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**NEW STUDY RELEASED ON HOW TO REFORM SCHOOL LUNCH—AND
PROMOTE EQUITY—IN OAKLAND**

JANUARY 26, 2012—The Center for Ecoliteracy and Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) have released a new study on how to reform school lunch in support of Superintendent Tony Smith’s plan to overcome systemic injustice and raise academic achievement in Oakland schools.

Like most large urban districts today, OUSD faces significant financial challenges. “Yet Oakland Unified also demonstrates a clear readiness and strong leadership to build on past innovation toward comprehensive change,” says Zenobia Barlow, founder and executive director of the Center for Ecoliteracy, a nonprofit dedicated to education for sustainable living.

The 79-page study, “Rethinking School Lunch Oakland,” offers a detailed road map for how to make those changes—above all, by addressing what Nutrition Services Director Jennifer LeBarre has identified as the primary obstacle to further improvement: inadequate kitchen facilities in the district, which serves nearly 37,000 meals a day, with 70 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

“While OUSD has made great improvement in the meals served to students through the National School Lunch, Breakfast, and Snack programs, more must be done,” said LeBarre, who was recognized by The California Endowment as a pioneer in making healthier school meals. “However,” she added, “we have reached the point where change can’t continue without drastic change in our facilities.”

In its evaluation of OUSD nutrition facilities, the study found:

- The majority of school kitchens are not equipped for scratch cooking; three out of four schools lack a cooking kitchen for preparing meals on-site.
- The majority of equipment in the cooking kitchens is old and non-functional.
- 73 percent of the district’s meals are prepared in three central kitchens and trucked to “satellite” sites.
- The chief central kitchen at Prescott Elementary School is operating at more than twice the capacity for which it was designed. Meant to provide for 8,000 meals a day, it prepares 20,000 meals daily.
- More than half the cafeterias (35 out of 64) that receive pre-packaged lunches and breakfasts lack serving counters and equipment.

Jennifer LeBarre’s vision for Nutrition Services specifies that at least 60 percent of the food served should be freshly prepared; food that is not freshly prepared should be minimally processed; and at least 25 percent of produce should be fresh, local, pesticide-free, or organic.

The feasibility study notes that its recommendations, if implemented, would help realize the objectives of the district’s strategic plan, which calls for developing each OUSD school as a “Full Service Community School” that contributes to the development of the social, emotional and physical health of students.

“School food reform is not separate from school reform,” Superintendent Tony Smith has said.” It is part of the basic work we have to do in order to correct systemic injustice, pursue equity, and give our children the best future possible.”

Among the recommendations of the feasibility study:

- Create a 44,000-square-foot central commissary that can receive deliveries and prepare items to be sent to all district schools.
- Upgrade equipment and facilities to create 17 cooking kitchens that can cook from scratch and 58 finishing kitchens that can prepare meals from “recipe kits” of bulk ingredients from the central commissary.
- Designate 14 sites as school-community kitchens to serve as cooking kitchens during the day and be made available for community uses (such as cooking classes and small business development) when school is not in session.
- Cultivate a 1.5-acre district farm/garden near the central commissary.

The Oakland School Food Alliance, a group of families, educators, and community members who have advocated for change for more than three years, praised the report. “We’re thrilled with the process and the outcome,” says founding member Ruth Woodruff. “We think improving the food served to children is critical to the functioning of Oakland and the ability of children to learn.”

The study was based on the Center for Ecoliteracy’s Rethinking School Lunch planning framework, a whole-systems approach developed over more than 15 years of work on school food issues. It was funded by the TomKat Charitable Trust with the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation.

For more information about the Center for Ecoliteracy, visit www.ecoliteracy.org.

An executive summary of the study can be downloaded at www.ecoliteracy.org or www.ousd.k12.ca.us