

School Food FOCUS

Transforming Food Options for Children in Urban Schools

Issue #2
July 30, 2008

We are very pleased to announce to you all that Liquori and Associates has hired Thomas Forster to serve as Policy Advisor to School Food FOCUS. Initial objectives of FOCUS policy work are to:

1. **Analyze and refine opportunities** in Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2009 and Farm Bill implementation/appropriations policy as they relate to big city school food. This includes outlining policy opportunities challenges, potential partners, and the unique place of this network.
2. **Devise a plan and timeline** for discussing, developing, confirming and promoting priority policy positions.
3. **Develop, with project participants through a policy committee, an advocacy platform and strategy** (including policy goals, key legislative opportunities, legislative allies and obstacles, coordination with other groups, timing and sequencing of advocacy).
4. **Design and begin implementation of advocacy strategies and activities**, through policy committee and partners, to advocate for network priorities, engage core stakeholders, attract new allies, and coordinate with similar efforts.

School Food FOCUS is dedicated to a collaborative approach to policy development and advocacy that builds participation, trust and a sense of ownership among FOCUS stakeholders and allies. Thomas is uniquely qualified to guide such a process as he brings not only in-depth knowledge of and direct experience in food and agriculture policy, but also long experience in multi-sector/multi-stakeholder policy processes at local, state, national and international levels. His working relationships with food and agriculture agencies as well as advocacy groups will serve School Food FOCUS well as we work to identify and the advocate for common policy goals, messages and strategies in cooperation with allied groups and coalition. He has worked specifically on policy to promote flexible procurement of local foods for school cafeterias and other policy to support institutional access to healthy foods in the past two Farm Bills and the 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act. (See bio at the end of this message)

In addition to introducing you to Thomas, with this announcement, we are also inviting your participation in the School Food FOCUS Policy Working Group.

The Policy Working Group will work with Thomas and FOCUS staff on the four objectives outlined above to ensure the active discussion and incorporation of perspectives, concerns and policy priorities of a broad spectrum of FOCUS stakeholders. The Policy Working Group will also help explore how to:

- Develop School Food FOCUS-specific policy priorities that grow directly out of the experiences and efforts of big city schools to provide quality meals and increase local/regional purchasing
- Identify success stories and case studies of urban school food change that can be crafted into persuasive policy briefings and policy education materials
- Maximize complementary advocacy work and avoid duplication, while supporting the core priorities of organizations, coalitions and networks pursuing similar policy goals

We do not yet have a School Food FOCUS policy platform—that will be the product of your active participation. However, we do have a significant body of discussions and shared work that led to this point. Participants in the two School Meals Institutes of 2007 indicated a need and interest in large urban school districts working together to sharpen shared policy priorities and work towards clearer, more focused representation of their interests in transforming school food options. We are committed to staffing a Policy Working Group and broader stakeholder input process to serve just those needs and interests.

Our current timeline is:

July 29, 2008

Extend this invitation to participate in the Policy Working Group

August 4, 2008

Circulate **draft** documents for your review and input:

- Core CNR Policy Players
- Venn Diagram of CNR Advocates
- Child Nutrition Policy Opportunities: Brief Scan

August 13-15, 2008

Participate in the WK Kellogg Foundation's Forum for Children's Futures in Santa Fe. Forum objectives are to:

- Convene children's advocates and child nutrition policy experts to develop a strategy for changing the public conversation about children and nutrition to achieve different policy outcomes
- Introduce research findings that help the group understand what will or won't work in their efforts to inform and educate policymakers
- Develop opportunities for citizen engagement to advance the best possible 2009 Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act

Details at www.wkkfchildrensforum.org

August 29, 2008

Circulate next iteration of these documents, with your suggestions

Early September

Establish Policy Working Group and circulate draft thoughts on how it will function, for your input

Mid-September

Initiate regular Working Group calls to begin scoping out a policy platform

Late October/Early November

Fall stakeholder/planning meeting of School Food FOCUS

We are depending on a diverse, dedicated group of people to help transform how child nutrition goals are pursued in public policy! If you are interested in participating in the School Food FOCUS Policy Working Group, please call (845-361-3205) or email (klgardensong@hvc.rr.com) Kathy Lawrence.

We look forward to hearing back from you and to beginning this advocacy work.

Sincerely,

Kathy Lawrence
Program Director
Liquori and Associates, LLC

Thomas Forster serves as Policy Advisor for the School Food FOCUS project. Thomas has worked closely with sustainable agriculture, nutrition, anti-hunger, public health and school food advocates on healthy local food provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill, 2004 Child Nutrition Reauthorization and the 2008 Farm Bill.

Following his role as Policy Director of CFSC in Washington DC from 2000 to early 2008, Thomas now resides in New York City where he teaches food policy at the New School and is actively engaged in United Nations policy on food, agriculture and nutrition issues.

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