

PROPOSAL

Central Kitchen Feasibility Study

**Durham Public Schools
Nutrition Programs**



**Presented by Food Insight Group
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Good food. Common good.

We help communities build just, equitable,
and resilient food systems.

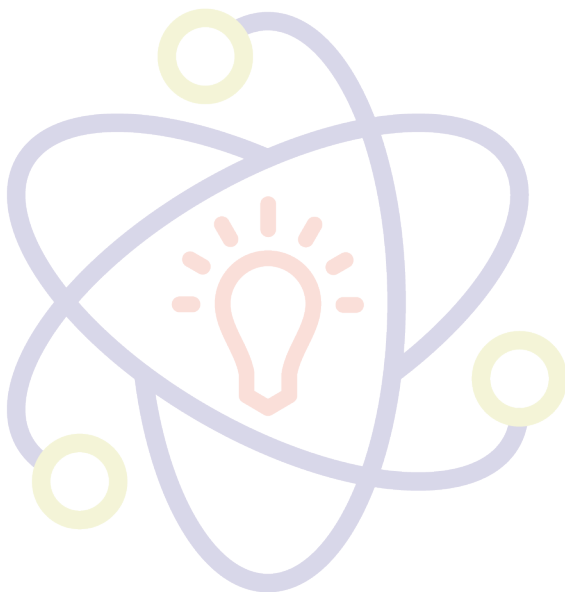


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Central Kitchen Feasibility Study

Durham Public Schools Nutrition Programs

Addressing Equity, Economics, Education, Environment, and Empowerment through school food



Executive Summary

Durham Public Schools (DPS) School Nutrition Services seeks to serve all students delicious, nourishing, environmentally conscious meals every day. Financial, policy, and historical challenges make this vision difficult to achieve. The greater Durham community has come together to end hunger in our community. Community and school nutrition programs must be a part of these efforts. Growing momentum and support for DPS school nutrition programs should be harnessed to shift from incremental change to catalytic and sustainable change in our school, community, and regional food systems.

This document outlines:

1. **Challenges** facing DPS school nutrition programs
2. **One promising solution** and examples implemented across the country
3. **A proposal** to quickly assess the projected feasibility and impact of the proposed solution
4. **Required next steps**



53

SCHOOLS

PEOPLE



32,000
STUDENTS
in grades K-12

600
STUDENTS
in pre-kindergarten



2,400
TEACHERS

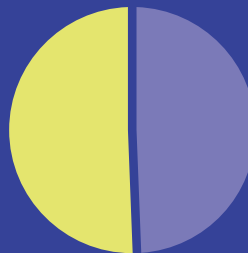
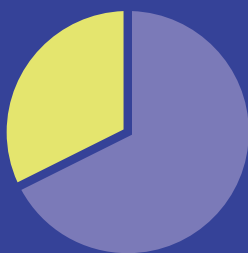
4,700
EMPLOYEES



MEALS SERVED



29.9%
STUDENTS
are served breakfast



51.6%
STUDENTS
are served lunch

+2,800 CHILDREN SERVED IN THE SUMMER

DPS NUTRITION SERVICES



294 EMPLOYEES SERVE IN
SCHOOL CAFETERIAS



5 DELIVERY
TRUCKS

9,375 SQ. FT.
WAREHOUSE



DPS School Nutrition Programs

A Snapshot

DPS is made up of approximately 32,000 students in grades K-12 and 600 in pre-kindergarten across 53 schools. It is served by approximately 2,400 teachers and 4,700 total employees. As part of state and federally mandated nutrition programs, DPS serves breakfast, lunch, snack, summer, and some supper meals to students. Currently, DPS serves an average of 29.9% of its student body breakfast and 51.6% of its student body lunch during the regular school year and an additional 2,800 children aged 0-18 years during the summer. DPS has a total free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) rate of 63.37%, with 13 schools on the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) where no FRL applications are required (100% free).

The DPS nutrition department is currently housed at 1817 Hamlin Road in Durham. DPS has 303 full- and part-time nutrition staff; 294 serve in school cafeterias, with the remainder serving in administrative and support roles. DPS owns 5 delivery trucks and maintains a 9,375 sq. ft. warehouse at 808 Bacon Street in Durham. USDA commodity products are delivered to the central warehouse and are then distributed to individual schools by DPS trucks. The DPS Child Nutrition budget was \$17.2 million in 2017-18.

DPS nutrition services runs a 3-week menu cycle for breakfast and lunch. DPS is a member of the NC Procurement Alliance and is currently supplied by Sysco, Flowers (bread products), Maola (milk), R&H Produce (produce), and Farmer Foodshare (local produce, currently purchasing spinach, turnip greens, collard greens, kale, diced sweet potatoes, and diced butternut squash).

Challenges

School nutrition programs are held to extremely high health and safety standards by federal, state, and local policies. To qualify for federal reimbursement dollars, a school lunch must offer five distinct components (fruit, vegetable, protein, grain, and milk) and meet strict nutrition standards. However, **there is more to food than nutrients**. Food is cultural, and the production of all food has a particular impact on the environment and the people working along its value chain. School food programs have an opportunity, and perhaps an obligation, to support a resilient, equitable, and ethical food system that meets the needs of all students in a culturally relevant manner. Unfortunately, current policies and severely limited federal and state funding make innovation and large-scale change challenging. **Increasing economies of scale by building a central kitchen is one promising strategy that provides many opportunities for broad and lasting community benefits.**



Solution: A Central Kitchen

FIG has been engaged in food systems research and “good food” projects through institutions like public schools for more than a decade. Recent projects have brought us in contact with some of the leading school nutrition programs across the country, and the concept of a central kitchen to support public school nutrition programs continues to emerge as one of few models that allows for significant positive school food system shifts within the limits of current federal policy and reimbursement rates.

WHAT IS A CENTRAL KITCHEN?

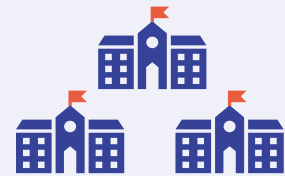
A central kitchen consolidates processing and cooking for school meals at one site, thereby increasing economies of scale and efficiencies. Prepared food (fresh, cooled, and/or frozen) is then transported to individual school kitchens for portioning, heating, and serving.



A CENTRAL KITCHEN
consolidates processing and
cooking for school meals.



PREPARED FOOD
is transported to school
kitchens.



INDIVIDUAL KITCHENS
portion, heat, and serve the
prepared food.

Examples of school systems using or building central kitchens across the US:

Berkeley Unified School District
Berkeley, CA

Bethel School District
Bethel, WA

Boulder Valley School District
Boulder, CO

Campbell Union School District
Campbell, CA

Clark County School District
Las Vegas, NV

Dallas Independent School District
Dallas, TX

Granite School District
Salt Lake City, UT

Greeley-Evans School District
Greeley, CO

Kalispell Public Schools
Kalispell, MT

Oakland Unified School District
Oakland, CA

Pasadena School District
Pasadena, CA

Pittsburgh Public Schools
Pittsburgh, PA

Central kitchens are cost effective and program enhancing for these reasons:

- ✓ Large-scale equipment increases capacity for processing and production, and it only has to be installed in one location versus multiple school sites. This allows for handling lower-cost raw product, and it also decreases the number of school sites needing equipment repairs, a significant expense for school nutrition programs.
- ✓ Larger cooler/freezer storage allows school systems to handle more fresh and local product.
- ✓ An executive chef is on staff and has the skills to move beyond standard school lunch fare, making menus more creative, culturally relevant, and adaptable to seasons and student preferences.
- ✓ Staffing is streamlined and supports more highly skilled culinary professionals.
- ✓ Utilities costs are streamlined, and waste can be reduced and handled in a more environmentally beneficial manner (e.g., through composting).
- ✓ Central kitchens are often financed through bonds, public-private partnerships, or grants that bring money into the school nutrition program rather than spending down the school nutrition budget.

Benefits at a glance:

- ✓ Increase processing and production capacity
- ✓ Decrease number of equipment repairs
- ✓ Increase ability to handle fresh/local products
- ✓ Streamline staffing
- ✓ Reduce waste
- ✓ Reduce utility cost
- ✓ Improve environmental impact
- ✓ Opportunities for additional financing

Community Benefits

In addition to functioning as a central site for ingredient delivery, storage, and breakfast/lunch/snack preparation for the school system, a central kitchen in Durham could serve many more functions for the community at large. A central kitchen could:

- Prepare CACFP meals** for childcare settings and congregate meal sites for older adults (those not served by CCSA)
- Prepare low-cost, delicious meals-to-go** for families, teachers, and community members
- Co-locate with local aggregator/distributor/processor(s)**, increasing the ease and decreasing the cost of local food procurement
- Co-locate with an educational garden or farm** to connect students to school food through integrated food and nutrition curricula
- Co-locate with other food businesses and entrepreneurs** to provide easily accessible, affordable food production space, including easy access to loading docks, deliveries, and distribution
- Provide additional office and meeting space** for aligned businesses, nonprofits, and community groups
- Incorporate green building best practices**, including water management, green roofs, solar panels, and composting systems, to demonstrate these techniques for the greater community, increase resilience, and provide cost savings through reduced utilities costs
- Establish procurement policies** to explicitly support people of color, women, young or new producers, and others historically underserved and underrepresented in mainstream food systems
- Build a commitment to the Good Food Purchasing Program** or a locally determined analog, providing guidelines for responsible and equitable sourcing and menu development
- Centralize and ensure food safety**, allowing for increased use of raw animal products
- Support the use of increased local product**, including produce, herbs, grains, dairy, eggs, meat, and legumes
- Improve the cultural relevance of menus** for the diverse student body of Durham
- Increase high-quality jobs in Durham** by reducing the purchasing of commercially processed and prepared foods (typically sourced from large corporations not based in North Carolina)

A central kitchen supports access to local products. Those currently available through partners like Farmer Foodshare & Firsthand Foods include:

long cucumbers	collards
pickling cucumbers	kale
eggplant	spinach
garlic	bibb lettuce
arugula	gem lettuce

okra
banana peppers
jalapenos
green bell peppers
poblano peppers
red potatoes
acorn squash
butternut squash
spaghetti squash
carrots
yellow squash

zucchini
tomatoes
gala apples
ginger gold apples
blackberries
blueberries
watermelon
peaches
asian pears
smoothies by Carolina Farmhouse

honey
Lindley Mill flour
muscadine jelly
scuppernong jelly
strawberry jam
green cabbage
lettuce mix
chopped collards
pastured beef and pork
eggs

Why a Central Kitchen for Durham?

If Durham is to become a “model food community,” school food cannot be ignored. In addition to having an impact on the health and educational outcomes of students, the thousands of school meals served daily present tremendous purchasing power. This purchasing power can and should be leveraged to transform our food system into one that promotes equity in health, economic opportunity, environmental resilience, and community self-reliance. The pieces are in place for Durham to build a central kitchen to support this vision. We have access to local food producers and distributors; the Director of School Nutrition Services for DPS, Mr. Jim Keaten, views this as a game-changing idea; we have tremendous community support for making school meals the best they can be; and many of our elected officials are attuned to the food system challenges Durham is facing. A central kitchen for DPS is one missing piece in the solution for an equitable and resilient food system in Durham.

Potential Challenges

The timeline for building a DPS central kitchen is uncertain, and the short-, medium- and long-term impacts are currently unknown. Funds will have to be raised, and public support must be high to bring this kind of project to life. Fortunately, we can look to other municipalities that have already navigated this process. In Oakland, 90% of polled residents reported believing that the school district had an obligation to feed students well, and 84% of voters supported a bond measure to fund building a central kitchen.

A Feasibility Study

A feasibility study will explore the broader impacts a central kitchen could have on DPS facilities, personnel, operations, students, and on the Durham community. Economic, environmental, and social impacts will be estimated for local farmers, businesses, restaurants, and other institutions like local universities and hospitals. A feasibility study is a low-cost approach to help DPS and Durham understand the potential benefits and risks associated with systems-level change to DPS nutrition services and the greater Durham foodshed. Potential beneficiaries of this feasibility study include policymakers, funders, DPS nutrition services, DPS, students, families, farmers, producers, distributors, aggregators, processors, entrepreneurs, and eaters, to name a few.



Next Steps

FIG proposes convening a diverse group of stakeholders to oversee the feasibility study and future implementation of study findings. Funding will need to be secured to support the feasibility study. A budget and timeline can be determined once the scope of work has been set in partnership with DPS, city and county elected officials, the DPS Board of Education, and others with a significant interest in the project.

JUST THE BASICS

Central Kitchen Feasibility Study Proposal

WHAT IS A CENTRAL KITCHEN?

A central kitchen is a facility that consolidates processing and cooking for school meals at one site, thereby increasing economies of scale and efficiencies. Prepared food (fresh, cooled, and/or frozen) is then transported to individual school kitchens for portioning, heating, and serving.



Does a central kitchen take away jobs from our community?

No. A central kitchen increases the total number of jobs and the number of skilled jobs in the community. Most schools will maintain their current nutrition program staffing to prepare and serve food, while jobs will be created at the central kitchen facility to oversee and run production. New staff may include an executive chef, delivery and operations managers, cooks, and delivery drivers.

Is a central kitchen run by a management company?

No. A central kitchen does not need to be run by a management company. Costs are lower if the school district continues to operate its own school nutrition programs.

Is a central kitchen model financially sustainable for DPS school nutrition programs?

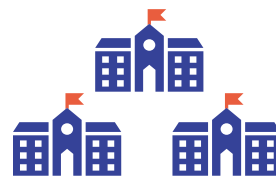
The feasibility study will directly address this question. Other districts have experienced cost savings through the centralized location of large and expensive pieces of equipment that require regular maintenance (e.g., 2-3 large steam kettles instead of 50 small ones across the district) and scratch cooking with raw ingredients rather than paying for value-added premade products (e.g., flour, water, eggs, tomato sauce, and cheese instead of the cost of premade pizza).



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How does a central kitchen for DPS benefit local farmers?

A central kitchen allows DPS to handle more fresh, local products because farms and aggregators can deliver product to one location (instead of 50+ school kitchens), and the central kitchen has the equipment and personnel to handle and prepare raw produce, local animal proteins, and more.

What is the environmental impact of a central kitchen?

The feasibility study will address this question directly. A central kitchen could help reduce DPS Nutrition Services' impact on the environment by building LEED-certified facilities, reducing the carbon footprint of raw ingredients (food miles traveled, retooled menus), and implementing composting programs.

How does a central kitchen for DPS benefit the local economy?

A central kitchen could increase demand for local food products, thereby increasing market opportunities for farmers and producers. A central kitchen campus could operate as a food hub with multiple other services for the community (like \$5 lunches from the School Food Truck served to local businesses, low-cost frozen family meals, and co-locating with processors that sell to DPS and other local businesses and institutions (e.g., washed and chopped collards sold nextdoor to DPS and down the road to Duke Dining Services).

Does a central kitchen require a new menu?

Not necessarily, but a central kitchen can be supported by increased student participation driven by new and engaging menus. In addition, a central kitchen will have its greatest economic and community impact if the menu is developed with local and regional impact in mind (e.g., a balanced menu that is delicious and highlights seasonal, cost-effective, local products as much as possible).



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