PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

USDA Highlights Improved Meals
In S.F.’s Public Schools

September 8, 2010 (San Francisco) – SFUSD meal improvements were lauded today by State Superintendent Jack O’Connell, officials from the US Department of Agriculture and both the mayor’s office and SF Board of Supervisors.

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service Deputy Administrator for Special Nutrition Programs Audrey Rowe visited Francisco Middle School to highlight SFUSD’s healthy meals and to promote the Obama Administration’s priorities for improving school meals and the health of children across the nation.

The USDA established the HealthierUS School Challenge to recognize schools that are creating healthy school environments by promoting good nutrition and physical activity. Schools can become certified as Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Gold of Distinction Schools, by meeting certain criteria.

“They are so far along that we are encouraging SFUSD to go for the Gold in the HealthierUS School Challenge,” said Rowe.

After years of improvements, SFUSD school meals now include fresh produce and whole grains each day, trans fats have been eliminated, instead of juice students get a fresh fruit breakfast, and there are salad bars at all middle and high schools. In addition, this fall an efficient point-of-sale system was up and running at every school.

“We know that eating right during the school day is absolutely essential for our students to be ready for learning,” said SFUSD Superintendent Carlos Garcia. “I’m proud to say that the food we serve them every day meets today’s high standards for healthy eating.”

Students at Francisco Middle School shared a snapshot of their peers’ opinions about their school food (and what they think still could be better), to USDA officials and shared a typical school lunch in the cafeteria.

USDA created the Challenge to recognize schools that maintain healthy school environments by improving the quality of meals and increasing physical activity and nutrition education. It is
also a key component of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign to end childhood obesity within a generation.

“We know our Gold nutritional standard menus are part of an overall strategy in our district to support the health of our students” said SFUSD Student Nutrition Services Director, Ed Wilkins. “This is an important step toward combating childhood obesity.”

**Detailed Improvements**

SFUSD has improved its vegetable offering by increasing the amount of dark green and orange vegetables such as romaine lettuce, spinach, collard greens, sweet potatoes, and limiting starchy vegetables.

SFUSD meals do not contain artificial flavoring or colors and SFUSD does not permit trans fats except for naturally occurring fats in beef and cheese, which are not considered a health risk. All deep fat fried foods are prohibited.

SFUSD’s fresh fruits and vegetables in its salad bars are from local vendors in middle and high schools and some elementary schools. Elementary schools without salad bars serve a fresh pack of vegetables to its students. The fresh packs include a variety of cut fresh vegetables such as carrots, celery, zucchini and jicama sticks. Locally-grown organic fruit is also served when possible.

Whole grain breads are offered from local vendors and whole grain pasta and pizza crusts are served. SFUSD delivers hot and cold breakfasts on a rotating basis to provide variety to all students. In addition, six high schools now offer a “Grab and Go” breakfast program.

SFUSD serves over 25,000 lunches a day. In San Francisco, approximately 54 percent of the public school students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

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