

RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH OAKLAND PROGRAM TO BE STUDIED BY UC BERKELEY FACULTY

For Immediate Release

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Photos: Ground Breaking of new OSUD central kitchen in Oakland, California, April 7, 2016. Images courtesy of the Oakland Unified School District.



Berkeley, Ca. An enthusiastic group of elementary school children stand at the ready with shovels poised in piles of dirt. They are not on a school field trip but at the exciting ground breaking for Oakland Unified School District's new Central Kitchen, Instructional Farm, and Education Center. The facility is part of the *Rethinking School Lunch Oakland* initiative, which is an outgrowth of a partnership between the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and the Center for Ecoliteracy (CEL).

The [Berkeley Food Institute](http://food.berkeley.edu/) <<http://food.berkeley.edu/>> has awarded a \$50,000 research grant to [Malo Hutson](https://ced.berkeley.edu/ced/faculty-staff/malo-hutson) <<https://ced.berkeley.edu/ced/faculty-staff/malo-hutson>>, Assistant Professor of City and Regional Planning, [Jason Corburn](https://ced.berkeley.edu/ced/faculty-staff/jason-corburn) <<https://ced.berkeley.edu/ced/faculty-staff/jason-corburn>>, Professor of City and Regional Planning and the School of Public Health, [Moira O'Neill](#) ([page 3168](#)), Lecturer in City and Regional Planning, and Christyna Serrano, in the School of Education, to study the initiative and its implementation. Jennifer LeBarre, Executive Director of Nutrition Services at OUSD and Zenobia Barlow, Executive Director at CEL will be community collaborators. When completed, the research will be available to School Districts nationwide as they look at transforming their school meal programs.

The study will examine OUSD's partnership with CEL and project outcomes to address system-wide change to food access, health, education, environment and social issues through its school meal program. According to Hutson, "Urban school meal programs represent a significant opportunity to implement food system reform strategies that both increase vulnerable populations' access to nutritious food while also supporting agro-ecology."

The Oakland program is based on the Rethinking School Lunch <<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/download/rethinking-school-lunch-guide>> planning framework created by CEL. The framework helped CEL and OUSD jointly formulate a strategy to address food and health, wellness, learning and the dining experience for the children. To implement the framework, OUSD needed to analyze its food procurement, facilities, financing, waste management and staff professional development processes.

Oakland has a critical need to reform its school lunch program. According to OUSD and CEL, students nationwide typically consume at least 35% of their daily calories at school. In OUSD schools, the students often consume far more calories than the national average. Over 73% of the students qualify for free, or reduced price lunches. Many children eat all three daily meals at school.

The volume of school meals produced by OUSD presented an incredible opportunity to improve school meals and wellness while addressing staff professional development issues and agro-ecology issues simultaneously. A CEL feasibility study determined three-quarters of student meals were originating at three separate central kitchens ill-equipped to produce the number of meals needed daily. (For example, OUSD served 28,196 breakfasts and lunches daily during the 2014–15 school year!)



OUSD's new vision includes a district-wide network of school kitchens, gardens and produce markets with a Central Kitchen, Instructional Farm and Education Center to support the new network. Food and produce will be sourced locally through local partners and farms. The new facility will support educational pathways in multiple related disciplines for students including connecting students to where their food comes from on a nearby instructional farm. The new environment will also improve the working conditions of the Nutrition Services staff. Oakland voters passed a bond measure to fund this initiative.

Hutson states, "Our study will focus on the on-going issues related both to nutritious food and agro-ecology. The research will have significant relevance for urban food system change-makers and school communities nationwide as they seek to address chronic public childhood health issues. Our plan is to make this study accessible to school districts nationwide considering similar projects."

About the Berkeley Food Institute's Seed Grant Program

The program supports innovative, collaborative, interdisciplinary research projects that are aligned with the vision of the Institute: to catalyze transformative changes in food systems to ensure that all people have access to healthy, affordable food that is produced sustainably and

equitably.

About Malo André Hutson

Malo André Hutson is an academic scholar and practitioner in the areas of community and economic development, urban policy and politics, and urban health. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California at Berkeley and the Associate Director of the Institute for Urban and Regional Development. Dr. Hutson's research focuses on how neighborhood, community, and metropolitan-level factors affect the health and the economic, environmental, political, and social well-being of urban residents. Specifically, his research is at the intersection of urban planning and health inequities.

About Jason Corburn

Jason Corburn is the Director of Institute for Urban and Regional Development and an Associate Professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning and the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley. His research focuses on environmental justice and climate change in cities, the links between urban planning and public health, and inclusive community development for informal settlements in cities of Africa, Asia and Latin America. He is a research and evaluation advisor for the World Health Organization, the International Council of Science, and numerous local and national governments. Jason has conducted research projects on: the health equity impacts of new urban governance strategies in San Francisco and Richmond; sanitation, food security and community development projects in Nairobi's informal settlements; community planning, poverty reduction and infectious disease in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, Brazil.