



First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom and Senator Nancy Skinner Join School Nutrition Staff for Farm to School Culinary Training

*The Center for Ecoliteracy Welcomed State Officials to Celebrate California's
Investments to Serve More Locally-Sourced, Freshly-Prepared Meals*

NAPA, CA (August 4, 2023) – First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom and Senator Nancy Skinner on Thursday joined school nutrition staff from San Luis Coastal Unified and Live Oak Unified school districts for a culinary training held at The Culinary Institute of America at Copia to highlight the importance of preparing fresh school meals with locally sourced ingredients.

As the back-to-school season begins, California's 5.9 million public school students will return to cafeterias that provide free breakfast and lunch to all students through the state's first-in-the-nation Universal School Meals program. Through the state's Farm to School grant program and \$600 million investment in the Kitchen Infrastructure and Training program, school nutrition staff can receive culinary training, and schools can purchase directly from local farmers, as well as upgrade school kitchen facilities and equipment.

"California's school food and nutrition staff are essential to feeding millions of public school students," said First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom. "Which is why I'm so proud of our unprecedented investment in school kitchen infrastructure and best-in-class culinary training so school food service workers across the state can build sustainable careers and support our ongoing efforts to bring delicious and nutritious scratch-cooked meals to California students."

"California was the first state to offer two free meals a day to all public school students, and I was proud to lead that initiative," said Sen. Skinner, D-Berkeley. "The state's Farm to School program and Kitchen Infrastructure and Training program are building on this groundbreaking achievement and expanding school meals prepared onsite with fresh, locally sourced ingredients. This event showcased what's possible for school meals."

On Thursday, teams practiced knife skills, slicing and dicing onions, and learning to julienne jicama. Students in San Luis Coastal Unified can look forward to seeing vegetable curry with coconut rice; local quinoa from Kandarian Organic Farms; and a melon, citrus, and jicama salad on their lunch trays this school year. The training also prepares the team to use new ovens purchased for the school kitchen and make baked goods from scratch.

"This culinary training is an opportunity for my staff to develop their skills and celebrate their leadership in serving fresh farm-to-school meals," said Erin Primer, Food and Nutrition Services Director for San Luis Coastal Unified School District. "The Kitchen Infrastructure and Training program supports the school nutrition workforce while providing healthier meals to students."

"As a leading advocate for free school meals, the Center for Ecoliteracy supports a network of over 100 California school districts to provide students with fresh, locally-grown school meals," said Alexa Norstad, Executive Director of the nonprofit Center for Ecoliteracy. "We are committed to advocating for ongoing state funding to ensure that California students receive the best school meals possible."



Senator Nancy Skinner and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom welcome school nutrition staff to the Culinary Institute of America training kitchen. © Center for Ecoliteracy



Senator Nancy Skinner practices knife skills with school nutrition staff. © Center for Ecoliteracy



First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom practices knife skills with school nutrition staff.



Senator Nancy Skinner, Director of Food Services for Live Oak Unified School District Sepon Istepanyan, First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom, Food and Nutrition Services Director for San Luis Coastal Unified School District Erin Primer, and Director of the Nutrition Services Division for the California Department of Education Kim Frinzell. © Center for Ecoliteracy

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The Center for Ecoliteracy advances change in K–12 education and school food systems to support students and the people who nourish them through resources, advocacy, and fostering leadership in a network of over 100 school districts. Learn more at ecoliteracy.org.