

THE RETHINKERS' SECOND ANNUAL SCHOOL FOOD REPORT



**SOWING SEEDS** *for* **BETTER HEALTH**  
STUDENTS GRADE NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOL CAFETERIAS

1001 S. BROAD ST  
STUDIO 206  
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70125

(504) 208-2813  
[www.TheRethinkers.com](http://www.TheRethinkers.com)



# INTRODUCTION

Three years ago, in 2008, youth from Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools (the Rethinkers) spent their summer “rethinking” school food. They did not like the food served to them in their cafeterias, nor the cafeterias themselves. During six intensive weeks, they examined their dismal lunch experiences and learned about creative alternatives, among them fresh, local food. They interviewed principals, shrimpers, chefs and other students to gain a wide array of perspectives, and then came up with “Twelve Recommendations for School Food and Cafeterias”. At the end of the summer program, they presented these recommendations to Paul Vallas, then superintendent of the Recovery School District (RSD), who agreed to implement 11 of the 12. (He balked at the recommendation to replace plastic utensils with metal ones out of concern that they might be a threat to student safety – knives in particular.) Please see “Twelve Recommendations for Public School Food and Cafeterias” on page 5.

Since the summer of 2008, Rethink students and staff have worked in a number of ways to keep the “Twelve Recommendations” in the public eye. For instance, in the spring of 2009, Rethink worked with Chef Katie Bingham to conduct a recipe-testing project in which middle-school students identified their top 10 favorite dishes that featured at least one local ingredient. These recipes were presented to the RSD for inclusion in the 2009-2010 school year menu. Their report, “Kids Will Eat It,” and the request for menu inclusion, were rolled out at a well-attended and widely reported news conference hosted by the Rethinkers. Part of the fun that day was serving the 10 dishes to representatives of the RSD and charter schools and capturing their enthusiastic reactions while cameras rolled! During 2010, the Rethinkers graded six public schools to see how well they were doing at adopting the “Twelve Recommendations.” They presented their findings in a report called “Time To Rethink School Lunch: Students Grade New Orleans Public School Cafeterias.” Grades ranged from B- to F, and the mainly grim report made quite a stir in New Orleans.

In the fall of 2010, glimmers of hope began to appear. One was a request from ARAMARK, the new RSD school food provider, to meet with the Rethinkers to help implement the recommendations in RSD schools. After meeting with the Rethinkers, ARAMARK agreed to significant changes and will soon sign an historic agreement related to fresh, local produce.

“Sowing Seeds for Better Health,” is Rethink’s second annual report on the state of school food in New Orleans. It is a joint effort by members of the Rethink Citywide Group (who conducted surveys at all nine schools that received grades), and Rethink Club members at Langston Hughes Academy and the Edgar P. Harney Elementary School (who contributed special reports).

At each of the nine schools graded this year, Rethink students surveyed 10% of the student body, four teachers and the principal. All survey tools for this report were created by the Rethink students – with invaluable support from the Prevention Research Center at Tulane University’s School of Public Health. Look for our third student report this time next year!

- Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools  
June, 2011



# TRENDS

The Rethinkers surveyed a total of nine schools for this report - six were included last year, and three were new. One of the most powerful trends we saw was that five of the six schools surveyed in 2010 had better grades this year, demonstrating that improvements in school food and food education are taking hold! You will notice that some schools' grades exceed 100%. The grades were curved 20% both this year and last year. Next year, we hope to remove the curve in response to higher grades from all schools.

We are also thrilled to report that two schools this year received the highest report card grades to date - an A and an A+. (Last year the highest grade was a B-.) What that means is that at least a few schools in the city have reached our gold standard: they serve delicious food cooked at school using local ingredients; supply reusable trays, plates and silverware; feature school gardens and food education; and last, support a dining culture that neither rushes students through lunch nor ties food to punishment.

The student meal approval ratings at all schools are still lower than we would hope for. We recognize that in many schools the cafeteria is reintroducing this generation of young people to fresh food that they might not be accustomed to eating. We trust that over time these rates will go up.

This year's report card revealed other interesting findings as well. For instance, schools with gardens and food education programs tend to serve more fresh food that is grown locally and prepared from scratch. Not surprisingly, at these schools, more staff and students report they enjoy the dining room atmosphere. These same schools also create less waste: some are composting cafeteria waste and serving school meals with cutlery, plates and trays that get washed and reused rather than thrown out.

Whether they intend to or not, schools teach students about food each time they walk into the cafeteria. It gives us great pleasure to report that schools are beginning to use this teachable moment to educate students not just about food, but also about health and sustainability. We hope that by next year's report card, we'll see an even greater increase in school willingness to serve tasty, fresh, local food and teach eating habits that lead to lifelong health.



# VICTORIES

The Rethinkers are the first K-12 students in the country to create policy goals for their schools and school food providers. The Recovery School District (RSD), the state entity that operates and charters the majority of New Orleans' public schools, credits Rethink with "driving" the following reforms: (1) the elimination of "sporks" in RSD cafeterias in favor of forks, knives and spoons; (2) the addition of cafeteria hand-washing sinks and garden plots in plans for all new schools; and (3) substantially more fresh food on the school lunch menu. The Rethink architectural design for a 21st Century Green Cafeteria was accepted as part of the School Facilities Master Plan for the City of New Orleans. This plan will inform our city's \$2 billion school construction project over the next decade.

The "Twelve Recommendations" were adopted by the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Council (FPAC) in 2010, and included that year in a major report to the city called, "Stepping Up to the Plate." In the fall of 2010, the RSD and its new food service provider, ARAMARK, expressed an interest in adopting the Rethink recommendations. After a number of meetings, ARAMARK agreed to add more vegetarian options at lunch and purchases more locally grown food for school meals. ARAMARK announced these commitments and others at the Rethinkers' school food news conference on May 26, 2011.

Through their collaborative approach, the Rethinkers have made New Orleans a model for school lunch reform in the country – proving that youth have an invaluable role to play in education reform. They have spoken on panels with author and whole food advocate Michael Pollan, sustainability expert Anna Lappé and others. Currently, HBO is profiling Rethink's school food reform work for a major, six-part documentary on childhood obesity called *The Weight of the Nation*, scheduled to appear in the spring of 2012.

Various books include chapters about the Rethinkers, including, *Food Justice*, by Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi (2010), *Collective Visioning: How Groups Can Work Together for a Just and Sustainable Future*, by Linda Stout (2011), and *How To Rebuild a City: Notes from a Work in Progress*, by Anne Gisleson and Tristan Thompson (2010).





# 12 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL FOOD & CAFETERIAS



## VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH

- **Recommendation 1: No more sporks!** Give public school students knives, forks and spoons. Short term: supply biodegradable utensils. Long term: buy dishwashing equipment and give us metal utensils.
- **Recommendation 2: Buy fresh, tasty food.** Give us as little highly processed food as possible. Keep preservatives, chemicals, and highly sweetened items to a minimum.



## VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY

- **Recommendation 3: Buy fresh food from local farmers, fishermen, and shrimpers.** We can have healthier food and keep our local economy strong at the same time by purchasing food grown, harvested or caught within 200 miles of New Orleans.
- **Recommendation 4: Present even more local dishes on the school menu.** We love our New Orleans and Louisiana food. The ingredients can be bought locally, such as shrimp, meat, okra, tomatoes, rice, and others.
- **Recommendation 5: Present tasty, healthy food alternatives for vegetarians.** Some of us cannot eat meat because of our religious convictions. Others are vegetarians for personal reasons.



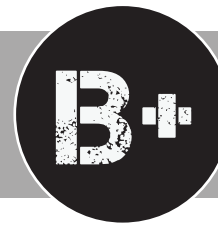
## VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH

- **Recommendation 6: No more Styrofoam trays!** Short term: give us biodegradable trays. Long term: buy real trays or plates and wash them in dishwashers after meals.
- **Recommendation 7: School designs should include outdoor vegetable gardens.** Students need to grow fresh food and taste what they grow. Part of our education is learning that things taste better when they come from the ground and not from a can.
- **Recommendation 8: Use leftover food to make compost for school gardens.**



## VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS

- **Recommendation 9: Design cafeterias that you would like to eat in yourselves.** Give us light, comfortable chairs, murals on the walls, and outdoor eating spaces. Check out our Rethink 21st century green cafeteria design!
- **Recommendation 10: Install sinks so we can wash our hands before eating.**
- **Recommendation 11: Enough lunch time to enjoy our food and our friends.** No more herding students into the cafeteria, standing in long lines, and eating with the time left over. Our time eating is as important as our time in class.
- **Recommendation 12: No more silent lunches for any reason.** Don't tie punishment to food and cafeterias.



## VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH

### Holding the Line:

- Ashe still does not use sporks, and its cafeteria food is still freshly cooked and prepared on-site. (Recommendations 1 and 2)

### Needs Improvement:

- Like last year, Ashe still uses plastic forks, knives, and spoons in the cafeteria. (Recommendation 1)
- The majority of students say they do not like eating the food. (Recommendation 2)



## VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY

### Notable Progress:

- Some of the produce or seafood served at Ashe is locally harvested. (Recommendation 3)
- The cafeteria now serves a local dish twice per week. This is an improvement over last year's custom of serving a local dish once per week. (Recommendation 4)
- Vegetarian options are now consistently available at breakfast and lunch. (Recommendation 5)



## VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH

### Holding the Line:

- Ashe's vegetable garden, garden education classes, and composting system make the school exemplary. These programs are sponsored by the Edible Schoolyard New Orleans. Way to go! (Recommendations 7 and 8)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria still uses Styrofoam trays. (Recommendation 6)



## VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS

### Notable Progress:

- Some students and the majority of staff say they like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere, an improvement from last year when the majority of staff said they did not like it. (Recommendation 9)

### Holding the Line:

- Ashe still maintains hand-washing sinks in the cafeteria, and the majority of students report they have time to wash their hands before and after eating. (Recommendation 10)
- Ashe offers a 30-minute lunch period, and students report waiting in line for five minutes for their food. (Recommendation 11)

### Needs Improvement:

- The majority of students say they do not like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere. (Recommendation 9)
- Like last year, the majority of students report having silent lunches more than once per week. (Recommendation 12)



## VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH

### Notable Progress:

- The cafeteria food is a mix of pre-cooked and freshly cooked. (Recommendation 2)

### Holding the Line:

- BCAA still does not use sporks. (Recommendation 1)

### Needs Improvement:

- Like last year, BCAA is still using plastic forks, knives, and spoons in the cafeteria. (Recommendation 1)
- The majority of students as well as staff say they do not like eating the food. (Recommendation 2)



## VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY

### Notable Progress:

- Vegetarian options are consistently available at breakfast and lunch. (Recommendation 5)
- Some of the produce or seafood at BCAA is locally harvested. (Recommendation 3)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria still serves a local dish only once per week. (Recommendation 4)



## VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH

### Notable Progress:

- The cafeteria alternates between using Styrofoam and plastic trays. (Recommendation 6)
- BCAA has a vegetable garden. (Recommendation 7)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria still sometimes uses Styrofoam trays. (Recommendation 6)
- BCAA still has no plans to start composting. (Recommendation 8)



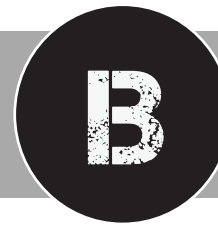
## VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS

### Notable Progress:

- BCAA offers a 30-minute lunch period, and students spend five minutes in line waiting for their food. (Recommendation 11)

### Needs Improvement:

- The majority of students and all staff say they do not like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere. (Recommendation 9)
- BCAA has no hand-washing sinks in the cafeteria, and students report they do not have time to wash their hands before and after eating. (Recommendation 10)
- BCAA has silent lunches more than once per week. (Recommendation 12)



## VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH

### Notable Progress:

- Craig no longer uses sporks. (Recommendation 1)
- The cafeteria food is now freshly cooked and prepared on-site. (Recommendation 2)

### Needs Improvement:

- Like last year, Craig is still using plastic forks, knives, and spoons in the cafeteria. (Recommendation 1)
- Half the students say they do not like eating the food. (Recommendation 2)



## VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY

### Notable Progress:

- Some of the produce or seafood served at Craig is locally harvested. (Recommendation 3)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria still only serves a local dish once per week. (Recommendation 4)
- Half the students report that vegetarian options are not consistently available at breakfast and lunch. (Recommendation 5)



## VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH

### Notable Progress:

- Craig has plans for a vegetable garden. (Recommendation 7)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria still uses Styrofoam trays. (Recommendation 6)
- Craig still has no plans to start composting. (Recommendation 8)



## VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS

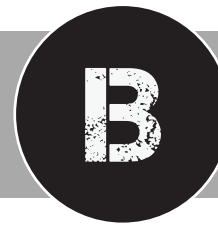
### Notable Progress:

- Some students and staff say they like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere, an improvement from last year when students and staff all said that they did not like it. (Recommendation 9)
- Students are now given time to wash their hands in the hand-washing sinks in the cafeteria. (Recommendation 10)
- Craig no longer has silent lunches. (Recommendation 12)

### Needs Improvement:

- Half the students say they do not like the dining atmosphere in the cafeteria. (Recommendation 9)
- Even though students report spending five minutes or less in line waiting for their food, Craig offers only a 30-minute combined lunch and recess period. (Recommendation 11)





## VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH

### Notable Progress:

- The cafeteria food is now freshly cooked and prepared on-site. (Recommendation 2)

### Holding the Line:

- Dibert still does not use sporks. (Recommendation 1)

### Needs Improvement:

- Like last year, Dibert is still using plastic forks, knives, and spoons in the cafeteria. (Recommendation 1)
- The majority of students say they do not like eating the food. (Recommendation 2)



## VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY

### Notable Progress:

- Some of the produce or seafood served at Dibert is locally harvested. (Recommendation 3)

### Holding the Line:

- Vegetarian options are still consistently available at breakfast and lunch. (Recommendation 5)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria still only serves a local dish once per week. (Recommendation 4)



## VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH

### Holding the Line:

- Dibert has maintained its vegetable garden. (Recommendation 7)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria still uses Styrofoam trays. (Recommendation 6)
- Dibert still has no plans to start composting. (Recommendation 8)



## VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS

### Notable Progress:

- Dibert has hand-washing sinks in the cafeteria, and students report they have time to wash their hands before and after eating. (Recommendation 10)
- The majority of staff say they like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere, an improvement from last year when all staff said they did not like it. (Recommendation 9)

### Needs Improvement:

- The majority of students say they do not like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere. (Recommendation 9)
- Even though students report spending only five minutes in line waiting for their food, Dibert offers only a 30-minute combined lunch and recess period, a negative change from last year's 45-minute combined period. (Recommendation 11)
- Dibert now has silent lunches, a negative change from last year, when it had no silent lunches. (Recommendation 12)



## VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH

### Notable Progress:

- Fannie C. does not use sporks. (Recommendation 1)
- The cafeteria food is a mix of pre-cooked and freshly cooked. (Recommendation 2)

### Needs Improvement:

- Fannie C. uses plastic forks, knives, and spoons in the cafeteria. (Recommendation 1)
- The majority of students say they do not like eating the cafeteria food. (Recommendation 2)



## VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY

### Notable Progress:

- The cafeteria serves a local dish once per week. (Recommendation 4)
- Some of the produce and seafood served at Fannie C. is locally harvested. (Recommendation 3)

### Needs Improvement:

- Vegetarian options are not consistently available at breakfast and lunch. (Recommendation 5)



## VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria uses Styrofoam trays. (Recommendation 6)
- Fannie C. has no garden and no plans to start one. (Recommendation 7)
- Fannie C. has no plans to start composting. (Recommendation 8)



## VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS

### Notable Progress:

- Fannie C. offers a 30-minute lunch period, and students report they spend five minutes in line waiting for their food. (Recommendation 11)

### Needs Improvement:

- The majority of students as well as staff say they do not like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere. (Recommendation 9)
- Fannie C. has no hand-washing sinks in the cafeteria, although students report they do have time to wash their hands in the bathrooms before and after they eat. (Recommendation 10)
- Fannie C. has silent lunches once per week. (Recommendation 12)



## VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH

### Notable Progress:

- Green uses metal forks, knives, and spoons. (Recommendation 1)
- The cafeteria food is freshly cooked and prepared on-site. (Recommendation 2)

### Needs Improvement:

- Half the students say they do not like eating the cafeteria food. (Recommendation 2)



## VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY

### Notable Progress:

- Some of the produce and seafood served at Green is locally harvested. (Recommendation 3)
- The cafeteria serves a local dish every day. Fantastic! (Recommendation 4)
- Vegetarian options are consistently available at breakfast and lunch. (Recommendation 5)



## VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH

### Notable Progress:

- Green uses real plates and bowls, in addition to reusable, washable trays. (Recommendation 6)
- Green's vegetable garden, garden education classes, and composting system make the school exemplary. These programs are sponsored by the Edible Schoolyard New Orleans. Great work! (Recommendations 7 and 8)



## VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS

### Notable Progress:

- The majority of students as well as staff say they like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere. (Recommendation 9)
- Green offers a 30-minute lunch period, and students report they spend five minutes waiting in line for their food. (Recommendation 11)
- Green has no silent lunches. (Recommendation 12)

### Needs Improvement:

- Green has no hand-washing sinks in its cafeteria, although students report they have time to wash their hands in the bathrooms before and after they eat. (Recommendation 10)



## VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH

### Notable Progress:

- Harney no longer uses sporks. (Recommendation 1)

### Needs Improvement:

- Like last year, Harney is still using plastic forks, knives, and spoons in the cafeteria. (Recommendation 1)
- The cafeteria food is still pre-cooked, and the majority of students as well as staff say they do not like eating it. (Recommendation 2)



## VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY

### Notable Progress:

- Some of the produce or seafood served at Harney is locally harvested. (Recommendation 3)
- Vegetarian options are now consistently available at breakfast and lunch. (Recommendation 5)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria now serves a local dish only once per week, a negative change from last year when twice per week was the custom. (Recommendation 4)



## VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria still uses Styrofoam trays. (Recommendation 6)
- Harney has discontinued its vegetable garden and no plans to replant it. (Recommendation 7)
- Harney still has no plans to start composting. (Recommendation 8)



## VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS

### Notable Progress:

- Some students and staff say they like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere, an improvement from last year when students and staff all said that they did not like it. (Recommendation 9)
- Harney has hand-washing sinks in the cafeteria, and students report they have time to wash their hands before and after eating. (Recommendation 10)
- Harney offers a 30-minute lunch period, and students report waiting in line for five minutes to receive their food. (Recommendation 11)

### Needs Improvement:

- Harney has silent lunches more than once per week. (Recommendation 12)





## **VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH**

### Notable Progress:

- LHA now uses metal forks, knives, and spoons. (Recommendation 1)
- The cafeteria food is now all freshly cooked and prepared on-site. (Recommendation 2)

### Needs Improvement:

- Half of the students still say they do not like eating the food. (Recommendation 2)



## **VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY**

### Notable Progress:

- Some of the produce or seafood served at LHA is locally harvested. (Recommendation 3)
- Vegetarian options are consistently available at breakfast and lunch. (Recommendation 5)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria still serves only one local dish per week. (Recommendation 4)



## **VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH**

### Notable Progress:

- The cafeteria now uses reusable, washable trays. (Recommendation 6)
- LHA has a bigger vegetable garden than last year, as well as garden and cooking education classes. These elements make it an exemplary model for other schools. Congratulations! (Recommendation 7)
- LHA is now composting. (Recommendation 8)



## **VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS**

### Notable Progress:

- The majority of students as well as staff both say they like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere. (Recommendation 9)
- LHA offers a 30-minute lunch period, and students report they spend five minutes in line waiting for their food. (Recommendation 11)

### Holding the Line:

- LHA has hand-washing sinks in the cafeteria, and students report they have time to wash their hands before and after eating. (Recommendation 10)

### Needs Improvement:

- LHA has silent lunches twice a month. (Recommendation 12)



## **VALUE: OUR DIGNITY & OUR HEALTH**

### Notable Progress:

- "Sci High" does not use sporks. (Recommendation 1)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria uses plastic forks, knives, and spoons. (Recommendation 1)
- The food is pre-cooked, and almost all students say they do not like eating it. All staff say they do not like eating the cafeteria food. (Recommendation 2)



## **VALUE: LOCAL ECONOMY, CULTURE & DIVERSITY**

### Notable Progress:

- The cafeteria serves a local dish once per week. (Recommendation 4)

### Needs Improvement:

- No one could tell us if any of the produce or seafood served at "Sci High" is locally harvested. (Recommendation 3)
- Vegetarian options are not consistently available at breakfast and lunch. (Recommendation 5)



## **VALUE: RESPECT FOR OUR EARTH**

### Notable Progress:

- "Sci High" has plans for a garden. (Recommendation 7)

### Needs Improvement:

- The cafeteria uses Styrofoam trays. (Recommendation 6)
- "Sci High" has no plans to start composting. (Recommendation 8)



## **VALUE: BEAUTY, COMFORT & CLEANLINESS**

### Notable Progress:

- "Sci High" offers a 33-minute lunch period, and students spend five minutes in line waiting for their food. (Recommendation 11)
- No silent lunches here. (Recommendation 12)

### Needs Improvement:

- The majority of students and all of staff say they do not like the cafeteria's dining atmosphere. (Recommendation 9)
- "Sci High" has no hand-washing sinks in the cafeteria, although students report they have time to wash their hands in the bathrooms before and after they eat. (Recommendation 10)

# HARNEY STUDENTS INVESTIGATE SCHOOL FOOD

This year, Rethinkers at Edgar P. Harney Elementary decided to learn where their school food comes from. They interviewed staff members from ARAMARK - one of the companies contracted to provide their school food - and asked where ingredients for one particular lunch came from. This map shows where a few of the ingredients from that meal originated. We've included only the ingredients that could have been harvested locally (within 200 miles of New Orleans) during the season the meal was served. The map tracks the amount of miles that each ingredient traveled from where it was grown or caught to the Harney cafeteria.



# HARNEY STUDENTS INVESTIGATE SCHOOL FOOD

Learning exactly how far the Harney food had traveled inspired the Rethinkers to ask ARAMARK and their school leaders to serve more fresh, locally harvested fruits and vegetables. The students created a video petition to request that ARAMARK serve local produce two times per week. One hundred and sixty-two students, parents and staff members signed their petition. You can find a link to the video on our website at [www.TheRethinkers.com/press-and-media](http://www.TheRethinkers.com/press-and-media).



Dear ARAMARK,

Hello, we are the Rethinkers from Edgar P. Harney School. Rethink is an organization that helps kids change things in the school. For the past few weeks we have been talking about nutritious food. We defined nutritious food as food that gives us energy. We feel it is important to eat local food. Local food is fresher and tastes better. We researched and met with Ms. Heather, ARAMARK, and the cafeteria staff. After talking to all of these adults we have decided we want our school to serve us 2-3 local fruits a week.

When people don't eat they act out. When they act out they get in trouble. When they get in trouble they get suspended. So they need to eat! But they're not eating because the food isn't fresh. Sometimes it tastes like it hasn't been cooked long enough and the rice is hard. One thing we know kids will eat is local fruit. When we had local strawberries, kumquats and satsumas in Rethink it was better than the fruit at school and most of us ate it. We ate the whole eight pound bag!

In our meeting with ARAMARK the one local fruit that they said they provided was grapes. But we never received them. Louisiana has local fruits like kumquats, oranges, strawberries and satsumas. Please help us get more local and nutritious fruits in our school.

Sincerely,

*The Rethinkers*

ARAMARK and the Recovery School District heard the Harney students' request, and also met with the Rethink Citywide Food Justice Group. ARAMARK representatives stated they are eager to work with the Rethinkers and will buy more locally grown food for Harney and many others schools they serve! Details will be announced at a news conference on May 26, 2011.

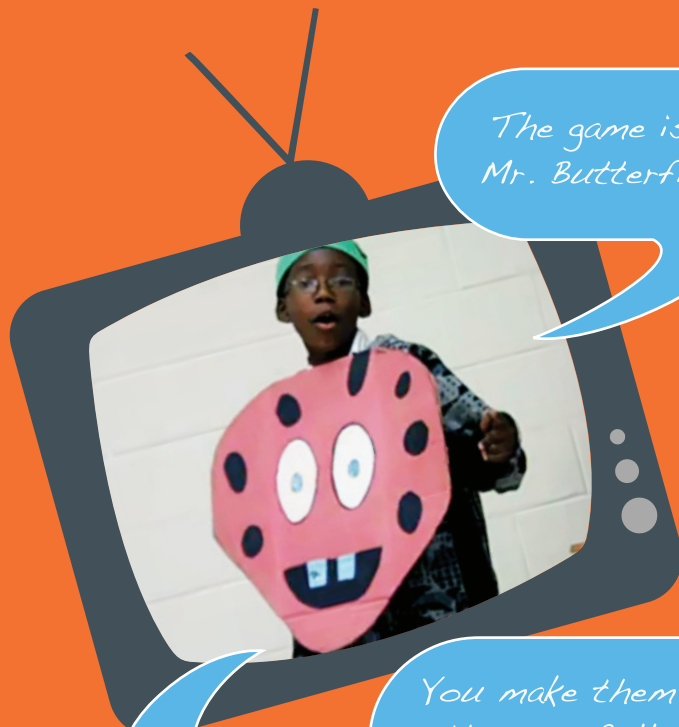


# HUGHES STUDENTS INVESTIGATE SCHOOL FOOD

After Langston Hughes Academy received the highest grade of all schools surveyed for the 2010 school food report cards, the Rethink Club members decided to work on expanding the food education programs already rooted there. Through interviews with the school gardening and after-school cooking instructors, the Rethinkers learned the differences between fresh and processed food and the benefits of expanding food education. To document their learnings, the Rethinkers made two videos. See one of them, a comedy about the value of strawberries vs. candy bars, at "Captain Strawberry vs. Mr. Butterfinger" on our website: [www.TheRethinkers.com/press-and-media](http://www.TheRethinkers.com/press-and-media).

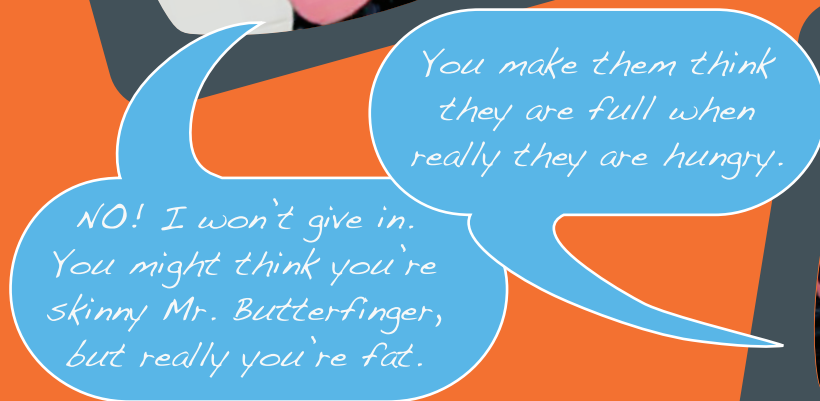
*Not so long ago in a school not so far away,  
there was a really really REALLY big problem!*

*Mr. Butterfinger was trying to take over the  
school by putting children under his spell.*



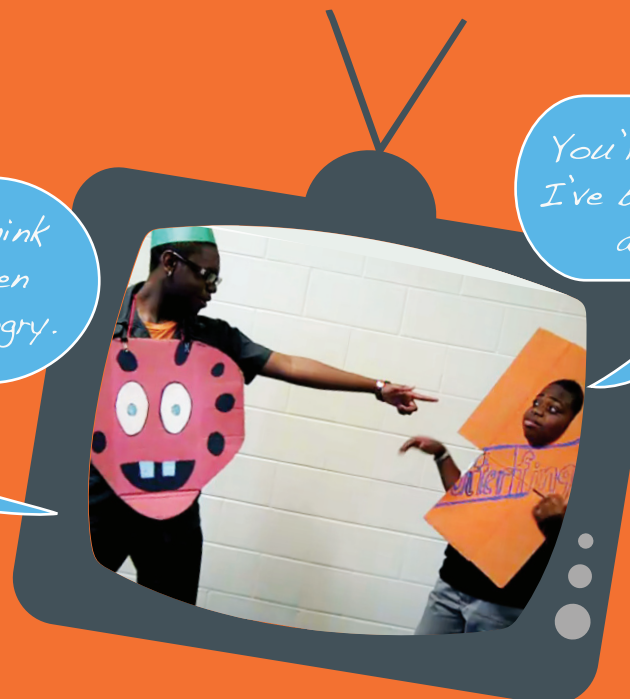
*The game is up,  
Mr. Butterfinger!*

*Luckily Captain Strawberry  
was on hand to save the day!*



*You make them think  
they are full when  
really they are hungry.*

*NO! I won't give in.  
You might think you're  
skinny Mr. Butterfinger,  
but really you're fat.*



*You're right!  
I've been living  
a lie!*

# HUGHES STUDENTS INVESTIGATE SCHOOL FOOD

Rethinkers from Langston Hughes Academy presented their video, along with the following recommendations, to their principals and the head of their school's charter organization, FirstLine Schools:

Dear FirstLine Schools,

We believe it's important that students know how to cook because if they know how to cook they are more able to take care of themselves.

Therefore, we recommend that you:

- Keep up and expand cooking education at LHA.
- Provide all FirstLine schools with cooking teachers and classes.
- Have an annual FirstLine cook-off between students from different schools.

We believe it's important that students learn how to garden because it's less expensive than buying vegetables at the store and you don't have to go all the way to the store to get vegetables. You just go to your backyard!

Therefore, we recommend that:

- FirstLine, the Recovery School District and our principals support our school garden and help us develop it over the next five years.
- LHA hire a second garden teacher to help out Ms. Z.

Sincerely,

*The Rethinkers*



Staff and administrators at the meeting responded to the requests by committing to:

- Hire a second garden teacher who can assist with both gardening and cooking classes at LHA next year.
- Organize a cook-off between students at various FirstLine schools next year. Jay Altman, CEO of FirstLine Schools, said he would like to act as a judge!

Jay Altman said that it would be smart to share "Captain Strawberry" with every class in the lower school at LHA – and begin with Rethinkers making a presentation for each group.

# WITH THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS

Emeril Lagasse Foundation

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*Who fund our food justice program*

America's Promise Alliance Entergy New Orleans Community Partnership

Greater New Orleans Foundation

Gulf Coast Fund

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Jazz & Heritage Foundation

Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation

Matt Damon

New Orleans Kids Partnership

New Orleans Outreach

RosaMary Foundation

Surdna Foundation

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# WHO WE ARE

Rethink embodies an idea that is as dynamic as it is simple: give young people a voice in the reform of public education. Through Rethink citywide and school-based programs, youth identify areas for improvement within individual schools as well as the school system as a whole, develop innovative solutions, and act to make their solutions a reality.

More than 250 students have taken part in Rethink programs since 2006.

## Report Authors:

### Rethink Citywide Food Justice Group

Briante Brumfield  
Victoria Carter  
Vernard Carter  
George Dixie Carter III  
Jada Cooper  
Danny Do  
Alana Hall  
Terriana Julien  
Arieanna McKnight  
Isaiah Simms  
Ory Stemley  
Ashley Triggs  
Ron Triggs  
Lucy Tucker  
Jordan Vigne

### Edgar P. Harney Rethink Club

Darenisha Bright  
Ashley Devlin  
Marcus Johnson  
Kewanda Lewis  
Kaycie Lenoir  
Dashon McDaniel  
Ashley Triggs  
Ron Triggs  
Rayion Wilson  
Dashawn Wright

### Langston Hughes Rethink Club

Drake Cifuentes  
Ernest Davrepoint  
Corde Dolliole  
Brandon Lindsey  
Ryan Mose  
Kyron Neveaux

## Report Support Team:

Johanna Gilligan & Heather Booth  
Food Educators, *Clean Plate Projects, LLC*

Micah Conkling  
Project Manager, *Rethink*

Laura Dean & Keelia O'Malley  
Survey Consultants, *Prevention Research Center  
Tulane University School of Public Health*

### Rethink Club Faciliators at Langston Hughes Academy & Edgar P. Harney Elementary:

Dominique Donnette  
Mallory Falk  
Rachel Lee  
Shannon Taylor

## Graphic Designer:

Hannah Adams

