

Plan to Succeed



**STRATEGIC PLAN
DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD AND
NUTRITION
SERVICES**

May 2015

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Introduction

This Strategic Plan is a first for the Department of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) and sets a baseline for moving ahead. It is foundational -- an initial step for this Department and its team. The Plan comes in a period of belt-tightening for the Department, along with the commensurate cuts for the District. These changes include: staff adjustments, fewer menu options in an environment that is placing increasing value on healthy eating, and additional controls. At this time, the Department needs to execute the fundamentals flawlessly with fewer resources. It is the expectation that there will be an opportunity to grow again in the near future.

The impetus for preparation of a plan came from Chief Operating Officer in late 2013, with the need reinforced by the Council of the Great City Schools report¹ presented in April 2014. Focused work on development of a plan began in earnest in late summer/fall 2014 and continued through winter. There was extensive outreach for Plan perspectives during this period within the Department and externally.

Employees across the Department provided their input through surveys and interviews. A team of 20 core employees participated fully in the Plan preparation. Department employees are aware of the Plan and are poised to actively take part in its implementation.

There was substantial engagement of external groups and individuals for Plan ideas. These inputs were secured through interviews and focus groups, including students and parents, staff of numerous Boston Public Schools departments, school leaders (principal/headmasters), teachers, government agency colleagues, and community partners.

The Plan was also enlightened by reports of: a) Review of the Food and Nutrition Services Department of the Boston Public Schools (April 2014)¹ by Council of the Great City Schools commissioned by Boston Public Schools; b) multiple years of Administrative Reviews (most recently in September, 2014) by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; and c) by inTEAM, consultant to school foodservice organizations, for new meal requirement.

The Strategic Plan has the potential to inform the on-boarding of the Department's new Executive Director for whom a search is now underway, and provides a map for action by Department employees, stakeholders, and School Department leaders and City leaders about priorities that the Food and Nutrition Services Department envisions going forward. It sets the framework and provides for flexibility in enhancements and granularity, and the addition of specific tasks, measurements, timetables, and responsibilities.

This Strategic Plan will inform preparation of the Food and Nutrition Services Business Plan.

Mission | Vision | Values

MISSION

We work to offer all Boston Public School students safe, wholesome, nutritious, enjoyable meals to fuel academic excellence. We achieve this in collaboration with students, parents, community, and school professionals.

VISION

We envision Boston Public School settings where students naturally enjoy eating healthy foods, thereby becoming better prepared for academic learning and living, by a Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Department that professionally manages all aspects of meal procurement, preparation and service in properly-equipped kitchens by well-trained, engaged staff, within fiscal targets. To succeed, FNS becomes a key collaborator with its stakeholders and elevates the knowledge and understanding of healthy eating with students and the community.

VALUES

We hold the following values to be primary:

- **Shared commitment:** Team members will work in collaboration to collectively reach strategic plan and Department goals.
- **Respect:** Team members will show consideration for others, listening to varied perspectives and recognizing the efforts of others, in a professional manner.
- **Accountability:** Team members will take responsibility for their work and through collaboration with others; they will apply due diligence and timely action.
- **Self motivation:** Team members will take initiative and be self directed.

Background | Leadership

BACKGROUND

The Boston Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services serves more than 13 million meals to students at 127 Boston Public Schools and offsite locations annually through four primary programs: a) Breakfast through the National School Lunch Program; b) Lunch through the National School Lunch Program; c) After School Meals (Child and Adult Care Food Program-CACFP) at school and youth-serving program locations; and d) Summer Meals (breakfast and lunch) through the National School Lunch Program, at a numbers of locations throughout Boston.

Meal service varies by school and may include meals served in multiple locations within a school as follows: cafeteria/dining area, classroom (breakfast, lunch, after school), grab and go (from a central location and taken to the classroom by individual students), off-sites/field trips.

Meals, as supported by Federal meals programs and served to students at schools and in the community, are highly regulated through a complex process. Meals must be in compliance with Federal government (United States Department of Agriculture-USDA) requirements under the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 and meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. All meals served must be accounted for at the time of service and data submitted monthly to the oversight authority, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Meals must also comply with Massachusetts regulations, and be in keeping with the District Wellness Policy.

USDA also provides USDA-purchased foods (USDA Foods/Commodities) to schools for school meals, after school meals and summer food service programs. These foods will increasingly play a part in meals at Boston schools. From USDA Foods allocation, Districts may select fruits, vegetables, lean meats, fish, poultry, rice, low fat cheese, beans, pasta, flour and other whole grain products.

LEADERSHIP

The City of Boston, Boston Public Schools and Food and Nutrition Service have been undergoing major leadership transitions. Since May 2013, Boston Public Schools has been led by Interim Superintendent John McDonough, following the retirement of Superintendent Carol R. Johnson. In January 2014, Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh was sworn in for his first term. New Superintendent Dr. Tommy Chang will take this position on July 1, 2015.

Within Food and Nutrition Services, there have also been a number of leadership changes in the last few years. A longstanding Director retired in late 2011, followed by a two-year-term Director. The Department of Food and Nutrition Services has been most recently led by the Deputy Director. This discontinuity of leadership has been disruptive to the Department and its work.

The search for a new Executive Director for Food and Nutrition Services was initiated in late winter 2015. The new Executive Director will set the course for the Department of Food and Nutrition Services and determine implementation of this Strategic Plan. While numbers of initiatives are underway to move the Department forward, there will naturally be redirection, innovation, specificity added, and change under new leadership. The new leader will refine the Plan, its measurements, assign responsibilities, and set the timetable for actions.

Highlights

HIGHLIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- Food and Nutrition Services has grown **revenue** for school meals from \$25.9 million in SY 2010 to \$34.2 million in SY 2014. **Expenses** increased from \$27.3 million to \$35.9 million over the same period. For SY 2015, there is a projected \$2.3 million loss, down from a forecast shortfall of \$4.8 million at the start of the SY.
- **Expenses break out** as follows: 56% food cost; 35.4% labor cost; 3.6% repair/maintenance; 5% other.
- **Meals served** have increased by an average of 3% per year; the number of lunches served has increased by 2% per year, with a 9% increase when Community Eligibility Provision was initiated in SY 2014.
- Average numbers of **meals served daily** at school sites (SY 2015):

	Meals/Day	Sites/Programs
School Year		
Breakfast	25,100	127
Lunch	39,800	127
After school	8,000	91
Summer (July through August 2014)		
Breakfast	4,000	150
Lunch	5,600	150

- **Meal participation** (average daily based on attendance) (%)

	SY10	SY11	SY12	SY13	SY14
Breakfast	43	44	49	50	49
Lunch	67	68	69	68	75

- Department of Food and Nutrition Services Department manages two food service models to provide meals to students: full service and satellite sites. Of the 127 School Food Authority (SFA) sites at which meals are provided, 45 are full-service kitchens and 82 are satellite sites that are serviced by a vendor.
- The Department of Food and Nutrition Services employs 528 individuals, with full- and part-time roles that include field staff (field supervisors, cafeteria and satellite managers, cooks and line servers) and business managers (finance, purchasing, personnel, technology, menu planning, management).

Goals | Strategies

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The plan articulates **four goals** for the Department for the coming **three years**. Within each goal, the strategies are noted in order of priority, with the most important first.

Goal One:

To **increase the meal participation rate** (breakfast, lunch, after school, summer) **by 8 percent** at the end of three years and **decrease waste**, by serving students healthy, tasty, appealing meals that meet regulatory standards by a well-trained, qualified staff, with menus well aligned at satellite and cafeteria schools. This may include CACFP program expansion because of extended school learning time and potential meal service in adult settings (e.g. shelters).

Strategies:

1. Reduce food waste

- Pilot pre-ordering and accurate forecasting tools in cafeteria and satellite locations, establish baseline daily counts by school; support with training; develop metrics on which to measure successful food waste reduction. Review and expand based on pilot.

2. Increase meal participation

- **Secure student feedback** on current and new menu items and recipes through surveys/sampling (at least twice a year) and focus groups (at least two groups, twice a year) for all grades, based on flavor and appearance. Also survey School Food Advisory Committee. Continuously survey through School Lunch Boston blog (<https://schoollunchboston.wordpress.com/>)

Adjust menus accordingly to attract and measure greater student meals participation, with recipe adjustment/development as needed.

Scope: at least 200 students surveyed/each cafeteria and satellite; both cafeteria and satellite for focus groups.

- **Maximize breakfast in the classroom**, as possible, across the District, implementing rigorous accountability practices. Where appropriate, secure grants for program expansion, recognizing the power of this program to jumpstart the number of students who begin the day with a healthy breakfast and perform better academically.
- **Actively market summer meals** and **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**, with improved packaging and variety. Initiate summer meals participation-building pilot in one Boston population/youth program/“neighborhood” to dramatically increase participation. Expand based on learning.

Goals | Strategies

- **Promote menu and menu items** through prominent signage where foods are served at breakfast and lunch. Follow USDA *Smarter Lunchrooms* standards to direct improvement. Inventory menu boards and signs and initiate action to develop and install enhanced signage. When menus are changed and/or options added, promote new items. As possible, use the lunchroom as classroom for lessons about healthy eating.

- **Market school meals to low and non-participating students**

Target primarily schools with low participation rates and low and non-participating students with marketing to boost meal participation; engage students in menu selection.

Implement **marketing campaign**: “What’s for lunch tomorrow?”

With sampling program at lunch the day before the item is on the menu. Gather student feedback; engage students in School Food Advisory Committee.

(See Exhibits: “What’s for lunch tomorrow?” for fuller description)

Assure **active role of vended meals provider** in marketing meals to students (surveys, promotion), hold vendor accountable for participation percentage increases.

- **Drive participation increases by school operations**

Using participation data, Field Coordinators and Cafeteria Managers/Satellite Attendants will develop and employ school-tailored tools and programs to increase numbers of students eating school meals. The initial step will be preparation of easily accessible participation reports and training on-site managers about use of this tool and levers for change. Incentivize on-site FNS staff for active role.

3. **Align menus at all schools -- cafeteria and satellite**

- For consistency and to assure that all students have access to very similar choices, menus will be planned, particularly for the protein choices, to be aligned across all menus and sites – cafeteria and satellite. This approach will also support offering meals that students favor most across the District. The intention is that menus for fall 2015 will exemplify this concept.

4. **Staff operations with capable, well-trained individuals**

- Develop **recruitment** standards (including computer literacy), on-boarding training for new operations hires (including HACCP, ServeSafe), with hands-on peer training of three-month duration for cafeteria and satellite staff. Continue new satellite manager training program initiated in fall 2014 program. Potentially engage college interns to develop programs.
- Assure high level of competency for all **field staff** with best management practices through

Goals | Strategies

professional development. Assure that on-site leads are trained and are applying readily accessible and current management tools, including profit and loss statement, accountability, comparative participation data, waste management, SOP's, through training and ongoing refreshers. For onsite staff, institutionalize continual training in HACCP, health requirement, operations basics and computer skills. On annual basis, survey staff for recommendations of areas for training.

Develop and manage tracking system to assure all staff members are trained; evaluate training effectiveness and adjust.

Continuously monitor training innovations in other districts and apply to Boston, as appropriate.

- Build and initiate formal program of **professional development** for management and central office staff in areas including business and personnel management, technology, subject knowledge (e.g. school nutrition)

Note: also see “Staff, Recruitment, and Training” under Goal #3

Measurement:

- Percentage increase in meal participation
- 100% compliance with regulations
- Waste reduction (standard to be established)
- Percent of menu items that are “matches” on satellite and cafeteria menus
- Increase score on *Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard* (USDA-HUSSC) to move above “Bronze”; and assure standards at “Bronze” level for Alliance for a Healthier Generation
- Develop and implement tracking measurement for marketing program effectiveness
- Track number of staff trained by key professional development needs/targets

Goals | Strategies

Goal Two:

Operate in a fiscally responsible, self-sustaining manner supported by revenue from Federal reimbursable grants.

Strategies:

1. **Maximize use of commodities**

Use commodities to the greatest extent possible (Brown Box, processed, and Department of Defense (DOD) with the target of 100% use at three years (incrementally 33% increases in each of 3 years). Steps will include defining menu, contracts for all processors, bid process determination, DOD determination, select processors, select items and set commodity process.

2. **Enhance and ensure implementation of more rigorous accountability and reporting in operating areas, including:**

- **Meal accountability with accuracy:**
Re-establish electronic **point-of-sale system**, utilizing more features of POS “front-of-house” module to capture student information. Steps will include: determine equipment, process, order equipment, train staff, implement

Where meals are served in locations other than the school dining area, complete rollout of **aggressive meal counting program** at school level, as outlined in 12/14 memo to all school principals/headmasters from Interim Superintendent

- **Claims submissions:**
Develop and implement **aggressive claims submission schedule**, shortening time from the current 30-day program, adjust timelines and procedures with new tracking system; monitor for accurate reporting

3. **Financial literacy** staff training

Develop program to assure knowledge by school-based **teams for management** of their “businesses” with tools, including inventory management and ordering to control waste, participation comparatives, P&L, etc. Work will be collaboration of financial and operations teams. (Reports listed below)

- Establish and implement new **operating standards and reports** to improve decision making by Central office and school site-based teams and use these tools rigorously

Develop the following **reports**, implement training, put into action:

- Site-based profit and loss statements (breakfast, lunch, CACF)
Use as tool to improve revenue and reduce costs, reduce food waste through more precise ordering

Goals | Strategies

- Participation comparatives, customized by Field Supervisor
Use to determine actions to increase participation school-by-school
 - Menu costs
Develop data base with product, pricing records, and nutritional information; apply this to menu planning and costing
 - Meal Per Labor Hour
Use to set appropriate staffing levels based on meals served at school sites
 - Financial projections
Develop the methodology and capability to prepare accurate financial projections for revenue and expenses, with consistency and accuracy
 - Capital Plan
Develop capital plan for equipment and facilities to provide for better expense planning and management of operations; collaborate with District on master plan.
4. **Establish cost management strategy and process related to waste and ordering;** implement in fall 2015
5. **Examine models for operation for move to self-reliant Department** in providing quality food to students away from vended meals model. Consider two potential forms: a) a self-operated, budget-neutral **Central Kitchen** in which foods are prepared for all schools; and b) **minimally equipping select satellite** locations to support food production.
- Explore concept for **Central Kitchen model** by:
 - Communicate with lead for the City's team on master capital plan; prepare briefing document of historical context for previous Central Kitchen operation; build list/report of potential users for Central Kitchen in addition to school meals (e.g. emergency shelter, CACFP); learn from other new Central Kitchen models (e.g. Detroit); prepare summary concept paper. Initiate winter 2015.
 - Investigate potential for satellite schools to prepare some school foods to enhance quality of student eating
 - Convene **internal task force to explore** concept of minimally-equipped satellite kitchens and site implications. Taskforce, composed primarily of operations and menu professionals, will determine what this model would look like and what would be required to move forward. Initiate winter 2015 for openness to this exploration.

Goals | Strategies

Measurement:

- Menus align with food cost targets within a small variance
- Menus meet target cost levels
- Percent of commodities used progressively in each of three years (33% usage in year 1; 66% usage in year 2; 100% usage in year 3)
- Reduction in number of days for claims filing to fewer than 30
- Establish accuracy measurement for claims and perform increasingly better to that metric
- Track knowledge by site-based managers in knowledge of management documents/tools, against established standards
- Periodic update memos on status of Central Kitchen and satellite equipping

Goals | Strategies

Goal Three:

Build and enhance culture for strong, positive relationships within the Department.

Strategies:

1. **Staff, Recruitment, Training**

Establish and **update job descriptions** for all roles and build standards/competencies for screening of job candidates, particularly “substitutes”. Develop rigorous on-boarding process and materials. **Assess training needs**; then prepare and implement explicit curriculum and timetable for new and existing employees.

Build cross-training program for clerical staff. Build and implement job sensitivity/awareness program for Central Office staff for interaction with on-site school staff.

2. **Survey**

Survey Food and Nutrition Services employees (cafeteria, satellite, central office) to set baseline **for work environment** and direction to move toward a positive Department throughout. **Annual survey** to continuously drive Department actions, initiating mid-2015.

3. **Recognition**

Define **measurable recognition program** for impact across the Department, extending to individual school operations, securing outside expertise and based on research of effective program models. Measure outcomes through survey (as noted above) and other measures.

4. **Interpersonal and Department Communication**

Establish and implement standards for **interpersonal workplace communication** and etiquette (phone, correspondence, meetings) within Department, school district and outside. Build program of Department connectedness through regular, formalized/organized written communication (e.g. e-newsletter, other)

5. **Staff: ongoing work**

Assure that changes in central office and field staff are **established with clear operations and responsibilities** in all areas.

Measurement:

- Establish measurement for interpersonal relationships; complaints, and recognition for high level performers
- Establish baseline employee survey in year 1; track over subsequent years for action (satisfaction metric/other).
- Completion of job descriptions by mid-2015
- Cross training in place by fall 2015

Goals | Strategies

Goal Four:

Enhance relationships with stakeholders (principals, staff, students, parents), and with influencers (school leadership, School Committee, City of Boston, community); educate these groups about the work of FNS; and secure their input to inform and improve FNS work

Strategies:

For stakeholders within the Boston Public Schools Department (principals, staff, students, parents, peer BPS departments)

1. **Department outreach:** Develop communication program to connect Food and Nutrition Services, at the school level, with school principals/headmasters, teachers, staff leaders, parents, students. Update information and add to content from Food and Nutrition Services in *Superintendent Circulars*; develop one-pagers on key topics for distribution, including through posting on *School Lunch Boston* blog. Cultivate opportunities for communication with school teams (e.g. Principal Institute)

Engage on-site FNS staff members for in-person communication and relationship building, assuring that they have the necessary tools and capabilities.

In year one, establish committee of Department and non-department members to creatively prepare a relationship-building communication program.

2. **Engage greater numbers of parents and students in existing School Food Advisory Committee**
Extend invitations to parents and students to participate in year-old Committee where there is active dialogue about school meals.
3. **Extend student menu sampling programs** and discussion of menu items **to parents** and **potentially other stakeholders** (see Goal One and Exhibits under “Get in Line for a Change and “What’s for Lunch”; same programs are applied to build participation)
4. **Implement marketing campaign: “School Lunch Hero”**
Encourage Food and Nutrition Services kitchen staff to be ambassadors of school food/frontline advocates of healthy, meals. Encourage students to share positive stories from their school cafeterias. Implement in year 1; consider for ongoing program (see Exhibits)
5. **Participate in collaborations with peer** departments within Boston Public Schools, including but not limited to: Wellness, Family Community Engagement, Facilities, Budget, Payroll, Human Capital, Academic.

For Persons of Influence within the City and Boston Public Schools, including Superintendent, School Committee, Mayor, City Councilors, State Representatives, State Senators, City of Boston, regulators (e.g. DESE), professional associations, community.

- 1. Create and implement communication program with dialogue to heighten awareness, engage school leaders and the community, and advocate on behalf of students** about the importance of school food, meals, and mealtime to improve academics. Initiate in summer 2015; work toward institutionalizing this approach.
 - Develop a **list of key influencers** for Department of Food and Nutrition Services within Boston Public Schools and in the community. Determine process and timetable for engaging these individuals with the Department.
 - Initiate communication and **build relationships** with these individuals. Host school lunches with students for these influencers; solicit feedback. Reach out periodically with written communication, e.g. one-pagers on relevant topics.
 - **Advocate for issues** that will benefit students, e.g. District-wide breakfast in the classroom policy
 - Inspire the School Food Advisory Committee to be **advocates** for Food and Nutrition Services; engage others such as Generation Citizen students as advocates. Expand Committee to engage persons of influence.
 - **Participate** in community organizations, offering Department expertise and perspective, e.g. Boston Public Health Commission
 - Take **leadership position**, as appropriate, on relevant issues; take steps for intentional outreach
 - Prepare, keep up-to-date, and available a one-pager “**vital issues**” **document** for communication with school leadership, and the full range of Food and Nutrition Services stakeholders. Explore annual convening.
- 2. Continue to engage stakeholders** through activity of the School Food Advisory Committee. Assure that, annually, ideas from this group are captured through a focus group.
- 3. Explore partnering** with an organization, such as Boston Public Market, to initiate an educational program about healthy eating and fresh food

Measurement:

- Number of contacts with target individuals/organizations
- Attendance and engagement with School Food Advisory Committee
- Number of outbound communications to target individuals/organizations
- Consider development of approach to “scoring” the level of these relationships
- Track changes based on School Food Advisory Committee input, e.g. on menu
- Document success of initiative with stakeholders

Exhibits

EXHIBITS

Plan components developed by the core teams of Food and Nutrition Services employees are available online as Exhibits with the posted Plan.

Core Team Reports:

Wave 1

Menu

Marketing

Training

Culture-Teamwork

Management-Finance-Procurement

Wave 2

Goal #1

Goal #2

Goal #3

Goal #4

Endnote

ENDNOTE

1. Carlson, R., Koch, D., Brooke, S., Eugene, M., Phillips, H., and Hafner, T. 2014: *Review of the Food and Nutrition Services Department of the Boston Public Schools, April 2014.*