change. With the steady leadership of SFPC, the group has also encouraged the program to center Springfield students and families. Through many months of meetings, the Advisory Council, SPS, Sodexo, and SFPC created the Home Grown Springfield (HGS) program.

In April 2019 the district celebrated the soft opening of the CNC with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, which drew over 100 visitors, including the mayor, a number of city counselors, representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), community members, policymakers, students, teachers, and administrators. The 2019-2020 school year marked the first year the CNC was fully operational, and the Home Grown Springfield program was launched.

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*Mark Jeffrey, Sodexo District Manager, makes comments at the CNC Ribbon Cutting, April 12, 2019*



*From left: Mark Jeffrey (Sodexo), Liz O'Gilvie (SFPC), Tim Gray (SPS), Patrick Roach (SPS), Superintendent Daniel Warwick (SPS), TaMya Romero (Putnam Vocational Technical Visual Arts student), Mayor Domenic Sarno, and Chris Collins (SPS School Committee member) gather to cut the ribbon at the CNC grand opening in April 2019*

## EVALUATION METHODS & DESIGN

### EVALUATION GOALS: SYSTEMS CHANGE EVALUATION

While the development of this project stretches back at least ten years, this evaluation focuses on the 2019-2020 school year, the first year in which the CNC was fully operational. Yet, Fertile Ground began engaging with SPS, Sodexo, and their partners in spring 2018, when Catherine Sands was hired to help convene and facilitate the Advisory Council's engagement process. During the Advisory Council's initial meetings, partners worked with the Fertile Ground team to develop a program theory, logic model, and set of work plans for achieving their goals (Appendix A and B). In addition, we received funding from Trinity Health and Mercy Medical Center for this evaluation to be an extension of the Transforming Communities Initiative Grant, which has been supporting systems, environment, and policy change in the city around healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco prevention. Liz O'Gilvie from the Springfield Food Policy Council (SFPC) was funded to be a thought partner on the evaluation and to co-design family and student evaluation project/instruments, and funds were set aside to provide honoraria for parent participants. The group met quarterly with an Evaluation sub-committee, as well as with the Transforming Communities Initiative Partners, and its evaluators, the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts.

### EVALUATION GOALS

- Document the systems changes that occur as a result of the Culinary and Nutrition Center and Home Grown Springfield programs
- Understand how a wide range of stakeholder's experience Home Grown Springfield
- Based on lessons learned, support partners to take strategic next steps to facilitate expansion of scratch cooking and student and family engagement.

### EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- Is the district serving scratch cooked, healthy, locally sourced, culturally relevant food?
- Are students, families, and the school community engaged in guiding the program?
- Is student participation in the meal program increasing?
- Is the district wellness culture changing?
- Are students more knowledgeable about healthy eating?
- Are students gaining leadership skills and pathways to job?
- How is the Advisory Committee impacting systems and policy change?

## SYSTEMS CHANGE APPROACH

We employed a systems change approach because SPS committed from the outset to not only change food service practices, but also policies and systems (e.g., around local food procurement, school wellness culture, and food and nutrition education) that could impact the lives of their students. Therefore, the changes that SPS has gone through to change its meal program requires evaluation of the systems disrupted and policies shifted to make lasting, sustainable change. When the CNC Advisory Committee first met, they examined the Results, Processes and Relationships necessary to establish a Pathway to Change.<sup>vii</sup>

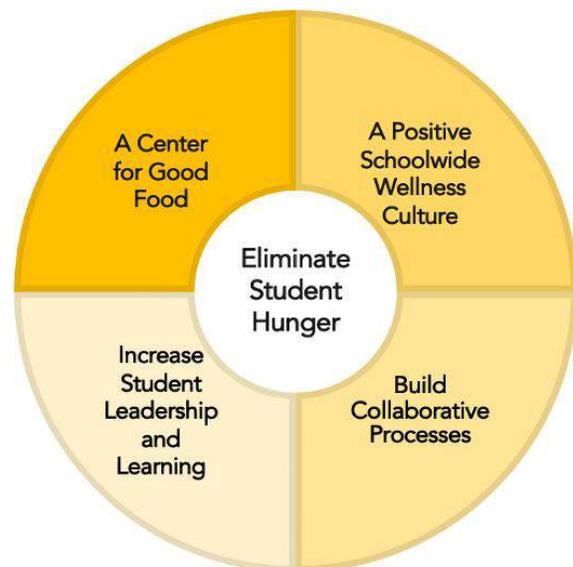
We selected a systems change evaluation framework to track the complexities of change happening in the last year, yet built on many years of groundwork. Embedded in the idea that “systems are dynamic and alive, as they are constantly changing and adapting,”<sup>viii</sup> we use a systems change research framework, which examines three parts of a system: elements, interconnections, and purpose.

## THE FRAMEWORK: PRACTICES, PEOPLE, POLICIES, PROMOTIONS

THIS EVALUATION EXAMINES FOUR ELEMENTS, OR INGREDIENTS:

**A CENTER FOR GOOD FOOD** – developing healthier, from scratch and culturally appropriate recipes; identifying and procuring new ingredients for scratch cooking and local sourcing; engaging students, parents/families, and staff in providing feedback and guidance.

**A POSITIVE SCHOOL WELLNESS CULTURE** – increasing student participation in the school meal program; shifting school culture toward health and wellness; creating new school policies; engaging students, parents, and families around school food.



## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

**INCREASED STUDENT LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP** – implementing student engagement and learning activities through garden and nutrition education programs; providing new opportunities for students to participate in the culinary program and engage with the CNC facility; cultivating student health and wellness champions.

**BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS** – engaging partners in food policy and advocacy, anti-hunger work, sustainable farming, food production, operations, and food education; collaborating innovating, and supporting the CNC; fostering a learning environment in which partners witness systems solutions to entrenched systemic inequities.

We conclude with a summary of SPS and Sodexo’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic as evidence of systemic change in the district, including: rapid shifting, serving, informing school community about meal sites, engaging DESE and USDA in shifting protocols to enable families to pick up meals, partner innovation and support.

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### WITHIN THESE ELEMENTS ARE FOUR INTERCONNECTIONS:

**POLICIES** are at multiple levels of the system, including federal, state, city, organizational and school that influence the management of school meals.

**PRACTICES** are the necessary tasks that occur from planning, to preparing, to serving meals.

**PEOPLE** are all the people who play a role in the system, including SPS leaders, Sodexo staff, school based staff, students, teachers, parents, and others in the broader community

**PROMOTION** is the communication and marketing both internal and external that builds support and awareness and enthusiasm for systems change. Promotion also includes food and nutrition education that is supportive of school meals.

### DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND ANALYSIS

This evaluation was informed by quantitative and qualitative data provided by key staff and stakeholders mostly during the 2019-2020 school year, although informed by collaboration and information sharing beginning in spring 2018. Sampling methods were focused on the schools participating in the Transforming Communities Initiative grant and hosting FoodCorps service members (i.e., Rebecca Johnson Elementary School, DeBerry Elementary School, Brookings Elementary School, and South End Middle School), but the findings in this report are presented

at the district level.

During spring 2020, Fertile Ground had planned to engage parents and students in conversations, interviews, and surveys, which were cancelled due to school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these have been postponed until next year.

The following methods were used to analyze data for this evaluation.

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#### DOCUMENT REVIEW

- Minutes from all committee meetings from the 2018-2019/2019-2020 school years
- Strategy worksheets developed by Advisory Council sub-committees
- Logic model developed by Advisory Council
- Menu and meal nutrition documents
- Participation statistics
- Reports on local sourcing goals and procurement protocols
- FoodCorps reports on taste tests, student preference tracking, school food environment/teacher summary 2019, 2020.
- Internal communications materials: newsletters, flyers, promotional materials, website, videos developed by SPS and Sodexo staff and FoodCorps members
- External communications: newspaper articles, radio coverage
- Advocacy materials: memos sent to legislators

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#### INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUPS, & PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

- Participation observation in 7 school cafeterias in 2019 and 2020
- Interviews with 16 Advisory Council members, conducted by Kristen Whitmore, January 2019
- Focus group with Food Corps members, July 2019
- Interview with FoodCorps member, April 2020
- Participation observation at one after school group, March 2020
- Informal conversations with staff at SPS, Sodexo, and partner organizations

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#### LITERATURE REVIEW

- Review of literature regarding multi stakeholder coalitions, systemic oppression, opportunity inequities, and school meal programs

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*Due to the school closures related to COVID-19, we were unable to complete the following data collection strategies, which we had developed:*

- Writing project for 3rd graders to learn about student meal preferences (*See Appendix C*)
- Focus group with parents who completed the nutrition class
- Focus group with afterschool student cooking/garden clubs
- FoodCorps Vegetable Preference Survey
- Analyze health and attendance records

## A CENTER FOR GOOD FOOD

*“I think that working at scale, like this, has the potential to change our landscape in Massachusetts, and support farmers in a way that would finally be sustainable” - Community partner*

### **A Center for Good Food: fresh, healthy, locally sourced, culturally relevant, scratch cooked food**

<b>Practices</b>	Build the CNC facility; onboard new software system; train staff on new scratch cooking techniques; develop new menus/recipes; develop partnerships to source more produce from local farms; acquire new prepared foods (bread, fish, granola..); engage students in taste tests, implement their feedback.
<b>People</b>	SPS: Food Service Manager, Chief Financial Officer; Sodexo: Procurement Manager, Executive Chef, Dietician; Partners: CISA, Springfield Food Policy Council, MA Farm to School, Northbound Ventures. Families and students test recipes, provide feedback. Regional farmers and distributors provide locally produced foods.
<b>Policies</b>	SPS follows USDA nutritional guidelines. Sodexo follows corporate food safety policies (instead of GAP and Commonwealth Quality, which most local farms use). Sodexo supports MA farm aggregators and producers to become Sodexo vendors.
<b>Promotions</b>	Edison, a new software system aligns warehouse inventory with cafeterias need. Local ingredients and new scratch meals promoted internally through Meal Viewer App and Website. Social media, newsletters, media coverage. CNC training room as a Sodexo staff, student, and community learning space.

The CNC is Springfield’s state of the art facility that serves as a hub to transform fresh ingredients into scratch cooked school meals, generating more opportunities to source products locally whenever possible. Once prepared, items are sent to schools for finishing touches before being served to students, elevating the quality of scratch cooking. With multiple kitchens, dry storage, a fresh fruit and vegetable processing room, a bakery, 10,000 square feet of refrigerator and freezer space and prep areas, the Center has the capability of processing, flash freezing, and storing fresh produce. The Center affords student learning opportunities while promoting operational efficiencies and economic development in the city.

The CNC was funded through a creative financing arrangement between the schools and the city. To fund the construction of the building, the city of Springfield issued a capital bond, which SPS pays back through a combination of its USDA school food funds, revenue generated

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

through participation in the meal program, and food service savings generated through consolidating food preparation in-house. For example, the district previously rented freezer space and outsourced all their baking and vegetable processing. Now, they have their own large scale cooler and freezer space, a bakery, and a vegetable processing room on site. By moving these operations in-house, the district and Sodexo plan to save significantly. In addition, USDA funding continues to be used for food purchases.

While savings from in-house production and USDA school food funds are important for the CNC and Home Grown Springfield model's financial stability, its sustainability rests upon ongoing and increasing student participation in the meal program; participation drives USDA meal reimbursement revenue for the district. Therefore, the district's goal to eliminate student hunger coincides with its goal to increase meal participation, which is supported by Springfield's participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). CEP is a federal program for under-resourced school districts which provides school meals free of charge to all students in the district regardless of family income. The district aims to leverage CEP to further reduce hunger by increasing participation not only in the breakfast and lunch programs, but also in the afterschool snack and dinner programs, as well as the summer meal program.

The CNC and Home Grown Springfield model is based on its financial stability being rooted in feeding students and reducing hunger in the city: the more students participate in school meals, the more revenue the program generates, and the fewer Springfield students go hungry. SPS is committed to re-investing that revenue into the meal program, to continually improve food quality and enhance student learning.

Through its engagement process, the Procurement, Local Sourcing and Menu Planning Committee identified the following goals for the Planning & Launch (2018-2019) and Implementation (2019-2020 and beyond) of the new program. For additional detail and long-term goals, see the Logic Model, Appendix A.

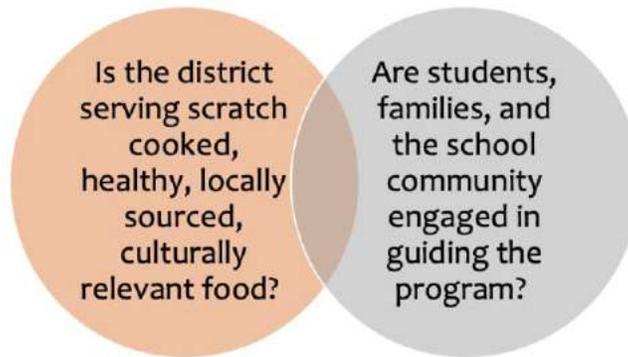
### Planning & Launch

- Engage students in menu development through taste tests, focus groups, and surveys
- Switch % meal components to scratch production
- Expand vendor approval policies to include small and mid-sized local producers
- Establish warehouse and distribution protocols to accept local produce
- Establish a definition and goal for local sourcing
- Establish purchasing relationships with local producers

### Implementation

- Students articulate what foods they want on the menu: quality, local, fresh, cultural foods
- Increase % scratch cooking for all meals
- Increase local sourcing through newly approved vendors
- Test and implement strategies
- Increase local purchasing to 16%
- Increase # local producers CNC has relationships with

To evaluate progress, they posed the questions:



## PRACTICES

At the center of the Home Grown Springfield program is the goal to serve students high quality school meals using a model that is economically viable for the district. High-quality food is defined using four metrics: 1) healthy 2) scratch cooked 3) locally sourced and 4) culturally relevant. Economic viability is driven by growing meal program participation which generates federal reimbursement revenue, the ability to serve meals at or below the federal reimbursement rate, and cost savings resulting from producing meals in-house at the CNC.

## FOOD COSTS

SPS and Sodexo partnered on the construction of the CNC and the development of the Home Grown Springfield program because they wanted to address student hunger and health. But the district was aware that the model must also function economically in order to be viable. As described above, the district relies on USDA reimbursements to cover the costs of school meals, and reimbursements are notably low. Springfield qualifies under the “severe need reimbursement rate” which is as follows:

- Breakfast: \$2.20/meal
- Lunch: \$3.55/meal
- Afterschool snack: \$0.94
- Afterschool dinner: \$3.41/meal

In comparing food costs and costs per meal, the district reports the following measures from before the CNC opened, as compared to February 2020.

- All food costs have decreased by \$1.6 million since 2018
- Breakfast costs have decreased by \$1.4 million since 2017; decreased by \$700,000 since 2018
- Cost per meal has increased by \$0.08 since 2018
- Cost per meal plus cost of labor cost exceeds the USDA reimbursement rate; this has been the case since at least 2017

SPS and Sodexo have decreased food costs significantly since the opening of the CNC. This was an important goal for the viability of the model, which the district has already met. In addition, they have done so while improving the quality of school meals dramatically. Note that the food costs for 2019-2020 were based on data through February 2020, then forecasted off the school year’s financial performance before the last day of regular service on March 16, when schools closed and the meal service program transitioned to grab-and-go pick up meals due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on this transition see the section called *COVID-19 Pandemic Response*.

Yet, the costs per meal plus cost of labor (i.e. the cost of getting a meal to the student’s plate) continues to exceed the USDA reimbursement rate, meaning that USDA funds alone do not cover the cost of feeding students. This has been an ongoing challenge in Springfield since at least 2017. The low federal reimbursement rate for school meals is a structural challenge that many districts grapple with, representing a barrier to providing students with healthy, high quality school meals. This challenge is particularly severe in states like Massachusetts, with a

higher (than other states) minimum wage (\$12.75). While a higher minimum wage represents work in labor advocacy to approach living wages in the Commonwealth, structures have not been created to support the cost increase in other areas of the food system. Therefore, the district strives to increase participation; higher participation yields more federal dollars in the meal program, enabling broader ability to source quality fresh foods and retain staff needed to provide good food service.

## HEALTHY

SPS and Sodexo prioritize student’s access to fresh and healthy food. Sodexo has been a leader in developing innovative new scratch cooked recipes, with the goal to make them healthier than the version purchased from a distributor. Below we highlight three new recipes developed by CNC chefs, in comparison to the products previously purchased from a distributor. Nutrient analysis of the blueberry muffin, egg and cheese English muffin sandwich, and Tex-Mex tortilla soup capture a sampling of the overall healthier recipes now used to make school food in Springfield.

### Blueberry Muffin

Serving size 3 oz	CALORIES (g)	FAT (g)	SATURATED FAT (g)	CHOLESTEROL (mg)	SODIUM (mg)	CARB (g)	FIBER (g)	SUGAR (g)	PROTEIN (g)
PREVIOUS RECIPE	312.5	9.5	3	64	208	48	3	26.5	4.5
NEW CNC RECIPE	258	11	1	21	300	36	2	18	4
NUTRIENT CHANGE	-54.5	+1.5	-2	-43	+92	-12	-1	-8.5	-0.5

Sodexo’s new blueberry muffin is significantly lower in calories, cholesterol, carbohydrates, sugar, and saturated fat. These nutrient improvements come at the cost of slightly less fiber and protein, but a better flavor.

### Egg & Cheese English Muffin

Serving size 106 g	CALORIES (g)	FAT (g)	SATURATED FAT (g)	CHOLESTEROL (mg)	SODIUM (mg)	CARB (g)	FIBER (g)	SUGAR (g)	PROTEIN (g)
PREVIOUS RECIPE	250	11.5	4	107.5	730	25	2	1	10.5
NEW CNC RECIPE	233	9.5	3.5	109	419	24.5	2	1	10
NUTRIENT CHANGE	-17	-2	-0.5	+1.5	-311	-0.5	0	0	-0.5

Sodexo's egg and cheese English muffin is a popular breakfast choice for SPS students. The new CNC-made recipe is lower in calories, fat, saturated fat, sodium, and carbohydrates. It has the same amount of sugar and fiber, a slight decrease in protein, and a slight increase in cholesterol.

### **Tex-Mex Tortilla Soup**

<i>Serving size</i> 6 oz	<b>CALORIES</b> (g)	<b>FAT</b> (g)	<b>SATURATED</b> <b>FAT (g)</b>	<b>CHOLESTEROL</b> (mg)	<b>SODIUM</b> (mg)	<b>CARB</b> (g)	<b>FIBER</b> (g)	<b>SUGAR</b> (g)	<b>PROTEIN</b> (g)
<b>PREVIOUS</b> <b>RECIPE</b>	316	19	7	61	166	13	4	4	20
<b>NEW</b> <b>CNC RECIPE</b>	179	4	0	54	697	15	3.5	4.5	19.5
<b>NUTRIENT</b> <b>CHANGE</b>	<b>-137</b>	<b>-15</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>+531</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>-0.5</b>	<b>+0.5</b>	<b>-0.5</b>

The Tex-Mex tortilla soup recipe is also healthier in many ways, with less calories, fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Yet, it has significantly more sodium than the previous purchased product. Reducing sodium continues to be a challenge for Sodexo chefs working on recipe development. The soup is slightly higher in carbs and sugar, and slightly lower in fiber and protein.

### **SCRATCH COOKED**

The CNC has developed 156 new scratch cooked sandwiches, salads, meats and proteins, soups and sauces, sweet baked items and savory baked items. A sampling of the 115 scratch cooked meals served to SPS students during the 2019-2020 school year is summarized in the figure below.

**New Scratch Cooked Meals at SPS**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Egg &amp; Cheese Bagel</li> <li>• Ham &amp; Cheese Ciabatta</li> <li>• Sausage &amp; Cheese Croissant</li> <li>• Asian Chicken Ciabatta</li> <li>• Turkey Cranberry Salad on Ciabatta</li> <li>• Turkey Cuban on Bulkie Roll</li> <li>• Italian on Bulkie Roll</li> </ul> <p><b>Sandwiches</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apple Kale Salad</li> <li>• Asian Chicken Salad</li> <li>• Chicken Fajita Salad</li> <li>• Ranchero Chicken Salad</li> <li>• Southwest Chopped Salad</li> <li>• Turkey BLT Salad</li> <li>• Fresh Fruit Cups</li> </ul> <p><b>Salads</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buffalo Chicken</li> <li>• Chicken Curry</li> <li>• Whole Rustic Turkey</li> <li>• Turkey Taco Meat</li> <li>• Teriyaki Glazed Chicken</li> <li>• BBQ Pork Pulled</li> <li>• Hummus (black bean, white bean, classic)</li> </ul> <p><b>Meats &amp; Proteins</b></p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loaded Potato Soup</li> <li>• Picadillo Soup</li> <li>• Tex-Mex Tortilla Soup</li> <li>• Ramen Noodles Bar</li> <li>• Nacho Cheese Sauce</li> <li>• Asian Sunbutter Sauce</li> <li>• Marinara Sauce</li> <li>• Teriyaki Sauce</li> </ul> <p><b>Soups &amp; Sauces</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• French Toast Flat Bread</li> <li>• Waffle Flat Bread</li> <li>• Lemon Raspberry with Yogurt Chips Muffin</li> <li>• Peppermint Chocolate Chip Muffin</li> <li>• Sweet Potato Raisin Muffin</li> <li>• Blueberry Muffin</li> </ul> <p><b>Sweet Baked Items</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parmesan Breadsticks</li> <li>• Hawaiian Roll</li> <li>• Bacon Cheddar Cornmeal Muffin</li> <li>• Bacon Mozzarella Breakfast Roll</li> <li>• Ham &amp; Cheddar Breakfast Roll</li> <li>• Rosemary Dinner Roll</li> </ul> <p><b>Savory Baked Items</b></p> 

A spice bar and Ramen bar were also prototyped for high school students based on their requests to the Executive Chef to add herbs and spices to the food. Students in those schools are now able to add spice as desired and to have options for popular Ramen noodles. Salad bars provide fresh raw vegetables in 35 of 59 schools. In the fall of 2019, the CNC began cook/chill practices for cheese sauce, marinara, and soups, allowing the Center to send products to the schools ready for cooking and serving.



*A sign advertising a new spice bar*

The following table provides a snapshot of scratch cooking at SPS:

### **Springfield Public Schools Scratch Meals**

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**156** new scratch cooked recipes developed

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**115** scratch cooked items served

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**41** scratch meal recipes developed for future service

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**46** items transitioned from purchased to scratch cooked

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**45** new scratch cooked recipes added to the menu

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**65** items previously scratch cooked in cafeterias now made at CNC

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**19** new scratch cooked culturally diverse recipes

## LOCAL SOURCING

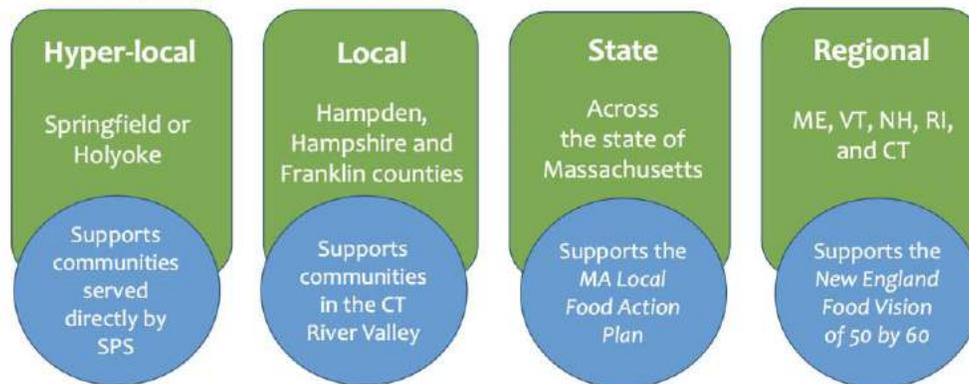
*“I think this can be a model that will inform state policy around local food procurement and values-based procurement at the state level.” –  
Community partner*

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## WHAT DEFINES LOCAL?

In 2017 SPS hired an external consulting firm, Northbound Ventures, to advise the district on a local procurement policy and set of goals for the CNC’s local spending going forward. Northbound Ventures crafted a definition of “local” for the district, summarized in the figure below.

### Springfield Public Schools Definition of “Local” Food



In addition to this four-tiered geographic-based definition, SPS defines locally sourced goods by the following two criteria:

- Any whole ingredient grown, raised or harvested in one of the defined geographies
- Value-added foods containing a majority (>50%) of locally sourced ingredients

SPS and Sodexo established the following local procurement goals coinciding with anticipated increased local sourcing due to the opening of the CNC in 2019:

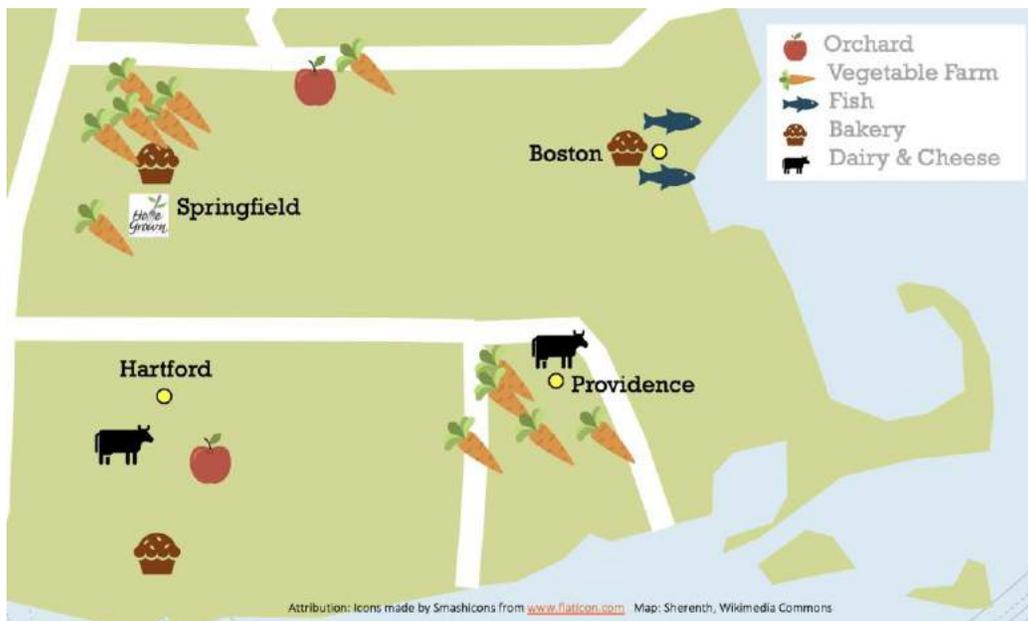
- For 2018-2019, a local procurement goal of 9%
- For 2019-2020, a local procurement goal of 16% (*average percent of budget spent on local food for districts in New England*)
- For 2021-2022, a local procurement goal of 21% (*average percent of budget spent on local food for districts in MA*)

SPS and Sodexo are committed to transparency around procurement, even when products do not fall neatly into a “local” category, as outlined by their definition. It is essential to capture the other positive characteristics some companies have, such as employing low income people, being locally owned business, being a small or family-run business, or being an environmentally friendly business. In addition to tracking their local procurement, as defined above, SPS is also committed to working with business that have other positive attributes including:

- Third-party certified sustainable products (e.g. USDA Organic, Marine Stewardship Council, Fair Trade, Humanely-Raised)
- Products with a social justice mission
- Suppliers that are in whole or in part community-owned or employee-owned
- Supplier diversity

SPS LOCAL SOURCING

Since at least 2015, SPS has sourced locally and regionally grown produce, dairy, fish and bakery products. Produce is sourced primarily through Roch’s Fresh Foods, a Rhode Island based food distribution company that sells a wide variety of food products sourced from around the world, including from local and regional farms in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. New partnerships with regional produce distributors such as the Franklin County Food Processing Center, have also enabled SPS and Sodexo to source more from local farms. In total, SPS and Sodexo source products from 12 local farms, 2 regional produce distributors, 2 local fisheries, 2 New England dairy processors, and 3 local bakeries. The map below visualizes CNC sourcing.



- |   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
|  | <b>Western MA Processing Center</b> – Greenfield, MA<br><b>Confreda Farms</b> – Western Cranston, RI<br><b>Joe Czajkowski Farm</b> – Hadley, MA<br><b>E. Cecchi Farms</b> – Feeding Hills, MA<br><b>David Mokrzecki Farm</b> - Hadley MA<br><b>Jekanowski Farms</b> – Hadley, MA<br><b>Little Leaf Farms</b> – Devens, MA<br><b>Outlook Farm</b> – Westhampton, MA<br><b>Pezza Farms</b> – Johnston, RI<br><b>Quonset View Farm</b> – Portsmouth, RI<br><b>Schartner Farm</b> – Exeter, RI<br><b>Roch’s Fresh Foods</b> – Providence, RI | <br><br><br> | <b>Red’s Best Fish</b> – Boston, MA<br><b>North Coast Seafoods</b> – Boston, MA |
|   | <b>Guida’s Dairy</b> – New Britain, CT<br><b>Narragansett Creamery</b> – Providence, RI  |  |   |
|   | <b>Chabaso Bakery</b> – New Haven, CT<br><b>88 Acres</b> – Dorchester, MA<br><b>Jeff’s Granola</b> – Holyoke, MA   |  |   |
|   | <b>Maine blueberries</b><br><b>Lanni Orchards</b> – Lunenburg, MA<br><b>Belltown Hill Orchards</b> – South Glastonbury, CT   |  |   |

Below is a summary of the district’s trajectory of local sourcing since 2016. In all cases “local” includes hyper-local, local, state and regional sourcing, as defined above.

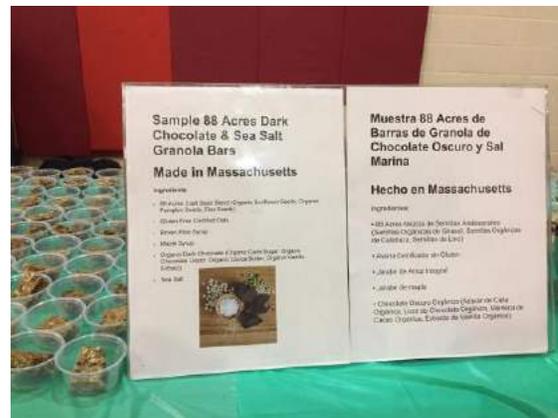
## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

- During the 2016-2017 school year (FY17), the district spent approximately 10% of its total food budget on local foods including New England dairy purchases.
- During the 2017-2018 school year (FY18) the district spent approximately 9% of its total food budget on local foods, including New England dairy purchases.
- During the 2018-2019 school year (FY19) the district spent approximately 11% of its total food budget on local foods, including New England dairy purchases (exceeding its goal of 9%).
- During the 2019-2020 school year (FY20) the district spent approximately 18% of its total food budget on local foods, including New England dairy purchases. By including food items that are manufactured or processed locally, but which include ingredients sourced from elsewhere (i.e. purchases from 88 Acres, Jeff's Granola, Chabaso Bakery, Calise Bakery, etc.), the percent of the total food budget spent on local foods increases to 39%.

In all cases, about 1% of the total local purchasing budget was spent on produce. New England dairy makes up the balance of the local percentage. The district is working to steadily increase the amount of locally and regionally grown fruits and vegetables contributing to its local spend.

As discussed above, the district is committed to working not only with local farmers, but also with local food businesses. Since the CNC opened, they have worked to source locally manufactured goods from small businesses in the region. During the 2019-2020 school year the district sourced several items based on the positive attributes discussed above to improve the already successful BIC program.

- Jeff's Granola – granola; strong relationship with the business owner and shared anti-hunger values, based in Hampden County
- 88 Acres – seed bars and pumpkin seed butter; manufactured in Boston, supporters of local economic development
- Chabaso Bakery – ciabatta bread for egg sandwiches, family owned



*88 Acres taste test in an SPS school*

## DIVERSE AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT

To date, 19 new scratch cooked culturally diverse recipes are included in the menu. Examples include: Arroz con Leche Rice Pudding, Chicken Curry, Chicken Sazon, Cuban Sandwich, Pico de Gallo, Sazon Pork Roast, Ranchero Chicken Salad, Asian Sunbutter sauce, Picadillo soup, and Tex-Mex Tortilla soup.

Student engagement through taste tests and focus groups has informed recipe development, making many recipes delicious, satisfying, and familiar for kids. During taste tests of the CNC's Arroz con Leche Rice Pudding recipe, many students commented that it was a familiar food they had eaten at home; the recipe was one of the most successful taste tests held, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from students.

## PEOPLE

The Production, Local Procurement, and Menu Planning Committee became a locus for SPS and Sodexo leaders to meet with their partners, including regional farm and procurement experts. Together they strategize on navigating procurement logistics, food safety standards, and building relationships with farmers (for a full list of the committee, see Section IV: Building a Collaborative Process). The team that works to ensure the CNC serves super high quality food includes:

- **SPS:** Timothy Gray (SPS Food Service Administrator), Pat Roach (CFO)
- **Sodexo:** Andrew Stratton (Sodexo Procurement Manager), Aaron Lenart (Executive Chef, former), CNC and cafeteria staff
- **Partners:** Phil Korman (CISA), Rachel Harb (Mass Farm to School), Liz O'Gilvie (Springfield Food Policy Council), Holly Fowler (Northbound Ventures).

An example of this synergy through the CNC Production, Local Sourcing sub-committee meetings:

*In 2019 SPS invited Red's Best Fish to do a demo featuring whole fish on ice in 3 cafeterias in the district. Combined with a student taste test of locally sourced dogfish, many students were delighted to see a whole*

*fish for the first time, meet a real fisherman, and were surprised to learn it was the same fish on their plate. In hearing about the success of the demo/taste test, Phil Korman, Executive Director of CISA (and CNC Advisory Council member), suggested a partnership with Mi Tierra, a Latino-owned company producing authentic stone ground corn tortillas in Springfield. CNC chefs envisioned serving students scratch cooked fish tacos. Mi Tierra is currently completing the paperwork to become a certified Sodexo vendor.*



*Students view and touch locally sourced fish during a taste test*

## **POLICIES**

### **FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS**

The primary challenge for local procurement has been aligning food safety standards to ensure that food coming into the schools is safe, and that vendors comply with Sodexo food safety requirements. Many MA and regional farmers are certified under Massachusetts Commonwealth Quality, and the federal Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. Andrew Stratton and Mandilyn Beck, Sodexo Sustainability Director, have endeavored to demonstrate to Sodexo's supply management team that the Massachusetts certification program (Commonwealth Quality) is comparable to their food safety standards in order to allow sourcing from more local farms. These negotiations are ongoing. Sodexo sources the majority of

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

their produce through Roch's Fresh Foods, a regional produce vendor that aggregates produce from farms in MA, RI, and CT.

Andrew Stratton also shepherded Little Leaf Lettuce Farms through the Sodexo food safety certification paperwork, and Sodexo began purchasing hydroponic lettuce in 2019 for sandwiches and salad bars. Mi Tierra, Latino-owned tortilla company that manufacturers in Springfield and sources corn from nearby Hadley is also navigating certification to become an approved vendor.

Due to the extended duration of the certification process, the natural next step for increased local procurement is to build partnerships with entities that are already certified by Sodexo, and/or have the insurance and infrastructure already approved by Sodexo: the Western MA Food Processing Center at the Franklin County CDC (which aggregates and flash freezes carrots, broccoli, potatoes from small MA farms), Red's Best (fresh, MA-based, under-utilized fish species), and the upcoming new Food Bank Farm with farmer Joe Czjakowski (which will grow 250,000 lbs. of potatoes and squash for SPS).

*"Hopefully [the CNC] can help be part of a rising tide with other institutions in the region contributing to a more stable and resilient food system based on people wanting to farm and being successful at it because they have clients who buy their food for a fair price." - Community partner*

### FEDERAL NUTRITION GUIDELINES

As the USDA continues to gut its standards for school meals, SPS and Sodexo hold fast to higher standards set by the CNC at the outset. As Springfield Food Policy Council Chair, Liz O'Gilvie notes:

*"This matters in Springfield. According to Robert Wood Johnson County Ratings, Springfield has worst social determinants of health in the state."*

In February 2020, Sodexo was committed to holding to 10% less sugar in all muffins. By taste testing them with students, staff, getting feedback, reworking recipes, they have developed breakfast muffins that appeal to students. Sodexo did make one change along with relaxed USDA nutrition requirements: dropping whole wheat pasta from menus, as it is the least liked item among students. In this case, Sodexo and SPS chose to ensure that more students would eat meals, striking a balance between hunger and health.

## PROMOTIONS

An advanced internal production and inventory communications system was developed. Edison, a new software system aligns warehouse inventory with the school kitchens, which entails an initial inventory of every school, planning order needs, and identifying sourcing (USDA, Sysco, other vendors). The system also charts recipes, production numbers, serving amounts, and nutrition and allergy information. School cafeteria leads were trained on planning how much of a product they need and placing orders to receive product two weeks ahead of time. The system onboarding process was new for all staff and took much of the first school year to test and fine tune.

SPS and Sodexo launched a Meal Viewer App which provides students and families with menus, nutrition breakdowns, and family events, in multiple languages.

Sodexo built a training room with a full kitchen, white board, moveable tables and chairs. In this room, cafeteria leads from all 61 schools train monthly around menu items, new preparation, and communication systems.

In response to the need for more education and communication about the CNC changes, in January, Sodexo staff released an internal newsletter for kitchen staff, with menu highlights, participation updates, information on local sourcing,

The CNC has received media coverage from the groundbreaking, ribbon cutting, and COVID-19 pandemic response.

## KEY FINDINGS

### INTRODUCING NEW MENU ITEMS TAKES TIME

Anecdotally, FoodCorps members and students say the food is better overall: there is more local food, more scratch cooked food, and healthier options being served. Meal options

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

increasingly represent the diversity of the student body. Healthy recipe development is a key long-term change - supported by student engagement and taste tests. The CNC has held to a 10% reduction in sugar in muffins demonstrating commitment to nutrition guidelines that exceed USDA requirements. The CNC Advisory partners are supporting SPS staff to balance between health and student satisfaction (e.g. the decision to go back to serving white pasta); challenges remain around recipe development in muffins (ratios of sugar/fat; sodium.) The CNC continues to transition and develop new scratch cooked items.

### PROCURING LOCAL INGREDIENTS IS COMPLEX, PARTNERING WITH KEY REGIONAL PARTNERS ACCELERATES PROCESS

Local procurement requires knowledge of existing Sodexo policies/internal protocols. It is accelerated by staff and partners who are networked with farms/aggregators. As they onboard new farm vendors, Sodexo procurement staff have found creative ways to partner with leading regional distribution aggregators, such as the Franklin County CDC and the new Food Bank of Western MA Farm. Procuring local produce has been a longer and more challenging process due to regulations and protocol differences. The district also continues to identify local businesses that meet some of the standards and values established for local and ethical sourcing (Jeff's Granola, 88 Acres, and Chabaso Bakery).

### CHANGING THE SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM IS ONGOING WORK

There continue to be challenges with the CNC's roll out of new food, with meals not always consistent across schools; teachers and parents feel that the food is not always as good as they hoped (i.e. packaged bars for breakfast). This is coupled with ongoing challenges around getting students to eat and enjoy new meal items - there remains substantial waste in many cafeterias. In addition, while the district's hallmark BIC program continues to feed thousands of students every day, there are concerns from school staff and teachers about waste in the classrooms and keeping classrooms clean and tidy as a space for learning.

# A POSITIVE SCHOOL-WIDE WELLNESS CULTURE

## *A Positive School-wide Wellness Culture*

<b>Practices</b>	Student participation is tracked; FoodCorps and Evaluation Committee track vegetable preferences in key schools. Students try new foods and provide feedback on new recipes through taste tests; Parent nutrition classes build capacity and leadership; Families engage in school wellness through taste tests, wellness committees, and healthy school culture events; Increase in culturally relevant foods offered; Wellness Policy implemented
<b>People</b>	SPS: staff, teachers, & administrators - Student Engagement Manager, Administrator of Performance and Evaluation/Wellness Liaison, School Garden Coordinator, District Nurse. Sodexo: Community Engagement Manager, Dietician, Executive Chef, Cafeteria staff. Partners: FoodCorps MA Program Director, 7 FoodCorps members, UMASS Nutrition Extension, Springfield Food Policy Council, Mercy Medical & Trinity Health. Parents & Families.
<b>Policies</b>	School Wellness Policy passed; schools begin implementation; Student and Community Engagement staff hired by both SPS and Sodexo; staff training around food and health; Changes in cafeteria layout and design.
<b>Promotions</b>	External communications about new program on MassLive, NEPR, newspapers, social media; Internal communications through Meal Viewer App, Website, Team Dynamics App, student and family taste tests, staff/admin/family newsletters. Participation in conferences.

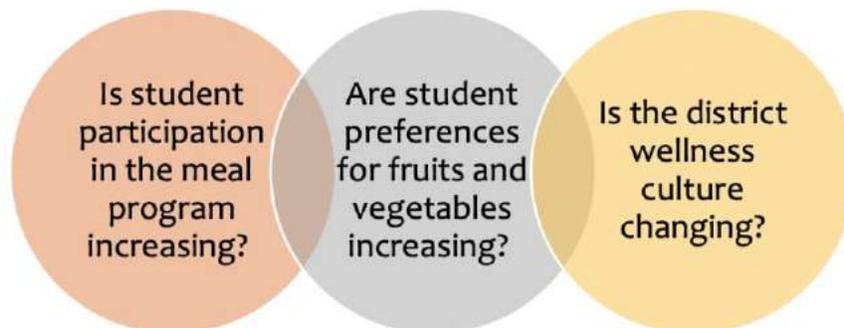
Early on, during the development of the Home Grown Springfield program, Advisory Council members understood that the CNC alone would not change the lives of Springfield students. They identified the need to shift school culture toward health and wellness, beginning on the ground with students, families, teachers, staff, and administrators.

Together the Marketing, Communications, Student/Community Engagement Committee and the Health, Wellness, Training and Curriculum Committee identified the following goals for the program’s Planning & Launch (2018-2019) and Implementation (2019-2020 and beyond). For additional detail and long-term goals, see the Logic Model, Appendix A.

## Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities

Planning & Launch	Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students try new healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods</li><li>• Students try healthy, scratch cooked, foods that represent their culture</li><li>• Students enjoy taste tests of healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods</li><li>• Build awareness of the changes to the meal program among administration, teachers, cafeteria staff</li><li>• Develop district communications strategy</li><li>• Pilot food and nutrition focused hands on learning in gardens and classrooms with Sodexo Sustainability Team &amp; FoodCorps</li><li>• Examine, update, and approve District Wellness Policy</li><li>• Offer wellness training opportunities to staff, teachers</li><li>• Create new jobs to increase student and family engagement</li><li>• Families and community partners participate in health and wellness and food events and activities (gardens, wellness teams, cooking classes, etc.)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students consume healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods</li><li>• Students see their cultures reflected in school meals</li><li>• Students change food preferences toward healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods</li><li>• Build excitement and engagement among administration, teachers, and cafeteria staff about school food change</li><li>• Build internal and external communications strategy and benchmarks</li><li>• Incorporate FoodCorps curriculum into classroom learning standards.</li><li>• Embrace District Wellness Policy at the school level</li><li>• Establish schoolwide multi stakeholder wellness teams</li><li>• Train food service staff in new technical skills</li><li>• Families and community partners demonstrate knowledge in health and wellness and food systems</li></ul>

To understand its progress toward building a positive school wide wellness culture, SPS set out to ask the following questions:



*The 2019-2020 school year launched with Convocation events themed “Power Up.” During events, Superintendent Warwick showcased the new school meal program and the opening of the CNC, highlighting the district’s commitment to serving scratch cooked, locally sourced, healthy, and culturally relevant meals. 5th graders from Boland Elementary Girls on the Run program spoke about the self-esteem they gained by participating in the program, which is aimed at building young girls’ confidence through emotionally and physically healthy lifestyles. Jeff Riley, Commissioner of Education, also spoke on the importance of fostering a culture of wellness, reminding the school community to see their students as whole people, living complex lives. The Power Up theme invited the school community to re-engage in student health and wellness in new and holistic ways, establishing a foundation for the year’s focus on cultivating a schoolwide wellness culture at SPS.*

## PRACTICES

SPS and Sodexo understand that shifting school culture toward health and wellness begins on the ground, with students, parents, staff, teachers, and administrators making small changes to their everyday routines. During the 2019-2020 school year, the district worked to spotlight wellness through events and opportunities for children and families, focused on the CNC’s new school meal offerings.

## STUDENT TASTE TESTS

FoodCorps members partnered with the SPS Student Engagement Manager and cafeteria staff to offer students the chance to try the new scratch recipes being developed at the CNC, as well as fruits and vegetables they may not have tried in the past. The taste tests have served multiple roles at SPS - to give students the opportunity to provide feedback on CNC recipe development and to teach students about new foods.

During the taste tests, FoodCorps members provide students with a sample-size taste of a fresh fruit, vegetable, or new recipe. While students are tasting the item, FoodCorps members talk about what they are eating, describing where it comes from, how it is made, and its nutritional benefits. After students taste the sample, they vote on whether they “love it,” “like it,” or “tried it”. FoodCorps members also ask students questions to generate feedback, which they record and share back with the Student Engagement Manager, who in turn shares that information with the Sodexo Executive Chef. SPS and Sodexo leaders have identified this feedback loop (from students to chefs) as critically important for ensuring that students like the taste of school meals. They are working together to formalize this feedback loop to ensure recipes are informed by student feedback.



*Results of a student taste test on display*

*“[Taste tests] encouraged students to try new and different things. Students were able to inform the Sodexo menu items through taste tests.”— SPS principal*

*“It was nice to see our children being exposed to new foods that were healthy” – SPS teacher*



*Samples prepared for a student taste test*

Many items that were taste tested by students during the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years have ended up on the school meal menu, including: ham & cheese muffin, sausage & mozzarella roll, yellow rice & beans; garbanzo hummus, white bean hummus, pumpkin seeds, spaghetti squash, beef picadillo, kale salad, arroz con leche (rice pudding). During Spring 2019 FoodCorps members engaged students from 11 schools in over 70 taste tests. During the 2019-2020

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

school year FoodCorps members engaged students in 47 taste tests at 13 schools. In addition, SPS, Sodexo, and FoodCorps partnered to attend 14 of the district's 61 open houses in fall of 2019, which featured taste tests of new CNC recipes for parents and families, along with information about the CNC and the new school meal program.

### HEALTHY SCHOOL CULTURE EVENTS

During the 2019-2020 school year SPS hosted 12 events promoting local food and a school wide culture of health. A sampling of those events are summarized below.

- Over 1,600 students at 3 schools had the opportunity to meet a fisherman from Red's Best, a locally sourced seafood company. During the visit, students got to see and touch a locally caught dogfish and talk to the fisherman about his job and the local seafood industry.
- Smoothie bike events were hosted at schools where students, teachers, administrators, and even Springfield's Mayor Sarno got to make a smoothie by riding the bike. In Fall 2019, Indian Orchard Elementary's smoothie bike event served 500 blueberry-kale smoothies to the school community. At Rebecca Johnson Elementary's Harvest Festival another 200 smoothies were served.
- Spanish Heritage Day at DeBerry Elementary School included a school-wide recipe contest for Sandwich de Mezcla, a traditional Puerto Rican ham and cheese sandwich. Two recipes were submitted, which CNC staff used to create an updated, healthier version of the sandwich. Students gave the CNC-made Sandwich de Mezcla high ratings!
- Students at Chestnut Academy (a middle school) went on a field trip to Mike's Maze



*A FoodCorps member demonstrates the Smoothie Bike*



*CNC Sandwich de Mezcla*

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

and Plainville Farm where they visited a corn maze and gleaned over 1,000 lbs. of spaghetti squash from the field. SPS donated the harvest to The Food Bank of Western MA, except for ten bushels which students brought back to Chestnut Academy where it was prepared in two variations and taste tested by students.

### PARENT NUTRITION COURSES

The Springfield Food Policy Council (SFPC) & UMASS Nutrition Extension partnered to offer nutrition courses to SPS parents and caregivers. The course is 7 weeks long and includes lessons on cooking and healthy eating, a guided grocery shopping trip, and policy education (including attending a school committee meeting). Participants are given a stipend, healthy eating and cooking tools (e.g. cookbook, strainer, pedometer), and a certificate upon completion. The course had 66 participants during the 2018-2019 school year, and another 14 participants in Fall 2019. Winter/spring classes were cancelled due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Additional health and wellness education for students is discussed in the *Increased Student Learning and Leadership* section.

### STUDENT MEAL PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

In January 2020, average daily participation rates in the SPS school meal program were 82% for breakfast and 81% for lunch. Compared to January 2019, average daily participation in lunch decreased by less than 1%, which the district considers a stable participation rate. Average daily participation in breakfast decreased by 3.4%.

SPS and Sodexo had anticipated that participation rates may fall in the first months of CNC operations due to the transition of opening the new facility, training staff, developing recipes, and mastering communications. In addition, at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year the district introduced a new accountability tracking software, which tracks student participation rates by counting the number of reimbursable meals served. As staff were trained on the new system and the software began capturing more accurate participation data, the district expected some fluctuation in participation rates. In addition, while administrative, CNC, and cafeteria staff adapted to new operations and amped up HGS programming (taste tests, health and wellness events, field trips, garden activities, etc.), students also experienced some inconsistencies in food preparation, changes in the look and taste of some meal items, and different meal items being offered. This included inconsistent labeling of some new food items during fall 2019, which led to some confusion and may have impacted participation as well.

Based on feedback from school staff and FoodCorps members, it often takes time for students to become familiarized with new menu items, and therefore make the choice to choose them. Taste tests have been one tool used in Springfield to increase familiarity with new menu items, giving

students a chance to provide feedback on the item and want to select them in the future because they are delicious and satisfying. Yet, district leaders recognize that these changes take time. SPS did not get to fully experience the impacts of the new CNC-made meals and the HGS programming because of the school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They expected to see average daily participation rates continue rise in the spring.

SPS continues to have a higher average daily participation rate for both the breakfast and lunch programs than the national average, and has one of the highest participation rates compared to other districts in Massachusetts.

*A brand new scratch recipe developed by CNC chefs, Picadillo (Cuban chili) was taste tested by students, parents, and families at open houses in the fall. Many parents and families enjoyed the chili and were excited to see it on the menu in the winter. In January 2020 Sodexo put the soup on the lunch menu district wide, serving 10,816 cups of picadillo. When it came up on the menu cycle a second time, in March, they served even more - 12,035 cups. While the upward trend in servings suggests that students like the soup, FoodCorps members observe that some students find the soup too spicy. Sodexo is working with SPS to develop a better system for integrating student feedback like this, in order to tweak recipes to ensure students love them and choose them at lunchtime.*

## PEOPLE

Throughout the visioning and construction of the Culinary and Nutrition Center and HGS program, SPS and Sodexo have emphasized that fostering and promoting a culture of health and wellness is key to reducing hunger in the city. SPS and Sodexo also recognize that people are at the center of a positive school wellness culture. The team that works to create and promote a positive school wide wellness culture in Springfield includes:

- **SPS:** Staff, teachers, nurses, and administrators, including Abby Getman-Skillicorn (Student Engagement Manager), Michelle Balch (Administrator of Performance and Evaluation/Wellness Liaison), and Jeanne Clancy (District Nurse)
- **Sodexo:** Erika Grover (Dietician), Norma Nunnally (Community Relations Manager, former), Aaron Lenart (Executive Chef, former) and Chef Managers, Cafeteria Leads and staff, John Alphin (Sustainability & School Garden Coordinator) and garden staff

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

- **Partners:** Liz O’Gilvie (Springfield Food Policy Council), Doreen Fadus and Cherelle Rozie (Mercy Medical Center & Trinity Health), Patricia Harmsen (UMASS Nutrition Extension, former) and nutrition educator staff, Beth Zschau (FoodCorps) and FoodCorps members serving in Springfield
- Parents and families including those participating in nutrition courses, garden education, school committee meetings, PTA, and Advisory Council meetings

Engaging parents and families has been a priority goal for the Home Grown Springfield program. School leaders and Advisory Council members believe that bringing parents and families respectfully into the process of iterating program design and implementation is the key to building community ownership over the program and to affecting long lasting change. Advisory Council members were not sure what this would look like and expressed concern that their meetings may not be welcoming to parents since they are attended primarily by nonprofit and school leaders. Finding the right moment to bring parents and families in and building their power at the table took time. One parent leader emerged, a participant in the parent nutrition classes, and she was ready to speak with the CNC about the work.

*In December 2019 Liz O’Gilvie of the SFPC brought a parent leader to the Advisory Council meeting. She spoke about the impact of parent nutrition classes on her choices and family health. She shared how she learned about serving sizes, reading nutrition labels (especially for sugar and sodium content), nutritional values of dark vs. light green vegetables, grocery shopping, and the importance of exercise (especially her new practice of tracking her step using a pedometer). She explained how her experience in the nutrition course has impacted her whole family, since she is primarily responsible for shopping, cooking, and influencing the eating and exercise habits of her loved ones. She shared some specific changes she has made for her family as a result of her learning during the class, including buying more healthy foods at the grocery store such as yogurt, bananas, apples, new vegetables, and fruit juice, serving vegetables at dinner every night, and paying more attention to getting exercise.*

*She also shared her analysis of the structural challenges and policy solutions she gleaned from discussions during the course. She noted that many people in Springfield are overweight and experience diet-related illness primarily because healthy foods are more expensive, and*

*therefore less accessible. She discussed the importance of starting to make small changes at home, continuing to reinforce those changes at school, and her hope to one day have a full grocery store in her neighborhood that stocks healthy, fresh, affordable food. She shared her excitement to support other parents in engaging with the Home Grown Springfield program and working to build family health. She will be a Wellness Team Leader at an SPS elementary school next year.*

The evaluation team together with SFPC developed a focus group discussion guide for family members who had taken the fall section of the UMASS Extension/SFPC Nutrition Course to hear about the effects of the course on their lives and families. They had scheduled these talks for March 2020. While the talks were cancelled, the CNC hopes to implement them next year with the help from parents like the one described above.

## **POLICIES**

SPS and Sodexo leaders recognize that shaping a positive school wide wellness culture must happen on the ground in partnership with those who study and work in the schools. Yet, they also understand that health and wellness culture in Springfield is deeply impacted by structural challenges that city residents face, including social and economic disadvantage, racial injustice, and health inequity.

*“We’re talking about this in terms of food, but this is really about literacy.” - Liz O’Gilvie, Springfield Food Policy Council*

From the start, Advisory Council members have recognized the opportunity to affect systematic and structural change in SPS and the city of Springfield by working at the policy level. Advisory Council participants understand that policy change can be made at multiple levels - at individual schools, at the district level, and the city level, and at the state and national levels. SPS, Sodexo, SFPC, and their partners have worked together at each of these levels to create new policies that support health and wellbeing for Springfield students and families

## SPS WELLNESS POLICY

After years of coordination and drafting by school leaders, Springfield's School Committee passed a new, district-wide Wellness Policy on March 14, 2019. The policy applies to all schools in the district and includes the following hallmark components:

- All food served in school adheres to the federal nutrition guidelines (including for celebrations, parties, and school sponsored events)
- Food-based fundraisers are not allowed
- Outside food is not allowed to be served at school sponsored events
- Withholding recess is not an acceptable punishment
- Michelle Heim Balch, Senior Administrator of Evaluation for SPS was designated to support the schools and administration in implementing the Wellness Policy by fielding questions, coordinate communications, help implement and uphold the policy.

Since its inception the Health, Wellness, Training and Curriculum Committee has been engaged in conversations about how to implement and embrace the Wellness Policy at the school level, across the district. The committee agreed that the district must frame the policy as an opportunity for health and wellness for all members of the school community versus as a prohibitive or restrictive rule. The 2019-2020 school year marked the first year with the new policy in effect. School wellness leaders worked to increase communications about the policy using the opportunity-oriented framework described above. School leaders also collaborated to implement and uphold the policy at the school level. Steps taken to implement the policy are summarized below.

- Professional development sessions were offered to principals and assistant principals to raise awareness about the policy and to ensure its requirements were clear.
- The SPS Finance Office worked to ensure that no food purchases were approved that did not comply with the new policy.
- SPS and Sodexo leaders collaborated to develop a catering menu for school events or celebrations that meets school food requirements.
- SPS presented to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees about Springfield's Wellness Policy and implementation.

Overall, reception from administrators has been positive and they have demonstrated leadership and modeling with their implementation of the policy at the school level. Parents have also become supportive of the policy as they build awareness of its intention to keep the school community safe and healthy. As one of the first school districts in the United States to

successfully pass a district-wide School Wellness policy, Springfield has become a national leader in school wellness. As a result, DESE invited SPS to help other schools in the state in developing their own wellness policies.

## HIRING, TRAINING, AND WORKPLACE POLICIES

If cultivation of a positive school wide wellness culture occurs at the school level, then ensuring that schools have supportive, well-trained staff is critical. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, SPS and Sodexo each hired a new permanent position to contribute to this goal: Student Engagement Manager, SPS and Community Relations Manager, Sodexo. Together these two positions coordinate to ensure that students and the wider community, including parents, caregivers, and family members are engaged in the school meal program. Advisory Council members state that student and family ownership over the school meal program is critical to its success. By hiring these two positions, SPS and Sodexo demonstrate an investment in student and family engagement.

In addition, SPS, Sodexo, and their partners identify cafeteria staff central to building a positive school wide wellness culture. First, Sodexo cafeteria staff are at the final touchpoint for food service. After the recipe development, high quality food procurement, and preparation at the CNC, school meals are assembled and served in the cafeteria, by the cafeteria staff. Ensuring that those staff members are well trained with culinary and customer service skills is essential. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year Sodexo provided a culinary training professional development workshop to all Lead Chefs. Expanding these opportunities is a goal going forward. Second, Sodexo and SPS recognize that cafeteria staff are not only food service workers, but also educators, role models, and support staff for students, whom they often build long lasting relationships with. Day after day students engage with cafeteria staff, who play the intimate role of feeding them. In addition, because a large number of Sodexo staff live in Springfield and have their own children or grandchildren in the district, they know the students they feed. Cafeteria staff play a central role in building students social, emotional, and life skills learning. School leaders and members of the Advisory Council continue to search for ways to support cafeteria staff in fully realizing this important role.

## CAFETERIA & MEALTIME EXPERIENCE

Advisory Council members and school leaders identify cafeteria layout and design as an important component for creating a positive mealtime experience for students. What the cafeteria looks and feels like has an impact on how students and staff move through the space, the noise level, and the overall experience of having lunch. At the end of the 2018-2019 school year, a FoodCorps member took on the challenge of planning changes in cafeteria design and layout. As a second-year FoodCorps member, she was able to see the changes implemented at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. The changes included a new lunch line formation, which ensures students walk by the salad bar and has resulted in decreased line times as well as less noise in the cafeteria. The changes also included a new seating arrangement, which has students from different grades or classrooms sitting on each side of the table, facilitating cross-classroom socialization.



*FoodCorps members run a taste test in a school cafeteria*

*“The changes in the lunch line flow is a change that will stay [for the long term].*

*Also the change in cafeteria seating. [Both changes] have really helped the cafeteria environment, it's so much quieter now, and so much friendlier.” - FoodCorps member*

But changing the line flow and seating arrangement was intended to be the beginning of the changes to the cafeteria environment in this school. The FoodCorps member had spent much of the school year collecting input from students on other aesthetic changes and updates they wanted to see in their cafeteria, and she had created a plan to implement student’s ideas. Unfortunately, due to the school closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the plans were not realized.

*“I got funding to do it. I asked every single student...what changes they would like to see in the cafeteria and what they would like it to look like*

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

*and I typed all of them up. And so our next step was going to be to start making those changes and narrow in on what we wanted to do. The students were going to create the designs for it, and then they were going to vote.*

*That was supposed to be my biggest, long term change of the school, to make it an amazing cafeteria environment. That's what I wanted for them...if [the cafeteria] looked better it would make it such a better place for everyone there.” – FoodCorps member*

*Student ideas for changes to the cafeteria included:*

*Colorful tables, seats, and walls, including many requests for a disco ball;*

*More representation of their own school, including drawings or murals of the school garden or other school accomplishments;*

*Friendlier cafeteria staff;*

*More quiet time, as well music playing;*

*Time to play games and socialize with friends*

In addition to making changes in the cafeteria, some schools have also found success in holding school mealtimes in the classroom, a program which Sodexo and SPS have piloted during the 2019-2020 school year in some schools. Initial reports suggest that having lunch in the classroom results in a more calm, quiet, and enjoyable lunchtime. On the downside, some teachers have said that they prefer not to have students eating in the classroom, and that it reduces the amount of school wide socialization that is possible during the day.

*“Classrooms tend to be relatively quiet and orderly... during lunchtime and students usually have enough time to eat and work on a fun activity. Overall, this system [of eating in the classroom] seems to work well.” - FoodCorps member*

## PROMOTIONS

Communications within the SPS community, as well as between the school community and the wider city and region, have been a major priority in the roll out of Springfield’s new school food program. While it has been a challenge to identify and develop appropriate communications channels for the project’s many different stakeholders, district leaders and their partners have been diligent in working to find solutions. In January 2020, Sodexo and SPS began a review of processes to improve channels of communication internally and externally. The review was focused on the lessons learned during the transition and first year of operations at the CNC. Roll out of actions began in February and March but were interrupted by school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic response, some digital communications plans were utilized to promote activities, raise awareness of meal availability, and engage students and families at the emergency meal sites. For more information on communications around feeding students during the COVID-19 pandemic response, see the section called *COVID-19 Pandemic Response*. Below is a summary of internal and external communications developed and used before the onset of the pandemic, in fall 2019 and winter 2020.

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

Over the past year, Sodexo and SPS staff, teachers, administrators, and partners have developed new communication loops to foster a culture of health and wellness at school. Methods (surveys, in-person conversations, informal tracking tools) are established, and then with feedback, iterated, and shifted to accommodate needs. For example, at the Advisory Council subcommittee meetings, critical conversations occur, resulting in new real time methods for Sodexo to get feedback from students, families, teachers, staff, and others.

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### TEACHER FEEDBACK

After conversations among the Student, Family, and Community Engagement and Communications Sub-committee and meetings with the Springfield Education Association (teacher’s union), SPS and Sodexo partnered to create the Food Service Feedback App, a desktop app for teachers.

Located conveniently on the SPS electronic dashboard, the Food Service Feedback App enables teachers who run BIC programs to submit direct feedback to Sodexo food service about their BIC experience. In the feedback form teachers can indicate if the issue is urgent (e.g. they did not receive enough breakfast items for all students in their class) or non-urgent (e.g. they

noticed that breakfast sandwiches were not hot). The feedback form is received by Sodexo Accountability Team Leads who respond immediately to urgent issues (such as bringing additional meals to a classroom without enough). While the app is currently being used primarily for submitting feedback about issues, the district hopes to create an opportunity for teachers to provide positive feedback through the app as well.

During the 2019-2020 school year the app was piloted in six schools and then expanded to eleven schools. Prior to school closures due to COVID-19, Sodexo had received 21 submissions from teachers, 20 of which have been resolved. Sodexo staff have found the feedback helpful, and teachers were excited to have their concerns heard and be responded to promptly.

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#### STUDENT FEEDBACK

As discussed in *Practices* section, students have been engaged directly in taste tests, where they are given the opportunity to provide feedback to FoodCorps members about the foods they are tasting. Students are able to vote on the recipe, indicating whether they “love it,” “like it,” or “tried it,” as well as provide verbal feedback in the moment. After the taste test has been concluded and FoodCorps members are back at the computer, they use a daily journal template to record student perceptions of the recipe. Entries are shared with the Student Engagement Manager, who passes the feedback along to Sodexo’s Executive Chef and staff.

While this feedback loop is simple and straightforward, SPS and Sodexo staff have expressed that it's too informal, making feedback difficult to track, and therefore that it has infrequently resulted in Sodexo making changes to a recipe based on the student feedback. This led to SPS and Sodexo staff collaborating to create a new tasting matrix form, where SPS staff and FoodCorps members can document and rate student feedback. This form is still under development and has yet to be tested.

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#### PARENT AND FAMILY FEEDBACK

While SPS and Sodexo have committed to building a school meal program that centralizes the needs and desires of students and families, and builds community ownership of the program, they have not yet developed a tangible feedback loop for parents and families. Currently, most parent and family feedback is shared directly with the SFPC, who in turn shares that information with the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council hopes – with the SFPC – to engage parents in focus groups next year, and to develop new ways for family feedback gathering and integration. Moreover, the Advisory Council, with leadership from the SFPC, has stated the hope of establishing a Parent Wellness Board to serve as a conduit between parents and SPS and Sodexo decision-makers. Next steps must include strategizing (particularly with the SFPC)

around how to collaborate with parents and families to develop more effective communications to reach the wider school community.

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#### CAFETERIA STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

*“No matter how committed or dedicated a Sodexo staff member is, or a school staff member is...the lines of communication just aren't there... so [staff don't] have the knowledge that... [their school] is serving local potatoes. Because the only way [they would] know that is if they were in the kitchen and they looked at the box and they saw that it was from Rhode Island.” - FoodCorps member*

Based on ongoing feedback that Sodexo staff in the CNC and cafeterias are not receiving timely updates about program developments or feeling connected to their critically important work of feeding Springfield kids, in January 2020, Sodexo launched a newsletter for cafeteria staff about the meal program. Highlights included new menu items, updates on local sourcing, information on health and wellness, staff updates, and highlights celebrating food service accomplishments at the CNC and in the cafeterias. The newsletter is intended to support staff in becoming apprised of changes to the meal program, as well as help food service staff feel connected to each other and the wider district.

Sodexo cafeteria leads participate in trainings about new food preparation and delivery patterns with the CNC. These trainings could benefit from including additional learning about food systems, nutrition, health, and wellness.

#### EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Sodexo Community Engagement Manager and SPS Student Engagement Manager create communication materials for teachers and families with information about the school meals program
- SPS Communications team manages social media, including updates about the CNC and school meal program
- SPS and Sodexo staff collaborate to maintain the Home Grown Springfield website, including ongoing work to make the site more informative, interactive, and appealing for families

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

- Media coverage in a wide variety of local news outlets including the NEPR, WWLP, The Daily Hampshire Gazette, The Republican, Mass Live, La Voz, Af-Am POV and more
- SPS and partners were invited to speak about the CNC and Home Grown Springfield programs at the 2019 Farm to Institution New England Conference and the 2019 USDA Farm to School grant awardees conference.

Beyond parents and families of SPS students, the district may also benefit from strategic partnerships to promote their meal program. The Advisory Council has discussed creating a page on the Home Grown Springfield website that could serve as a blog for sharing news and updates about the program. They have also discussed a city-wide digital storytelling campaign which could use posters and audio recording to share information and impacts of the programs on the walls of bus stops or city buildings.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

#### **REVISING THE WELLNESS POLICY IS A SIGNIFICANT SYSTEMIC CHANGE**

After the School Committee passed a new wellness policy in March 2019, Michelle Balch, Administrator of Performance and Evaluation, has driven district conversations and trainings about eliminating outside food for fundraisers and events, requiring all food (including for celebrations) to meet federal nutrition guidelines, and prohibiting the practice of eliminating or withholding recess. While some principals and families have pushed back, having a policy in place and structures for dialogue and training provide means to build buy-in and compliance. For example, when teachers and parents voiced concern with the provision prohibiting food-related fundraising, stating that those fundraisers are often the most profitable for students, school wellness leaders respond by providing principles with a list of alternative fundraising ideas, and are working to highlight schools that are having success with those alternative activities.

#### **BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH TEACHERS**

While FoodCorps members note the overwhelmingly positive reception of the new meals and programs in the schools where they have members, the Teacher's Union has voiced concerns about the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) program and tensions remain around using teacher's time to serve classroom breakfasts, as well as taking time away from instruction. The Wellness Director mediates some of these conversations. There is an opportunity in the coming year for more communication with teachers and principals across the district to see the value of the

menu changes and student engagement, as well as continually listening to teachers and integrating their feedback in order to make the program sustainable for all stakeholders.

#### CULTIVATING HEALTH AND FOOD LITERACY AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME

The commitment to dynamic teaching and wellness learning through nutrition education courses, school garden programming, taste tests, healthy food events, and food and farming field trips builds school community synergy amongst parents, families, students, teachers, and administrators. For many years UMASS Nutrition Extension has supported this programming by offering nutrition education courses in 20 of the district's elementary schools. In 2018, FoodCorps was invited into the district, helping to layer on top of UMASS Nutrition Extension programs. FoodCorps service members have quickly become integral to SPS's nutrition and garden education curriculum, setting up systems and building capacity for SPS's student engagement programs.

SPS partners collaborate to strengthen the continuity of programs and impact, from school to home. For example, student taste tests (run by SPS Student Engagement Manager and FoodCorps members) have increased participation in parent nutrition education classes (run by UMASS Extension and SPFC) – 64% of parents said they took the class because their kids told them about the food they tried at school. Encouraging and creating opportunities for cultivating health literacy among all school community members, and between school and home, is fundamental to building a positive wellness culture across the city. Ongoing funding for these programs (including FoodCorps) is critical for the continued rippling out of impacts.

#### CHANGE TAKES INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE AND PLACES

School culture is created by the daily behaviors and actions among all school community members. Shifting school culture toward health and wellness is deeply challenging because it depends not only on changing the food and the school meal infrastructure, but also shifting the relationships individuals and communities have with each other and themselves. SPS and Sodexo have demonstrated their commitment to building the infrastructure required for change by constructing the CNC. Further investments in the people and places that support Springfield students must be ongoing and expanding. For example, investment in food service staff by providing training and professional development ensures they are not only skilled chefs, but also food educators and caregivers for students. The Advisory Council has discussed ways to tell the story of how cafeteria staff support, take care of and educate students, through story posters, multimedia promotions, photovoice. In addition, ongoing investment in school building infrastructure will help create bright, inviting, and friendly cafeteria spaces that make

students and staff feel good. Investing in parents and families ensures that student growth and learning goes beyond school and invites movement toward health and wellness across the city.

#### PARTICIPATION RATES REMAIN HIGH

SPS has high school meal participation rates when compared to the average across the United States and the rest of the state. For example, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) reports that about 92% of students nationwide have access to the National School Lunch Program, yet on a typical day an average of 58% of students participate. In Springfield, 81% of students participated in school lunch in January 2020.

SPS's school meal program is impacting student hunger. The District Nurse reports that student hunger visits (i.e., students feeling sick due to hunger) to school nurse offices were down by 10% in February 2020, as compared to last year.

#### MASTERING COMMUNICATIONS TAKES TIME AND PLANNING

Throughout the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years there were ongoing reports that parents, families, teachers, administrators, and Sodexo staff did not fully understand the Home Grown Springfield programs and how they would impact students and the broader community. Future communications about school meal changes should be dynamic and diverse in style (i.e. printed materials, electronic materials, in-person training and workshops, etc.) and consistently reach all members of the school community. The Advisory Council has brainstormed some outside-the-box communications and engagement strategies including:

- A #CaughtBeingHealthy campaign where SPS community members and families submit photos to SPS social media showing them participating in healthy activities;
- Workshops on mindful eating, food acceptance;
- Creating a Wellness Champion award for teachers, staff, and students, spotlighting school wellness leaders.

Changing the cafeteria experience across a district takes funding, capacity and coordination: Many school cafeterias do not yet evoke the kind of health and wellness culture that the district hopes to create and sustain. While SPS and Sodexo have worked hard to greatly increase the amount of hands on learning, taste tests, food promos, etc., many SPS school cafeterias continue to struggle with being noisy, having limited time for eating, and lacking bright and lively aesthetics. While many schools have salad bars, it remains a goal to install them district-

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

wide. Some of these challenges are related to capacity, timing, and resources. With buy in from leadership, change is happening, but at a slow pace.

*“The challenges are structural, cultural, capacity and funding issues. So many different chains of command exist in school meals, that it’s just plain hard to develop a cohesive culture about making and serving school food. Culture moves at the speed of trust - it will take time to change cultures in 61 cafeterias.” - Abby Getman-Skillicorn, SPS Student Engagement Manager*

# INCREASED STUDENT LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

## *Increase Student Learning and Leadership*

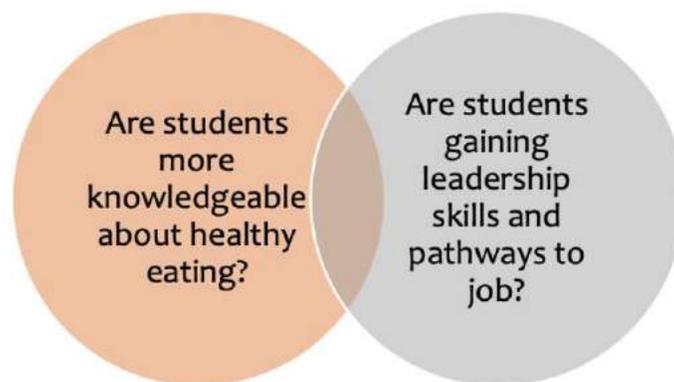
<b>Practices</b>	SPS and Sodexo partner to provide school garden education in over half of schools; FoodCorps provides nutrition and garden education in 11 elementary schools and support 5 afterschool nutrition/garden clubs; UMASS Nutrition Extension provides taste tests in all preschools and nutrition education in 20 schools; SPS hosts local food producers and sends students on field trips to nearby farms; Students exposed to food/farming careers during career days and build job skills through projects related to the CNC (graphic design, marketing, branding). Students provide direct feedback on meal program.
<b>People</b>	SPS: staff, teachers, & administrators - Student Engagement Manager, Administrator of Performance and Evaluation/Wellness Liaison, Sustainability Manager/School Garden Coordinator. Sodexo: Dietician, Executive Chef, Cafeteria staff. Partners: FoodCorps MA Program Director, 7 FoodCorps members, UMASS Nutrition Extension, Springfield Food Policy Council, parents & families.
<b>Policies</b>	SPS Student Engagement Manager position created; SPS, Sodexo, and partners work together to institutionalize the school garden and nutrition education curriculum – SPS includes garden line item in school budget. SPS and partners participate in school food advocacy at local, state, and national levels.
<b>Promotions</b>	External communications about new program on MassLive, NEPR, newspapers, social media; Internal communications through Meal Viewer App, Website, student and family taste tests, staff/admin/family/community newsletters, posters in schools. Participation in conferences. Students participate in Junior Chef competition.

Education and learning are at the center of SPS’s approach to reducing hunger and promoting student success. SPS recognizes that increasing student knowledge around health, nutrition, gardening, and food systems is fundamental to changing student behavior. They understand that building healthy habits among students results in being better able to learn and grow. They know that students who are fully engaged in their educational experience are more equipped to build their skillsets, become leaders in the fields they are passionate about, and live fulfilling lives in the service of themselves, their families, and their community.

Together the Marketing, Communications, Student/Community Engagement Committee and the Health, Wellness, Training and Curriculum Committee identified the following goals for the program’s Planning & Launch (2018-2019) and Implementation (2019-2020 and beyond). For additional detail and long-term goals, see the Logic Model, Appendix A.

Planning & Launch	Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students participate in health and wellness and food events and activities (gardens, wellness teams, cooking classes, etc.)</li><li>• Students are aware of changes to the meal program through participation in taste tests, tours of the CNC, and new menu items</li><li>• SPS develops Student CNC Ambassador program</li><li>• Student internship positions (cooking, food services, gardening, wellness) are created giving students opportunities to develop critical thinking and hands on experience</li><li>• District pilots components of health and wellness and food learning program</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students obtain new skills (gardening, cooking, advocacy)</li><li>• Students are excited about and engaged in school food change and learning opportunities</li><li>• Student CNC Ambassador system scaffolded in designated schools</li><li>• Internship program established</li><li>• District invests in health and wellness and food learning program infrastructure</li></ul>

In order to understand if they are meeting their goals around increasing student learning and leadership, SPS asked the following questions:



## PRACTICES

### NUTRITION AND GARDEN-BASED EDUCATION

SPS relies on constellation of programs and people to provide students with nutrition and garden-based education. Through these programs the district promotes hands-on and experiential learning, aiming to give students the opportunity to learn by being outdoors, working in the garden, and applying skills learned in the classroom.



*SPS school garden*

Since 2014 the district has offered hands-on garden education through its School Garden program, which has operated with various partnerships including with Sodexo, SFPC and School Sprouts. In 2014 SPS was awarded a USDA Farm to School grant to launch its School Garden program, which represented an important shift in the health and wellness culture in the district, solidifying the commitment to garden-based education. John Alphin, the Sodexo Sustainability Coordinator, was appointed as the School Garden Coordinator. Today SPS currently operates 29 outdoor school gardens, 14 indoor school gardens (under lights), and 5 hydroponic indoor gardens. In 2019 SPS received a second USDA Farm to School grant, supporting the installation of 7 more school gardens.

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

The gardens are used as hands-on learning spaces by classroom teachers and the School Garden program, offering lessons in science, math, writing, and health/wellness. Garden-based education is also offered in SPS's summer school classes, including Sheriff Cochi's summer enrichment program for youth. During the summer of 2019, SPS offered more garden-based summer school classes than ever before. The gardens are also tended to in the summertime by families and community members. The school garden team recognizes the gardens as an excellent space to engage parents and families around healthy cooking and eating. The school garden team has noticed that while some parents may hesitate to get involved in school activities during the academic year, the garden represents a good entry point for parent engagement. Parent and family involvement in the gardens during the summer also helps provide them with fresh fruits and vegetables to supplement their grocery shopping.



*Worm composting in a school garden*

*"This is changing lives beyond reducing hunger visits and increasing participation. It's bigger than the kids in the garden. Sometimes kids get reinforcement and see their success in the gardens, and sometimes it impacts their academics." Liz O'Gilvie, Springfield Food Policy Council*

SPS supplements garden education with nutrition education. For many years the district has worked closely with UMASS Extension, which supports a fruit and vegetable taste test program in all district preschools, as well as nutrition education courses in 4 PE classes in 20 schools. UMASS Extension also distributes bilingual nutrition education posters for parents and kids in the district.

In 2018, the district also began partnering with FoodCorps, an organization which places service



*Students engage in nutrition education activities*

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*



*Students prepare their own scratch cooked recipe*

members in schools for one-year, working to connect students to healthy food through hands-on garden and nutrition education. During the 2018-2019 school year SPS brought three FoodCorps members into the district to support, scaffold, and institutionalize their existing garden and nutrition education programs. In the 2019-2020 school year the district increased the number of FoodCorps members to 7. FoodCorps members visit lunch daily, run student taste tests, talk with students about healthy food choices and foodways, develop and deliver nutrition and garden education

lessons, run after school nutrition and gardening clubs, and work with teachers and school staff to develop a positive school wide wellness culture in their schools. During the 2019-2020 school year FoodCorps members engaged over 850 students at 11 elementary schools in over 450 direct nutrition education lessons. In addition, FoodCorps members held 5 afterschool nutrition and gardening clubs.

*“It has made the students more aware of healthy choices for food. It has helped inspire them to eat healthier and to think about where our food comes from. They have asked interesting questions about what teachers know about food and gardening, which has helped to build more bonds between staff and students. It has enhanced cooperative groups of students in grade levels, as well as between grade levels.” - SPS teacher*

*“Everyone in my class enjoyed the FoodCorps lessons. I think it helped expose them to fruits and vegetables they may have not heard of before.” - SPS teacher*

*“[Our FoodCorps member] covered topics that normally I would not have time to incorporate into my everyday lessons.” - SPS teacher*

In addition to these nutrition education and gardening programs, SPS works to make additional food and health-related learning opportunities available to students. A selection of those opportunities are summarized below.

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

- Over 1,600 students at 3 schools had the opportunity to meet a fisherman from Red's Best, a locally sourced seafood company. During the visit, students got to see and touch a locally caught dogfish and talk to the fisherman about his job and the local seafood industry.
- Students at Chestnut Academy (a middle school) went on a field trip to Mike's Maze and Plainville Farm where they visited a corn maze and gleaned over 1,000 lbs. of spaghetti squash from the field. SPS donated the harvest to The Food Bank of Western MA, except for ten bushels which students brought back to Chestnut Academy where it was prepared in two variations and taste tested by students.
- Students at STEM Middle Academy are learning about hydroponic growing practices by producing hydroponic basil. They are exploring the opportunity to grow basil for the CNC, as well as offer education to other students interested in learning about the system.



*Students try hummus and vegetables*

*"I want them to...know how the garden grows in their science curriculum, bring [the vegetables to the CNC], see how it's all cut and cleaned, brought back to their school and cooked in their cafeteria. And be able to understand that." – School leader*

### BUILDING PATHWAYS TO CAREERS

The Home Grown Springfield program aims to engage students in multiple levels of learning. While direct nutrition and garden education are important, so are opportunities to build job skills. Students have been engaged directly in several marketing and branding projects for the CNC and Home Grown Springfield programs. For example, during the 2018-2019 school year the district hosted a competition among students to design the Home Grown Springfield logo. TaMya Romero, a Putnam Vocational Technical Academy Visual Arts student won the competition and her design was used to create the program's logo. In the 2019-2020 school year, Putnam students worked on a branding project, including developing an icon to highlight locally sourced products on the lunch line. In the future, the CNC hopes to offer internships in Human Resources, Food Service Operations, Finance,

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

Information Technology, Culinary Arts, and Hospitality. Sodexo staff have partnered with SPS teachers and FoodCorps members to provide presentations about their work, aiming to increase knowledge and awareness around potential career opportunities for students.

*“We brought in Sodexo’s Executive Chef to meet [students] for career day and that was really awesome for them. They loved that day. And they really appreciated hearing that Sodexo actually cares about them and they want the food to be good...The students gave such positive feedback...They were like, ‘I love the food so much!’ And they were talking about the foods that they really loved and they were talking like, ‘Yeah I noticed how the food’s changed’ and ‘I really am starting to like it now.’.... And they were really excited to have him there. He did an experiment about how dough rises with them, they loved that.” - FoodCorps member*

SPS and Sodexo have also expressed the desire for the CNC facility to become a learning and engagement space for the community. This includes offering cooking and nutrition workshops for community members. Workshops have not yet been offered. The CNC and SPS cafeterias are also sites of learning and training for the many Springfield residents who are employed as food service workers by Sodexo.

### HOME GROWN SPRINGFIELD PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

In addition to participating in marketing and branding projects, students have been engaged directly in Home Grown Springfield program development. For example, Pioneer Valley Project Youth Ambassadors from Central High School and Putnam Vocational Technical Academy met with Sodexo and SPS to give feedback on menus (particularly around vegetarian and non-pork options for high school students) and assess signage needs in the cafeteria. In response, Sodexo introduced several changes, including offering a sun butter sandwich at all high schools. Additionally, as discussed in the Positive School Wide Wellness Culture, Practices section, students have been engaged in menu development by offering their feedback at taste tests. Sodexo has committed to developing a systematic method for tracking feedback in order to use it to inform menu changes. The goal is to create a student feedback loop from taste tests directly into recipe production. Being involved in menu development provides students with the opportunity to apply their nutrition knowledge, practice thinking about healthy meal choices, and develop their own tastes and opinions about food.

## PEOPLE

Student learning around nutrition and gardening is supported by an array of important people and organizations, including:

- **SPS:** Abby Getman-Skillicorn (Student Engagement Manager), school teachers and staff
- **Sodexo:** John Alphin (Sustainability & School Garden Program Coordinator), Aaron Lenart (Executive Chef, former), Erika Grover, Dietician, cafeteria staff
- **Partners:** Liz O’Gilvie (Springfield Food Policy Council), Beth Zschau (FoodCorps), Patricia Harmsen (UMASS Nutrition Extension, former) and nutrition educator staff, parents and families

## POLICIES

At the school level, there has been ongoing work to institutionalize SPS’s School Garden program and its associated curriculum. SPS now includes the program as a permanent line item in the budget, representing a critical systems change for the district. Furthermore, Springfield’s work around garden education in an urban school district with high rates of economic disadvantage is recognized across the state, and is influencing policy nation-wide.

*“We’re making policy that lives beyond us here. And impacting policy on a state and national level. Policy is the people behind it.” - John Alphin, Sodexo Sustainability & School Garden Coordinator*

Partnerships have also formed among community organizations based on their shared work with SPS, which are being leveraged to engage in important state and national policy conversations around school food, student success, and community resiliency. Members of the Advisory Council (including leaders from SPS, SFPC, Mercy Hospital, and others) have collaborated in multiple ways, including:

- Submitting comments on the USDA Dietary Guidelines advocating for stricter sugar limitations and a K-12 nutrition education sub-committee at the USDA.
- Contributing significantly to Breakfast After the Bell/Breakfast in the Classroom legislation at state level, including bringing several Springfield parents who were new to

policy advocacy work to speak at the MA state house. Springfield is viewed as a leader in BIC across the state.

## PROMOTIONS

- FoodCorps and UMASS Extension provide nutrition and garden education posters, which are displayed in school cafeterias and classrooms
- FoodCorps members create and distribute fall and spring newsletters for school staff, families, students, and partners, sharing garden and nutrition education milestones
- Student taste tests and events raise awareness around local sourcing, nutrition, and building a school wide wellness culture
- Sodexo's Junior Chef Competition engages students to participate in an annual cooking contest, where students develop a recipe and partner with a food service staff member to execute it. Families attend the final event and celebration each March. (The Junior Chef Competition was cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

## KEY FINDINGS

### PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION FOR INTEGRAL NUTRITION AND GARDEN-BASED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Springfield's nutrition and garden-based education programs are supported by an array of organizations, funders, and educators. The many people that contribute to offering hands on, experiential learning opportunities for SPS students have been building out these programs for almost a decade. Formal garden education in SPS began when the USDA Farm to School grant (2014) provided funding to hire John Alphin as School Garden Coordinator. Since, SPS and Sodexo have expanded garden-based education to 55 gardens (including outdoors, indoor, and hydroponic), reaching hundreds of SPS students. Funding for the garden program was later picked up by Sodexo, and since has gained a line item in the school budget, signaling a major systems change in support of garden education. In 2018 the H.P. Kendall Foundation provided funding to hire Abby Getman-Skillicorn, hired later by SPS to manage student programs and accelerate nutrition and garden based learning in the schools. The ongoing support of passionate educators is at the core of the SPS School Garden program, continually striving to install more gardens, provide more garden-based curriculum, support more teachers, and get more students outside. SPS garden educators see their students grow, learn, and excel in new ways in the garden, promoting holistic learning and diverse skill building.

FUNDING FOODCORPS HAS ENHANCED FOOD AND NUTRITION LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM, CAFETERIA, AND GARDENS

Over the past two years, FoodCorps has become an essential part of the SPS nutrition and garden-based education program. FoodCorps members visit lunch daily, run student taste tests, talk with students about healthy food choices, develop and deliver nutrition and garden education lessons, run afterschool nutrition and garden clubs, and work with teachers and school staff to develop a positive school wide wellness culture in their schools. During the 2018-2019 school year the district hosted 3 FoodCorps members. The following year the district increased its members to 7. During the 2019-2020 school year FoodCorps members engaged over 850 students at 11 elementary schools in over 450 direct nutrition education lessons. In addition, FoodCorps members held 5 afterschool nutrition and gardening clubs. The added capacity that FoodCorps members provide to teachers, cafeteria staff, and garden educators is invaluable. The work that FoodCorps members do works to institutionalize positive school wellness culture. In schools where FoodCorps is present students are engaged in conversations about food, gardening, nutrition, and food systems in ways they are not in schools without FoodCorps members.

*“My work is totally enhanced by being able to observe someone else teach my subject area in a different way. The partnership [with FoodCorps] supports giving the children and families opportunities to live healthy lives, and helping the children to have skills in determining how to grow their own food and how it fits in with knowing science and using science in their lives” - SPS Teacher*

*“I have learned so much from the lessons that [our FoodCorps member] teaches our students. This partnership has supported our schools’ mission to engage the community and providing hands on and cross curricular lessons.” - SPS teacher*

YOU CAN CHANGE THE FOOD BUT WILL STUDENTS EAT IT?

15 years of farm to school programming around the country has proven that changing menus alone does not drive children to change eating preferences and habits. The combination of hands-on learning in the garden, experiential food and nutrition education, and agency (having a say in the school meal program) creates student buy-in. The CNC takes the next step by also

## *Transforming School Food, Transforming Communities*

engaging families in food and health, resource sharing, family events, and workshops. It provides internship opportunities for students, jobs for Springfield residents, and a site for coalescing around food justice in the city. The impacts of this holistic approach are germinating.

### ENGAGING STUDENTS IN GIVING MENU FEEDBACK BUILDS BUY IN

When students observe that administrators are listening to them, and responding to their requests, they feel ownership over the program. SPS has engaged students in graphic design, menu development, and sharing feedback about school food. The next step is to create a Student Advisory Committee, an early goal of the CNC Advisory Council.

# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

## Building Partnerships through Collaborative Process

<b>Practices</b>	Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee comprised of experts in food policy, food and health access, sustainable farming, institutional food and hunger support the SPS and Sodexo staff to achieve goals.
<b>People</b>	SPS, Sodexo, Springfield Food Policy Council, CISA, UMASS EXT, UMASS Auxiliary Food Services, FoodCorps, Mercy Medical Center/Trinity Health, Food Bank of Western MA, Franklin County CDC, MA Farm to School, Kendall Foundation, Jeff's Granola, Kittredge suppliers. SPS hired a facilitator, Fertile Ground. Mercy and Trinity Health funded first year of evaluation.
<b>Policies</b>	The structure of committees: Health, Wellness, Training and Curriculum; Student, Family, Community Engagement and Communications; Production, Local Procurement and Menu Planning; Evaluation. Collaborative advocacy at the local, state, and national levels for Breakfast After the Bell, Health Incentives Program, Community Eligibility Provision, and more.
<b>Promotions</b>	Advisory Council members spreads the word amongst networks and funders about the Culinary and Nutrition Center and Home Grown Springfield programs.

From the outset, SPS and Sodexo leaders imagined that the CNC and HGS program could be groundbreaking – a model for doing school food differently, which would build health equity across the city. District leaders envisioned a facility and a program that would not only feed every Springfield student fresh, healthy food, but would create new systems to sustain that change that would ripple across the city. The key to expanding the CNC and HGS program beyond the district, making it a city-wide initiative, was the formation of the Advisory Council.

*“If I was a consultant...the first thing I would do is start the Advisory Council earlier in the process” - School leader*

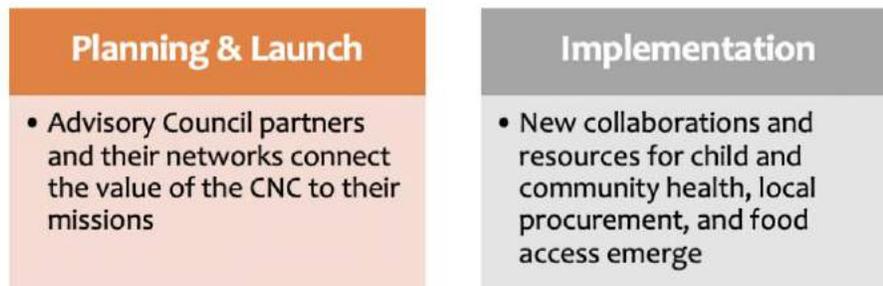
Increasingly since the 2000s, multi-stakeholder coalitions have been used as a tool for making change. Coalitions are often used to identify community needs, build consensus around solutions, share resources, manage collaborative evaluation metrics, and promote long-term solutions that work.<sup>ix</sup> Coalitions are a distinct form of organizing because they aim to bring together people who are different from each other, whether by mission and goals, community served, or priorities, to work toward common goals with collective benefit. Over the past

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decade, coalitions have increasingly been called on to impart “collective impact,” which occurs when diverse stakeholders join forces to establish a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and the support of a backbone organization to oversee and facilitate the coalition.x

After over a decade of organizing leading up to the construction of the CNC, the vision began to come alive in the steel beams framing the new structure in December 2017. At this time, Liz O’Gilvie (Springfield Food Policy Council) and Phil Korman (CISA) began to envision the power that could be leveraged by bringing together a diverse, cross-sector coalition to guide this project. In collaboration with the H.P. Kendall Foundation and Fertile Ground, they designed a structure and meeting schedule for the Advisory Council that carried the CNC and HGS through its first two years.

During its process, the Advisory Council worked together to identify the following goals for itself during the Planning & Launch (2018-2019) and Implementation (2019-2020 and beyond) phases of the project. For additional detail and long-term goals, see the Logic Model, Appendix A.



In addition, in order to assess their progress, they asked the following evaluation question:

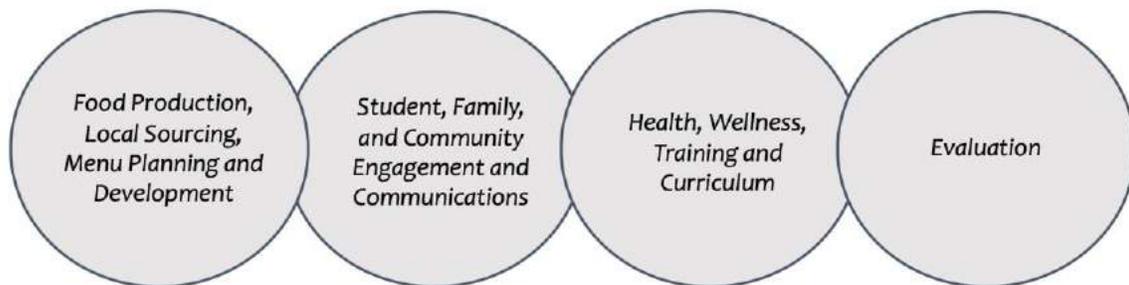


## PRACTICES

The H.P. Kendall Foundation funded the convening of a multi-stakeholder Advisory Council (facilitated by Catherine Sands, Fertile Ground) comprised primarily of experts in food policy, food and health access, sustainable farming, institutional food and hunger to support the SPS and Sodexo staff to achieve their goals. Catherine was joined by Kristen Whitmore, a food systems consultant and PhD student at University of Massachusetts Amherst, who conducted 16 interviews with the group as part of her master's thesis. She then continued as a member of the evaluation team.

Overall, stakeholders represent many different missions and models, all working toward increasing food access and promoting food justice, but from a myriad of angles. At least one Advisory Council member is also a parent of a Springfield student, and several others are parents of Springfield graduates. Within the large group, the Advisory Council formed sub-committees, outlined below. Each sub-committee is composed of about ten representatives from the large group, with several stakeholders participating in multiple sub-committees.

### **Advisory Council Sub-Committees**



Throughout 2018, 2019, and into 2020 (up to the COVID-19 school closures in March) the Advisory Council met as a large group four times annually and as individual subcommittees in between those meetings. In its first meetings each sub-committee developed a goal statement, below.

## COMMITTEE GOALS



Then, through its collaborative process, the Advisory Council generated a theory of change, logic model, and strategic work plans for each sub-committee (Appendix A and B). Throughout 2018, 2019, and 2020 Advisory Council meetings served as a place for Advisors to inform each other, hear about program updates, develop ideas, share experiences, and provide feedback.

*“I think it’s really unique to see a food service management company, a district and...all the community partners that sit around this table, I haven’t seen this in any of the other districts that we work in...nothing like this, where there are so many committed leaders across the community...I think it will be what makes this stick.” - Community partner*

Through the support of the H.P. Kendall Foundation’s multi-year grant, SPS and Sodexo were able to harness community and regional resources to innovate school meal and education practices. Through the Home Grown Springfield program, SPS, Sodexo, and Advisors are demonstrating that eliminating student hunger requires a systems approach, which draws on the work of many varied organizations and businesses, as well as students and families themselves.

PEOPLE

*“I can’t go back to yesterday because I was a different person then. Likewise we can’t go back to 10 years when planning for this center began, because we were different people then. We are different people today, but our dream to build the SPS child nutrition program to serve as a national leader, a benchmark for others to follow, has never disappeared.” - Mark Jeffrey, Sodexo District Manager*

Mark Jeffrey, Sodexo District Manager, Timothy Gray, SPS Food Service Director, and Patrick Roach, SPS Chief Financial & Operations Officer, had a dream about improving school meals by building a central kitchen. This dream ballooned, and attracted key partners, who, as Jeffrey noted at the CNC grand opening, “have been transformed from partners to friends.”

The CNC Advisory Council members are listed below.

Springfield Public Schools	Sodexo	Community Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timothy Gray, Food Service Administrator</li> <li>• Pat Roach, Chief Finance and Operations Officer</li> <li>• Abby Getman-Skillicorn, Student Engagement Manager</li> <li>• Michelle Balch, Administrator of Performance and Evaluation</li> <li>• Jeanne Clancy, District Nurse</li> <li>• Tad Tokarz, Principal, Central High School</li> <li>• Chris Sutton, Principal, Rebecca Johnson Elementary School</li> <li>• Azell Cavaan, Chief Communications Officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark Jeffrey, District Manager (former)</li> <li>• Mike Grey, North American Vice President</li> <li>• Marc Roy, General Manager</li> <li>• Aaron Lenart, Executive Chef (former)</li> <li>• Michael Wolcott, Executive Chef</li> <li>• Andrew Stratton, Procurement Manager</li> <li>• Erika Grover, Dietician</li> <li>• John Alphin, Sustainability &amp; School Garden Coordinator</li> <li>• Norma Nunnally, Community Relations Manager (former)</li> <li>• Heman Rijos, Information Technology</li> <li>• Lynn Conca, Operations Manager (former)</li> <li>• TJ Grey, Regional Operations Manager (former)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phil Korman, CISA</li> <li>• Liz O’Gilvie, Springfield Food Policy Council</li> <li>• Holly Fowler, Northbound Ventures</li> <li>• Doreen Fadus &amp; Cherele Rozie, Mercy Medical Center</li> <li>• Patricia Harmsen, UMASS Nutrition Extension (former)</li> <li>• Beth Zschau, FoodCorps</li> <li>• Andy Kendall, H.P. Kendall Foundation</li> <li>• Jeff Greim, Jeff’s Granola &amp; Strategic Planning Consultant</li> <li>• Ken Toong &amp; Kathy Wicks, UMass Auxiliary Enterprises</li> <li>• John Waite, Franklin County CDC</li> <li>• Laura Sylvester, Food Bank of Western MA</li> <li>• Lisa Damon &amp; Rachel Harb, Mass Farm to School</li> <li>• Paul Robins &amp; Talene Jerkmakian, Paul Robbins Associates</li> <li>• Al Fratini, Kittredge Equipment Company</li> <li>• Students, parents, families, community members</li> </ul>

*The Springfield Food Policy Council was an integral driver of the CNC development and implementation over nearly a decade. Liz O’Gilvie, Chair, enlivens the heart of Springfield in the work, as a resident, parent,*

*and professional with a career in food systems, housing, public health, growing and cooking food. She reminds partners of the lived experience of families in Springfield, and is an integral link between staff administrators, families and caregivers, students, teachers, cafeteria workers, farmers, regional farm to school networks, funders, and all the stakeholders present in the CNC. As a member of the advisory boards of the Mass Food Collaborative, Mass Farm to School, and Gardening the Community she is a key influencer of state and national policy in the areas of food access, public health, farm to school and urban agriculture. She brings a systems and equity lens to this work, and as a racial equity trainer and policy specialist, is able to “call in” her peers and bridge the racial divide between policy and people. O’Gilvie has played a leading role in changing the way Massachusetts legislators think about breakfast for students, student learning, and systemic oppression.*

## **POLICIES**

### **INFLUENCING STATE AND NATIONAL POLICY**

Springfield has become a leading example of the efficacy of Breakfast After the Bell (also known as Breakfast in the Classroom/BIC) and a leader in advocating for statewide adoption of the program. In 2019 a bill was introduced in the House that would mandate all schools with over 60% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch to serve breakfast. The SFPC has led advocacy efforts including coordinating three trips to the State House with 3 to 4 parent advocates attending each trip to share their positive experiences with the program. The SFPC also secured letters of support from Mayor Sarno and Superintendent Warwick to support the bill. In February and March 2020 the SFPC advocated to move the bill out of committee, and after the bill passed in both the House and Senate, visited the State House with parents, and conducted local legislative visits with Rep. Williams and Sen. Welch. The bill is awaiting the Governor’s signature.

The SFPC has also led and engaged the Mass Food Systems Collaborative (including many key CNC member organizations - CISA, Franklin County CDC, MA Farm to School) more deeply in advocacy for equitable expansion of the Healthy Incentives Program, which provides a limited amount of no cost fruits and vegetables for families with SNAP benefits when they shop at authorized agricultural retailers. Highlighting the low number of authorized agricultural retailers

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owned and operated by people of color, the SFPC is working to expand authorizations in underserved cities like Springfield and for farmers and vendors of color. After three years of advocacy, a meeting was secured with the new State Food and Nutrition Services Director, and the SFPC co-facilitated and led the discussion on HIP Authorization expansion. On May 29, 2020 Department of Transitional Assistance announced that HIP authorizations would be reopened specifically for growers and vendors of color and those serving underserved communities across the Commonwealth including Springfield and Holyoke. This means that SPS families will be able to match their SNAP benefits with free fruits and vegetables from farmers markets, the Gardening the Community Walnut Street Store in Springfield, and other markets.

For many Springfield families, one of the primary barriers to improving nutrition at home is the lack of affordable and accessible high quality fresh produce in Springfield. When CNC and HGS project leaders envisioned this project impacting not only students at school, but families across the city, it is strategic and innovative work like the policy advocacy described above that makes that vision real. By making fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible in the city, families will be able to deepen the impact of the CNC and HGS program.

Collaborations among Advisory Council member organizations have also led to advocacy around USDA nutrition standards for school meals. In 2019 and 2020 SPS, the SFPC, Mercy Medical Center, and others collaborated to submit public comments in support of stricter sugar limitations and a K-12 nutrition education sub-committee at the USDA. Rooted in their investment in the CNC and the HGS program, these community organizations cooperated to both hold Sodexo and SPS accountable to their commitments around school meal nutrition requirements, as well as advocate for child health at the national level. For more information on this work see Section V: Increased Student Learning and Leadership, Policies.

Additional examples of state and national policy advocacy led by Advisory Council members is listed in the COVID-19 response section.

### SHAPING INTERNAL POLICY

Advisory Council convenings are also a site for influencing SPS and Sodexo policies. Advisory Council members including staff from SPS, Sodexo, CISA, and the Franklin County CDC have collaborated to get more locally sourced products on to the menu. This work has required innovative strategizing to navigate Sodexo procurement policies, which has brought new farmers and seafood purveyors on board as vendors in the district. These collaborations have also resulted in a commitment from the Food Bank of Western MA's new farm operation to provide at least 250,000 lbs. of potatoes and squash for SPS in the 2020-2021 school year. For

more information about these policy developments see the section called *A Center for Good Food*.

In addition, Advisory Council members engaged in conversations around the formation and implementation the SPS District Wellness Policy in order to build buy in among families and across different school-level cultures and practices. For more information about this process the section called *A Positive School Wide Wellness Culture*.

## PROMOTIONS

### SYSTEMS CHANGES AS A RESULT OF CNC RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

In some ways, the Advisory Council's role was to create time and space for listening, reflection, and strategizing. For most Advisory Council members, the meetings are one of the only times they get to convene, discuss, and think together. The diversity of backgrounds and experiences represented by the members often generated interesting and surprising conversations, which led to brainstorming solutions. For example, conversation developed during a Health, Wellness, Training, and Curriculum meeting about some of the challenges teachers faced with the Breakfast in the Classroom program. One member shared that sometimes there are errors in attendance information, or students arriving tardy, which means there is not enough breakfast items sent to the classroom for all students to eat. This led to discussion about how to provide quick feedback from teachers to Sodexo staff to resolve issues like this. SPS and Sodexo staff took this information back to their desks and worked to develop the Food Service Feedback App, which allows teachers to report real time needs and feedback to Sodexo staff. The app was piloted prior to COVID-19 and was receiving positive feedback - an example of a communications feedback loop innovation, created because there was a meeting space for a parent, Springfield Food Policy Council (SFPC), and SPS and Sodexo administrators to sit at the table together to brainstorm.

### PARTNERS CHAMPION SPRINGFIELD'S MODEL

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The Advisory Council's diverse members leave their meetings and go back to their organizations, across the region and the state. They share the work they are doing in Springfield with a wide array of other leaders and community members who care about economic development, community health, and food systems. Members have presented at conferences, shared information via newsletters, and helped create a buzz about Springfield's program. For example, staff from SPS and the SFPC made phone calls to city council members, school committee representatives, and state legislators to invite them to the CNC's grand opening. Many were present at the event. The work of Advisory Council members has helped spread the word about why Springfield's model is unique, and why it could be a model for other cities. The H.P. Kendall Foundation has also recognized its value by extending additional funding to support their work, which has impacts that ripple through Springfield and the region.



*Advisory Council members tour the CNC facility*

## **KEY FINDINGS**

### **MEETINGS CREATE SPACE AND TIME FOR REFLECTION**

The practice of coming together with the goal of supporting the Springfield Public Schools and Sodexo in eliminating child hunger in Springfield has had deep ramifications on how partnering organizations think about their own missions, and understand the interconnectedness of health, education, economy, and racial equity. SPS, Sodexo, and the SFPC understood that dedicating this time to collaborative process would reap deeper systems and policy changes. For example, SPS, Sodexo, SFPC, and FoodCorps members collaborated to assemble and distribute over 500 vacation grocery bags at Rebecca Johnson Elementary School during the 2019 February break, to make up for SNAP cuts at the time. In 2020 the district was able to expand the February vacation grocery bag distribution to serve families at Rebecca Johnson Elementary, Boland Elementary, and DeBerry Elementary. Together SPS, Sodexo, and their partners were able to make a bigger impact by collaborating and learning together. Having a place to solve and respond to problems has been a chief benefit of the committees.

## CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES IS DELICATE AND NECESSARY

A real challenge remains around reaching and connecting with SPS parents and families. As noted, the Advisory Council is currently composed primarily of organizational leaders, with the exception of one parent who is also an organizational leader, and a few parents of SPS graduates. Some families of SPS students are not on the internet and have limited access to information disseminated electronically. The challenge around struggling to engage parents and families directly impacts the buy-in and ownership of the Springfield community over its public-school meal program. When parents have feedback about school food, they do not have a clear outlet - they often end up discussing with the SFPC informally, but no system exists for getting that feedback to Sodexo or SPS. For example, when Bel Vita breakfast bars were served on Monday after February vacation some parents were disappointed. They wanted to see hot breakfast on Monday morning. The Advisory Council agreed that formalizing parent feedback was a priority, as well as developing ways for parents to engage with the CNC. Finding workable strategies around this challenge is ongoing.

## SCHOOL FOOD AS A LEVER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The diversity of fields in which Advisory Council members work has meant that ideas, challenges, and solutions get analyzed from all angles. This group understands that impacting health equity requires a systems approach. They understand that the goal of a school meal program is not only to ensure that students consume adequate nutrition. Instead, they see this program as an opportunity to change the ways students feel, think, and connect to food and health. They have designed a program that centers high quality and delicious meals, gives students the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions about the program, and provides hands on learning that connects students to gardens and the outdoors. In addition, they consider the ways this program can impact economic development in the city and the region, how their program can influence state and national policies around food access and hunger, and how the CNC could become a model for doing school food differently. By bringing stakeholders to the table from so many different sectors, the project is demonstrating how a school food program can be a lever for equitable community development.

# COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

## SPS COVID-19 RESPONSE

SPS announced district-wide closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, effective March 15, 2020. All schools closed for the rest of the school year and students were offered online/remote instruction. With the understanding that many students and families depend on school meals, and that students may not have access to healthy food in the meantime, SPS and Sodexo worked quickly to adapt the meal program in the midst of the pandemic's onset. In fact, in anticipation of the possible school closures, the district had been developing a plan for adapting to remote meal pick-up for several weeks. Once Governor Baker announced state-wide school closures, the district immediately worked to make meals available to students within walking distance, to make production/distribution safe for employees, and to get the word out quickly. The first Monday after the COVID-19 school closures, 14 remote meal sites were set up across the city to provide students free breakfast and lunch; that number soon grew to 17 pick-up sites. Based on requests from the community, SPS added two additional once-weekly pick-up sites at Central High School and at a local housing facility, bringing the total number of meal sites throughout the city to 19 as of June 2020. The Central High School site operates in partnership with Oasis Food Pantry and includes a grocery distribution for adults and families.

SPS, Sodexo, and their partners worked in close collaboration to make the meal pick-ups as easy, accessible, and convenient as possible. School meal sites were selected so that all families could access a pick-up location within one mile of their home, in order to facilitate walking as needed. The district worked with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), filing for every waiver possible to make food available and accessible to families. For example, with DESE approval, the district was able to allow adults to pick up meals for children (without the SPS student present), which was previously not allowed (such as during summer meal pick-ups). In addition, they were able to allow pick-up of multiple meals at the same time, meaning families could take breakfast and lunch at once, versus needing to come back to the site to pick up each meal separately. In April, the district was able to add dinner and snacks to the meal distribution, increasing food access and thereby serving a complete set of daily meals for Springfield students. During this extremely uncertain and stressful time for families, the district worked tirelessly to get the word out to families through official communications and community partners, hoping to alleviate concerns about feeding kids during the onset, and later, ongoing pandemic conditions.

Meals are simple – Sodexo serves breakfast (cereal, French toast, waffles, bars); lunch (deli or Sunbutter and jelly sandwich); dinner (a hot meal – packaged in black container with film for

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easy heating in microwave or oven, including BBQ chicken with roll and corn, cheesy dunkers, soup and corn bread); and a snack (string cheese, juice, chips – items already stored in the warehouse).

Early on the meals were being prepared at the CNC, but soon staff shifted production to several sites in order to broaden and avoid the likelihood of mass-exposure to the COVID-19 virus by food service staff. By setting up multiple meal production sites in school cafeterias, the district also allowed workers to safely distance while working. Dinners are being made at Central and Putnam High Schools; the CNC is providing prep work - slicing meat, individually wrapping items, and making English muffins and bagels, as well as making breakfast sandwiches. As the pandemic wears on, capacity has become an issue, as many staff fear contracting COVID-19 and choose not to work, rather to take unemployment benefits. In addition, capacity is becoming a bigger issue because the ongoing pandemic has kept many Springfield families out of work, driving the demand for food assistance.

During the first two weeks of the grab-and-go style meal program average daily participation tripled. 500,000 meals were served as of May 4th. By June 3rd, more than 1 million meals were served across the city. At the Central High School site, which happens from noon to 6pm one day a week, the district serves an average of 5,000 meals per day; an additional 3,500 families take home grocery bags provisioned by Oasis Food Pantry. At many of the meal sites families line up early to pick-up food for the day.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Springfield families are relying on the SPS meal sites as food access points. The sites have also become hubs for accessing other donated goods and services including face masks and toiletries. In true SPS fashion, the district also continues to leverage its partnerships to bring spirit, appreciation, and camaraderie to the meal sites – the Community School of Springfield has done safely distanced pop up performances and musical concerts, and the Springfield Thunderbirds mascot has made appearances.

According to Doreen Fadus of Mercy Medical Center, Trinity Health (Mercy's parent organization) noted Springfield's quick ability to obtain policy waivers for family members to pick up meals, adapt meal preparation and distribution, and get the word out. This highlights Springfield's food service team as a leader in the COVID-19 pandemic response.

One FoodCorps member notes the SPS and Sodexo's ability to pivot:

*“It’s incredible that they were able to do it, and that they did it so quickly...On Friday after the school day had already ended, they announced [school closures due to COVID 19], and then on Monday they had already started serving, which is pretty great.” - FoodCorps member*

## COMPLEMENTARY FOOD ACCESS EFFORTS

SPS continues to leverage its partnerships with community organizations to widen and deepen its impact on reducing hunger in the city. During the COVID-19 pandemic response the district partnered with a nearby homeless shelter to deliver meals to over 100 SPS students, despite the shelter being located outside the district. SPS and Sodexo are also working with the Springfield Council on Aging to provide meals through their senior citizen meal delivery program.

SFPC is also stepping in to complement SPS meal distribution with other critical programming to support families during this unprecedented time. SFPC’s deep partnerships with local funders enabled them to respond quickly as well. For instance, SFPC secured a grant to purchase \$5,000 worth of \$25 coupons from Gardening the Community’s Walnut Street Farm Store to enable Springfield families to purchase fresh produce. The intention is to educate parents about the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), during their free coupon redemption, and to encourage them to exercise that underutilized benefit.

SFPC also raised \$75,000 in funding and engaged World Farmers (based on Lancaster, MA) to bring 400 boxes of fresh local produce (suitable for a family of four) which is distributed on a weekly basis to families at Commerce High School and Chestnut Academy during the student meal pick up. These fresh boxes of produce will continue to be distributed throughout the summer.

SFPC also secured emergency funds to build backyard gardens for Springfield families, providing organic soil, compost, vegetable and flower seedlings for each bed. To date, 56 beds have been installed for very low and low income households. Those who participated in the SFPC/UMASS Extension parent nutrition classes were first in line.

*When she was installing a backyard garden for a community resident last week, a boy approached Liz O’Gilvie, of SFPC, asking, “Do you know Miss Kali, the garden lady?” He had learned from Kali, a former Springfield FoodCorps member, to plant his school garden at Boland*

*Elementary School. He asked if his family could have a backyard garden as well. Liz asked him to bring his Abuela to the door and to translate about the program, explaining that it was free and she would help them plant the garden. Liz asked the boy if he could get online, and he said yes, and she told him how to register. By the time she had returned home, the family's application was in, and the next day they were planting the garden with pepper and tomato starts. The boy told the plants "You will be able to stretch your roots here and feed all of us."*

## MAINTAINING SCHOOL GARDENS AND DISTRIBUTING PRODUCE IN THE COMMUNITY

With the transition from in-school food service to grab-and-go pick-up meals, Sodexo has seen a drop in overall school meal program participation. Despite all their efforts to make food accessible and available for families, it is not the same as serving students during the school day; many more barriers exist for getting students to the meal pick up sites. Therefore, Sodexo was forced to focus all efforts on feeding families, resulting in furloughing some employees, including the school garden staff.

Again, leveraging its deep partnerships throughout the community, SPS is maintaining school gardens with help. SPS transitioned garden care at Rebecca Johnson Elementary, DeBerry Elementary, Brookings Elementary, Chestnut Academy, and Kensington Elementary School to SFPC. In addition, SPS is partnering with FoodCorps members, volunteers, and even school custodians to maintain gardens at Walsh Elementary, Washington Elementary, Dryden Elementary, Early Childhood Education Center, Harris Elementary, Indian Orchard Elementary, Brightwood Elementary, Springfield Academy for Excellence, Boland Elementary, and Zanetti Elementary. In the spring partners were able to clean up and plant garden beds and will continue to manage harvests over the summer. Food grown will be distributed for free to Springfield families.

## INFLUENCING STATEWIDE AND NATIONAL POLICY ADJUSTMENTS

SPS appealed to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and USDA to open regulations around meal distribution for the COVID-19 response. DESE and USDA have significantly relaxed requirements for meal serving; any child 18 or under may receive a meal without a student ID card, adults may pick up meals for children who are not on-site, and adults may pick up multiple meals at a time. In April, DESE approved SPS to provide dinner and snack

during emergency distributions in addition to breakfast and lunch, which significantly increases the amount of food that they can send home to families. Meals comply with the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Summer Food Service Program<sup>xi</sup> and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.<sup>xii</sup> Elementary schools have been authorized to use the last of their Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) funds to pay for fresh produce, such as recently, pineapple.

The Springfield Food Policy Council (SFPC) partnered with Good Food for All and Union of Concerned Scientists to advocate at the federal level for expanded EBT benefits that included SNAP benefits for all students who attend CEP schools, resulting in all students receiving SNAP benefits. Families already enrolled in SNAP had additional benefits loaded onto their existing EBT cards. In households not enrolled in SNAP, cards were issued for each SPS student in the household. The SNAP benefits are equivalent to the federal meal reimbursement. Cards were received by families statewide during the last week of May. The SFPC is asking families who do not need the benefit to purchase produce and donate it to their church food distribution program or neighborhood food pantry.

## THE ARCHITECTS OF SPS COVID-19 RESPONSE

The district's rapid response to the COVID-19 outbreak was made possible by a group of core SPS, Sodexo and partner staff including:

- **SPS:** Tim Gray (Food Service Administrator), Patrick Roach (CFO), Abby Getman-Skillicorn (Student Engagement Manager), and school principals who helped spread the word in their school communities.
- **Sodexo:** Mike Grey (Vice President), Marc Roy (General Manager), Andrew Stratton (Procurement Manager), Aaron Lenart (Executive Chef, former), Erika Grover (Dietician), and all the cafeteria staff who stayed on to work
- **Partners:** Springfield Food Policy Council, FoodCorps, Springfield Thunderbirds, Community Music School of Springfield, Oasis Food Pantry, Catie's Closet, Parent Villages, Springfield College, AmeriCorps, volunteers and community members

Alongside meal distribution coordination, as the Sodexo garden staff was furloughed, the SFPC and FoodCorps members resolved to plant and engage families in caring for school gardens and harvesting produce. FoodCorps members created and circulated educational videos about gardening and home cooking. Liz O'Gilvie (Springfield Food Policy Council) drew on her network of support through the Trinity Health Transforming Communities Initiatives grant partners to raise funds, spread the word, and network Springfield families to access resources.

These actions provide Springfield families with the opportunities for children who have been part of the SPS School Garden Program to lead their families in food production, and for families to learn about and use supports (e.g. HIP) to obtain healthy produce in a city that has been deemed a food desert, with few affordable options for healthy, affordable food access. It has also helped utilize school meal sites as hubs for families to access other resources in the city during the pandemic.

## SPREADING THE WORD

### ADVISORY COUNCIL PARTNERSHIPS EXPEDITED GETTING THE WORD OUT ABOUT MEALS

At the school closures, SPS vigorously endeavored to get the word out about school meal availability at the new pick-up sites across the city. The district led with newspaper articles, TV advertisements, website announcements, robo calls, text messages (using 413Families), digital communication tools (using myDTxT), and public service announcements reaching families across Springfield. SFPC offered support by coordinating with five Rebecca Johnson Elementary parents to distribute 75 lawn signs throughout the city. SFPC also informed church communities and spent many hours making public radio announcements to spread the word.

### EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

In response to their inquiries, FoodCorps members developed videos for families and staff about gardening, composting, cooking, and enjoying the outdoors.

*“[We] did a video that was like just to show the green spaces that are available to people around the city of Springfield... So that's something we're working on just highlight that there are green spaces that are open and available if people want some fresh air. And then I did another one...which was simple garden clean up, just to show [students] what's going on, and that our school is still here, and the garden is still here, and things are still growing, and trying to give a little bit of joy.” - FoodCorps member*

*“I am working on a composting lesson which is really more geared towards...families and also the staff. Because I've had staff ask me about, ‘how do you do composting?’ And also some families too have asked, ‘I want to do this but I don't know how.’ So I want to be doing lessons for kids, but then I also want to start making some of the content for staff and families because I've had people ask for, ‘how do you garden?’ And I shared tons of resources, but I think having a video series would make it clear.” - FoodCorps member*

## MEAL PICK UP AS A CENTRAL POINT OF COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

District staff’s creativity was key to success of adapting to COVID-19 closings. Some schools aligned picking up laptops for home lessons with meal pick-up, which bumped participation in both programs. The district also helped families get discounts for Wi-Fi connections. In addition, the meal sites become hubs for distributing other goods, such as face masks and toiletries. To bring liveliness to the sites, the Community School of Springfield offered safely distanced pop up performances and musical concerts, and the Springfield Thunderbirds mascot has made appearances.

*“Our staff at our school have been really great about like getting resources out to students and creating frameworks for how to structure the day now that kids aren't in school. And they're...doing classes still online, which is pretty cool that students are still able to engage with their other classmates and their teachers in that way.” - FoodCorps member*

## KEY FINDINGS

### COALITION WORK PROVIDED THE FOUNDATION FOR COLLABORATIVE EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

Early in the partnership process, Liz O’Gilvie (Springfield Food Policy Council) said, “We are modeling that we do this together.” We heard anecdotally from partners that their ability to augment efforts and support each other – to reach families with meals and deliver additional

access to healthy food and life skills could impact families with long term food resiliency. It may also engage families more the school meal program, school garden program, and nutrition education offered in the district. SPS and partner response to the COVID-19 crisis demonstrates that communities coalesce in response to a national crisis. Successful strategies include quick policy changes negotiated with state and national agencies, accessible meal site pickups, ensuring that families can pick up meals for students, combining educational efforts (laptop pickup, PE mini classes, nurse visits) with meal site pickups, distributing breakfast, lunch, dinner and a snack at once, as well as weekend meals on Fridays.

### INNOVATING STRUCTURAL CHANGES

SPS, Sodexo, SFPC, and their partners have combined efforts to create broader family access to gardens and fresh produce in Springfield. Efforts among partners that contribute to structural changes in the community include: maintaining school gardens, building new backyard gardens, introducing families to Gardening the Community's Walnut Street Farm Store (a community/youth-run urban farm in Springfield) and to the HIP program. These efforts are engaging parents in both what food kids are eating as well as the garden and nutrition education they are getting. These efforts are also creating opportunities for obtaining fresh quality food in their community that they have not had or known about before. These strategies build community resilience and can contribute to diminishing hunger.

The pandemic response demonstrates ability to innovate and act on long term goals that weave together food and health systems and policy changes for community resiliency. As another example, the district food manager had dreamed of serving hot meals to all students. Ironically, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed hot meals for dinner.

### POLICY DEMANDS

Students across the city of Springfield and the state of MA have benefited from DESE and USDA's relaxation of certain school meal program policies. These adaptations have made meals more accessible to students during the COVID-19 pandemic and helped ensure families can access school food at this critical time. SPS, Sodexo, and their partners recognize that these changes would promote food access beyond the pandemic as well, and they are working to advocate for long-term policy change in several specific areas:

- *Congregate Meal Requirements*: These requirements necessitate that students eat school meals at a school site, having particular impact on summer and emergency

feeding programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this policy has been relaxed to allow students to take food home to consume. SPS supports an elimination of the congregate meal requirements, giving students the opportunity to take meals home to eat when eating at a meal site is not possible or convenient.

- *Meal Pick-up Timing Requirements:* These requirements state that students must return to the school meal site for each meal. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the requirement has been loosened to allow students to take all meals and snack at one time. SPS promotes a change to this policy allowing students to take multiple meals at a time during summer and emergency feeding programs.
- *Mandatory Milk Requirements:* During the school year students have the option to take milk with their meal. During summer feeding programs, students are required to take milk. SPS and Sodexo staff observe that many students do not drink their milk at the summer feeding sites, resulting in increased waste. SPS supports a policy change which would allow students to choose whether they want to take milk during summer and emergency feeding programs.

## FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

While family meal pick up participation rates during the COVID crisis are some of the highest in the Commonwealth, SPS acknowledges that these rates come nowhere close to their average daily meal participation rate in January of 85%.

According to a recent survey by the School Nutrition Association (SNA)<sup>xiii</sup> highlighting K-12 trends amidst COVID-19 closures, meals were administered to 1,894 schools nationally, and across all regions 80.1% of respondents reported serving fewer meals than normal, and 86% of New England school respondents reported serving fewer meals. According to the study, districts ranked financial losses, student hunger, staff safety, and availability of product/distributor as their biggest concerns, with all except student hunger being reported more frequently than in a March survey.

SPS likely would rank these as important concerns. We know that like most districts, Sodexo has lost considerable money during the pandemic, due to diminished participation and therefore federal reimbursements, and due to many cafeteria staff choosing to stay home and take unemployment compensation instead of risking being on the front lines. In a city where the majority of people working cafeteria jobs are income precarious people of color, who

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statistically suffer inequitable health disparities, they face dire decisions in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic. While staff are given personal protection daily, and social distancing is encouraged, there is risk.

*“We have been going to sites to do staff appreciation for the Sodexo crew because obviously it's really tough for them to be at work and risking...their health and taking those [risks] with their families” - FoodCorps member*

The SPS average daily participation in the school meal program during the COVID-19 pandemic fluctuates during the month, and staff believe that this is related to SNAP spending. The participation rates are well below the student population and partners have made efforts to spread the word about meal availability through the newspapers, television, the CNC website, the Meal Viewer App, robo calls, text messages (413Families), digital communication tools (myDTxT), radio, and lawn signs.

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

### RELATIONSHIPS IN PLACE

A decade of collaborative prototypes to engage families, students, teachers, policy makers, school administrators, community-based organizations, and funders, were leveraged to develop and fund a facilitated Advisory Council, creating a cross-sector space for ideation and strategizing.

### INNOVATION BUILDS ON A STRONG FOUNDATION

Innovative and strategic collaborations mobilized over the past decade to develop school gardens and education programs, Breakfast in the Classroom, and universal free meals as a result of the Community Eligibility Program, laying the foundation for this venture.

### HEALTH AND WELLNESS POLICY COMMITMENTS

SPS committed to instituting a Wellness Policy and implementing it across 61 schools; Sodexo staff committed to navigating corporate protocols to procure local produce and cook scratch meals.

### RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

SPS committed to partnership with the Springfield Food Policy Council to ensure that programs were developed for long term systems, environment, and policy change; SPS committed to incorporating processes for student, family, teacher, and cafeteria staff engagement.

## FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

SPS financial leaders committed to innovative and creative funding structures to secure a bond from the city for the construction of the CNC, as well as funding for student and family engagement and Advisory Council facilitation.

## HOLISTIC APPROACH

Project leaders and partners recognize that affecting change in health and wellness requires physical and programmatic investments that address food quality, increase food access, promote community-wide learning, and engage young people, families, and leaders across the region.

## A PATH FORWARD DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

When the Advisory Council and Fertile Ground began to collaborate, plan and embark on this evaluation, there was no way to know the ways in which our lives would change as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and the public health and economic crisis that would follow. As Springfield schools closed in March 2020, along with many employers in the city, uncertainty grew around how residents would both stay safe and healthy, while making ends meet during this time. While pandemic response is still unfolding, we are again faced with witnessing how social and health inequities experienced by low income communities and communities of color show up in tangible ways – higher rates of infection and death from the virus. As of June 2020, hospitalization rates of African-Americans are 5 times that of white Americans; for Latinos the rate is 4 times higher.<sup>xiv</sup> In addition, Feeding America expects that rates of food insecurity in western Massachusetts will increase by 47% this year. These impacts will be felt most deeply in cities like Springfield.

At the center of SPS' new school meal program is a central goal: To eliminate student hunger in Springfield. Through the process of envisioning a new school food program, SPS and Sodexo leaders and their partners began to see the possibility that the CNC and HGS programs could become a lever for changing the lives of Springfield residents, by shifting systems around school food. While the COVID-19 pandemic response is ongoing and remains urgent, there are glimmers of hope, crystalized in the resiliency of SPS' new programs and the associated networks of support that extend into the city.

For over ten years SPS worked toward building the CNC and developing the HGS program. Placing high quality and delicious meals, food access, and student and family engagement and learning at the heart of its meal program, SPS endeavored to transform the culture of food, health, and wellness in the district and the city. Together with their partners they have built and launched an innovative school meal program that is rooted in changing systems – food procurement protocols, health and wellness policies, hands-on learning curriculum, and student and family engagement. In spring 2020, just months after its official rollout, the new programs and infrastructure were tested. In a rapid pivot (over one weekend) the district leveraged its cutting edge facility, network of partners, and holistic approach to do the work it has continually placed at the center - feeding families in Springfield. The many years of organizing, advocating, and networking, especially over the past two years, provided a steady foundation to launch from in response to crisis.

Beyond the COVID-19 crisis, this foundation will enable SPS and Sodexo to grow toward their vision of eliminating hunger in the city. SPS, Sodexo, and partners may draw on the words of Dr. Deb Habib from Seeds of Solidarity Farm and Education Center:

*“Change moves at the speed of trust.” - Dr. Deb Habib*

SPS and Sodexo have demonstrated that they are invested in changing the systems that do not serve Springfield residents by building trust in their community. The district shows this by drawing on regional networks facilitated by Advisory Council, by valuing student feedback, and by working to build community ownership of the program. The ongoing, on-the-ground influence of tasty school food, student and family taste tests, health and wellness events, and school garden programming is helping to shape how students and families perceive themselves, their school, and their community.

Yet, this kind of full scale, district-wide systems change is a resource-heavy endeavor. The work of SPS and Sodexo staff to collaborate and communicate internally and externally has required a different standard of business that normally functions between a district and a contractor. External partners on the Advisory Council are trusted advisors and collaborators, helping influence and shape the program as it evolves, yet they are sometimes busy and stretched thin in providing time and energy toward the project. School environments are dynamic and challenging because all changes rely on individuals’ intentions, actions and behaviors changing, which is often a slow process. FoodCorps members lead in developing innovative experiential curriculum, yet their presence relies on ongoing funding. And perhaps most important, parents and caregivers continue to seek more effective ways to make their voices heard, and to truly gain agency over food and health choices for their families.

We don’t know how the 2020-2021 school year will look, but it is certain that it will be unlike any other. The district and the city will likely be more challenged than ever to continue feeding Springfield students and their families, to hold true to their values around serving top quality food, to offer innovative nutrition and garden programs, and to prioritize listening to and hearing their community. The strides the CNC has made to centralize scratch food production and introduce new nutritious and tasty menu items means that they, unlike many districts, can avoid sourcing entirely from far away and control the quality of the meals they are serving students. The district has already applied for grant funding for a new wrapping/packing machine and an additional refrigerated truck, leveraging the resources they have to make

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investments that allow for adaptation to the new needs of Springfield students. To deepen its impact and strive toward these goals, SPS and Sodexo will again draw on their experience, their infrastructure, their partnership networks, and their community to cultivate food justice and health equity in Springfield.

*“Mark Jeffrey (Sodexo District Manager) remarked at the ribbon cutting that ‘We’re not the same people we were when this started.’ The statement rings louder and truer as the Culinary and Nutrition Center approaches its first full year of operations...*

*I knew this was true about me – I learned a lot about the complexity of feeding kids’ good food. Because of the Advisory Committee convenings, we’re all bigger. We’re more available to each other.*

*And when the school goes to these efforts (during the COVID-19 closings) to ensure that kids get food in the evenings and weekends, it’s not just about kids getting food. I feel the people working in the district care about them in a different way. When you are poor and don’t have what you need, you don’t feel seen and cared about. Pat and Tim’s efforts are manifestations of love. For most people, the schools are their connection to the city. This work shows all of us that we all have the capacity to be each other’s people.”*

*- Liz O’Gilvie, Springfield Food Policy Council*

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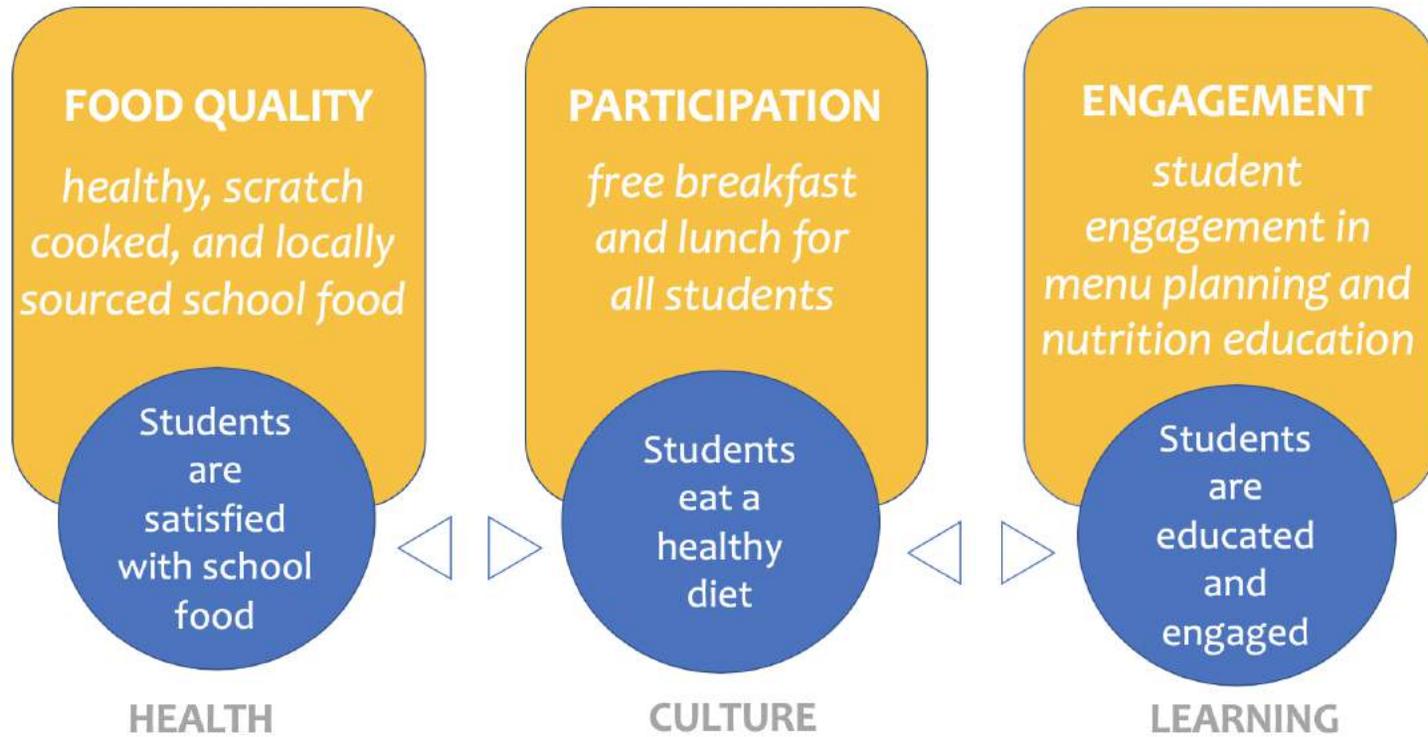
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## APPENDIX A LOGIC MODEL

SPRINGFIELD CULINARY AND NUTRITION CENTER WORKING LOGIC MODEL			
Target	Planning and Launch	Implementation	Sustaining
<b>GOAL 1: Improve quality of food served: fresh, healthy, locally sourced, culturally relevant homemade.</b>			
<b>STUDENT</b>	Engage students in menu development through taste tests, focus groups, and surveys	Students articulate what foods they want on the menu: quality, local, fresh, cultural foods	Students co-lead in evaluating, advocating for, and sustaining the CNC meal program
<b>DISTRICT</b>	Switch % meal components to scratch production Expand vendor approval policies to include small and mid-sized local producers Establish warehouse and distribution protocols to accept local produce Establish a definition and goal for local sourcing	Increase % scratch cooking for all meals Increase local sourcing through newly approved vendors Test and implement strategies Increase local purchasing to 16%	Increase % scratch cooked meals Institutionalize expanded vendor approval policies Streamline protocols to maximize local sourcing Increase local purchasing to 22%
<b>FAMILY &amp; COMMUNITY</b>	Establish purchasing relationships with local producers	Increase # local producers CNC has relationships with	Institutionalize relationship-building systems with local producers
<b>GOAL 2: Cultivate positive school-wide wellness culture and increase program participation</b>			
<b>STUDENT</b>	Students try new healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods Students try healthy, scratch cooked, foods that represent their culture Students enjoy taste tests of healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods	Students consume healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods Students see their cultures reflected in school meals Students change food preferences toward healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods	Students eat a healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced diet School meals reflect diversity of cultures in Springfield Students enjoy school meals
<b>DISTRICT</b>	Build awareness of the changes to the meal program among administration, teachers, cafeteria staff Develop district communications strategy Pilot food and nutrition focussed hands on learning in gardens and classrooms with Sodexo Sustainability Team & FoodCorps Examine, update, and approve District Wellness Policy Offer wellness training opportunities to staff, teachers Create new jobs to increase student and family engagement	Build excitement and engagement among administration, teachers, and cafeteria staff about school food change Build internal and external communications strategy and benchmarks Incorporate FoodCorps curriculum into classroom learning standards Embrace District Wellness Policy at the school level Establish schoolwide multistakeholder wellness teams Train food service staff in new technical skills	Develop skills among administration, teachers, and cafeteria staff to talk about the program and its impacts to become Ambassadors of the program Sustain communications strategy Include food and nutrition focussed wellness learning in curriculum Champion District Wellness Policy in all schools Model wellness at school leadership and staff level (teachers, principals, administration, food service) Food service staff satisfied with jobs
<b>FAMILY &amp; COMMUNITY</b>	Families and community partners participate in health and wellness and food events and activities (gardens, wellness teams, cooking classes, etc.)	Families and community partners demonstrate knowledge in health and wellness and food systems	Families and community partners become Ambassadors to champion school wide policy changes around health and wellness and food systems
<b>Goal 3: Increase Student Learning and Leadership</b>			
<b>STUDENT</b>	Students participate in health and wellness and food events and activities (gardens, wellness teams, cooking classes, etc.) Students are aware of the changes to the meal program through participation in taste tests, tours of the CNC, and new menu items	Students obtain new skills (gardening, cooking, advocacy) Students are excited about and engaged in school food change and learning opportunities	Increased student awareness and knowledge about food and health Students develop skills to talk about the program and its impacts, becoming Ambassadors of the program
<b>DISTRICT</b>	SPS develops Student CNC Ambassador program Student internship positions (cooking, food services, gardening, wellness) are created giving students opportunities to develop critical thinking and hands on experience District pilots components of health and wellness and food learning program	Student CNC Ambassador system scaffolded in designated schools Internship program established District invests in health and wellness and food learning program infrastructure	Student CNC Ambassador program becomes part of school district structure Students use internship learning to achieve career goals District invests in health and wellness and food learning program
<b>GOAL 4: Leverage broad systems and policy change</b>			
<b>FAMILY &amp; COMMUNITY</b>	Advisory Council partners and their networks connect the value of the CNC to their missions	New collaborations and resources for child and community health, local procurement, and food access emerge	Community partnerships influence state policies for procurement, health and food access

APPENDIX B HOME GROWN SPRINGFIELD THEORY OF CHANGE

THEORY OF CHANGE



# What's for Lunch?

*Learning about school food at Springfield Public Schools*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

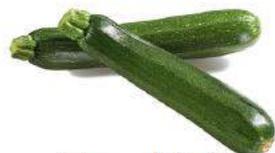


# What is your favorite vegetable?

**Directions:** Circle the vegetables that you like eating at school, then answer the two questions.



Kale



Zucchini



Carrots



Spinach



Lettuce



Sweet potato



Green beans



Tomato



Bell pepper



Cauliflower



Cucumber

What was the vegetable at lunch yesterday? (Write below)

\_\_\_\_\_

Did you eat it? (Circle one)

Yes

No

## What are your favorite foods to eat at school?

**Directions:** Use the space below to finish the sentence.

My favorite foods to eat at school lunch are

---

---

I like these foods because

---

---

---

---

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