

White House Childhood Obesity Summit Summary and Notes

April 9, 2010 1:30-5:00pm
Washington, DC
Debra Eschmeyer



Photo credit: ObamaFoodorama

Tony Geraci and Tim Cipriano pose behind the White House podium on Friday, April 9th at the Childhood Obesity Summit, the same podium that Michelle Obama spoke at a few hours earlier.



The following notes are from Friday, April 9th, 2010 by Debra Eschmeyer for the National Farm to School Network (see above from left to right, Tony Geraci, Tim Cipriano, Debra Eschmeyer, Lisa Watson, Charles Basch) Photo credit: ObamaFoodorama

SUMMARY

Quick links

- White House Childhood Obesity Summit summary from the [White House blog](#)
- Michelle Obama's [opening remarks](#)
- National Farm to School Network's [White House Taskforce Brief](#)
- Want to provide further comment to the taskforce? write them at letsmove@who.eop.gov

Attendees

Farm to School in the WHITE HOUSE! (*Farm to School parties present included but were not limited to: Timothy Cipriano, FSD New Haven Public Schools; Tony Geraci, FSD Baltimore City Schools; Debra Eschmeyer, National Farm to School Network; Rochelle Davis, Healthy Schools Campaign; Gail Christopher, WK Kellogg Foundation.*)

Specific Mentions of Farm to School at the Summit by Administration Officials

Kathleen Merrigan, the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, clearly stated in her brief remarks at the opening of the summit, USDA "would like to see Farm to School programs" in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization. Tim Cipriano, Tony Geraci, and Debra Eschmeyer spoke up loud and clear for Farm to School in the breakout session focusing on 'healthier food in schools' and made it in the top 5 recommendations to the taskforce. In the report back after the small group breakout, Kevin Concannon, USDA, stated as a priority, "We need to rethink the business of meal production and its delivery with programs such as Farm to School. Some of the most fortunate schools have gardens and Farm to School programs. We need to break down the myths of USDA regulations: it is ok to source locally and it is ok to have a garden. The CNR includes funding for Farm to School nationally."

Summary of the report back for the four objectives is toward the bottom of the notes, but this is the one that includes Farm to School:

(c) Providing healthier food in schools Top 5 Key Recommendations:

Kevin Concannon's summary to the full summit:

- 1) Need for strong national standards for ALL food in schools: meals, snacks, competitive, etc.
- 2) Enhance and ramp up professional training for all those involved in putting food on the tray: food service, custodians, and all adults in the school
- 3) Rethink business of meal production and its delivery: kids involved in preparing food, local procurement, schools gardens, etc. Find funding for this. **We need to rethink the business of meal production and its delivery with programs such as Farm to School. Some of the most fortunate schools have gardens and Farm to School programs. We need to break down the myths of USDA regulations: it is ok to source locally and it is ok to have a garden. The CNR includes funding for Farm to School nationally.**
- 4) Nutrition education needs to happen across all classrooms (again citing farm to school)--classroom for nutrition education, but also using cafeteria as educational opportunity for a teachable moment
- 5) Integrate incentives to make positive change happen

BACKGROUND & SETTING

The 44th president signed a [Presidential Memorandum](#) on February 9th, 2010 establishing a taskforce on childhood obesity to develop and submit to the President in 90 days an interagency plan that "details a coordinated strategy, identifies key benchmarks, and outlines an action plan." As part of the First Lady's campaign, the taskforce is engaging both public and private sectors with the primary goal of helping children become more active and eat healthier within a generation, so that children born today will reach adulthood at a healthy weight.

Feeding our children well may seem like a soft ball issue for the first lady, but as explained in [TIME](#): "If this sounds like a political fight, well, it is. Michelle Obama may be tilling nonpartisan ground with her vegetable garden and child-obesity program, but food has long been political. From soda taxes to corn subsidies, food is about health care costs, environmentalism, education, agriculture and class."

Which is why such heavy hitters from the latter departments are involved in the [President's Task Force on Childhood Obesity](#) and all spoke on Friday, April 9th, at the [White House's Childhood Obesity Meeting](#), including Health Reform Director **Nancy-Ann DeParle**, Interior Secretary **Ken Salazar**, Education Secretary **Arne Duncan**, Office of Management and Budget Director **Peter Orszag**, Surgeon General **Regina Benjamin**, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture **Kathleen Merrigan**, and Domestic Policy Adviser **Melody Barnes**.

Joining the ranks of the [75 students](#) who are Michelle Obama's most critical stakeholders in her Let's Move! campaign, I was fortunate enough to participate as a representative for the [National Farm to School Network](#) at this meeting and advocate that Farm to School programs [address all four of the objectives](#) laid out by the Administration:

- (a) Ensuring access to healthy, affordable food;
- (b) Increasing physical activity in schools and communities;
- (c) Providing healthier food in schools; and
- (d) Empowering parents with information and tools to make good choices for themselves and their families.

The lead pitcher to Let's Move!, Michelle Obama, provided the welcoming remarks for this historic event, "This gathering has never happened before at the White House. It's one where we're bringing together teachers and child advocates, doctors and nurses, business leaders, public servants, researchers and health experts to talk about one of the most serious and difficult problems facing our kids today, and that is the epidemic of childhood obesity in this country." Michelle's full remarks are available [here](#).

After Mrs. Obama made brief welcoming remarks, Melody Barnes took over. Barnes chairs the task force, and said it was time for "all hands on deck," as the task force focuses on its report for the President. Duncan, Salazar, Benjamin, Merrigan, and Orszag made brief comments. Then four break-out groups convened separately: Healthier school lunches (moderated by **Kevin Concannon** of USDA); Making food healthy accessible and affordable (moderated by Dep. Sec. Merrigan); Increasing physical activity (unclear who moderated this breakout group); and Tools to empower parents (moderated by Mrs. Obama's Food Initiative Coordinator, **Sam Kass**, and **Ursula Bauer**).

DETAILED NOTES

Setting: In White House with panel setting and audience of approximately 100 stakeholders; the participant list is at the end of the notes.

1:30

Melody Barnes, Domestic Policy Advisor and chair of the White House Childhood Obesity task force, introduced the First Lady:

I am not making this up, but last night I went to dinner with an old friend, and she said that her 7 year-old asked about planting a garden stating that people need to eat healthy, so we need to plant a garden because the President's wife told us to. Thus, Michelle's mission is convincing CEO's and 7 year-olds.

1:35

Michelle Obama then walked in to a standing ovation. (Read Michelle Obama's full [opening remarks](#) at the White House Childhood Obesity Summit.) High points:

- this gathering has never happened before: interagency approach to a national problem
- solving this problem will take every one of us including reaching out to SNA (schools), food manufacturers (marketing), etc.
- White House kitchen garden was 1st step
- eating 'good food' and eating right
- kids didn't do this to themselves
- kids don't determine what is sold in schools
- hard for schools to provide lunches with just a few dollars--budget constraints
- obesity stats
- 4 objective areas
- what we have done is start a national conversation, but we need your help to propel that conversation into a national response
- create a roadmap

Michelle left immediately after her remarks.

1:45

Melody Barnes, who chairs the taskforce, took the podium again to encourage a 'walk and talk moment' and said it was time for "all hands on deck," as the task force focuses on its report for the President. 2,500 responses were submitted to the White House's childhood obesity task force call for comments. (NFSN submitted the research agenda developed by the One Tray research team as well as this [summary](#) of how Farm to School addresses all four areas.)

Demonstrating the interagency nature of this campaign's coordination, the panel included Interior Secretary **Ken Salazar**, Education Secretary **Arne Duncan**, Office of Management and Budget Director **Peter Orszag**, Surgeon General **Regina Benjamin**, and Deputy Secretary of Agriculture **Kathleen Merrigan**.

Summary of Remarks:

Arne Duncan, Dept. of Education to address Physical Activity objective

- began with nod to great leadership of USDA
- false dichotomy of activity v. education
- 'recreation deserts' are like food deserts
- well rounded education for children

Ken Salazar, Interior Secretary to address Physical Activity objective

- focus on 'output' v. input, i.e. movement v. food intake
- locate parks next to schools so for recess or after school, go to a park

Kathleen Merrigan, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture to address access to healthy food objective

- prevalence of hunger and obesity seem like a paradox but it isn't as they stem from the same problem of access
- Child Nutrition Reauthorization
 - addressing this now
 - we know we need \$, would like to see the 10 billion the Administration requested in the President's budget
 - increase reimbursement
 - Like to see "Farm to School" programs
 - Ease of access
- food deserts: rural and urban
- rural development programs: mobile groceries and other ways to address food deserts

Regina Benjamin, Surgeon General on access to healthy food

- working on child obesity problem for some time
- UNC report: "obese children showing diet-related diseases usually only seen in adults."
- Involve the parents

Peter Orszag, Office of Management and Budget Director on cost of obesity to society

- healthcare costs of obesity: \$150 billion/year
- \$1,500 more per year in healthcare expenses if obese (compared to person with normal BMI)
- 1/5 of healthcare spending is obesity related
- 40 is the new 60 for obese individuals

2:15

Questions from participants to panel (more like statements):

1) Dr Kann, Large employee rep, employees eat free breakfast, lunch, and dinner at our facilities and this could be a huge area to focus on

Orszag: focus on how the fruits and vegetables are presented on the cafeteria line, i.e. fruits in front

2) Transportation/land use question

Merrigan: look at USDA Environmental Food Atlas

3) Built environment question from Tenly Albright, MIT

4) Toni Yancey, UCLA on behavioral economics of eating, don't coop people up for endless hours, i.e. Take 10, instant access to a gym, etc.; May 3 National Physical Action Plan 1:00-1:10 EST (move!)

Benjamin: we didn't disco dance because we wanted to avoid a stroke, need to make it fun

2:30-4:00

Four break-out groups then convened separately (each participant had a pre-determined area on their name tag): School lunches (moderated by **Kevin Concannon** of USDA); Making food healthy accessible and affordable (moderated by Dep. Sec. Merrigan); Increasing physical activity (unclear who moderated this breakout group); and Tools to empower parents (moderated by Mrs. Obama's Food Initiative Coordinator, **Sam Kass**, and **Ursula Bauer**).

We were tasked with identifying 3 to 5 of the best ideas to present to the writers of the roadmap for the task force. I was assigned to Kevin Concannon's breakout: Using schools for improving nutrition for American children. We were asked to consider: food and nutrition environment, increased nutritional quality of school meals, changes in school environment, and infrastructure of schools that would lead to key benchmarks and actions.

We went around the table introducing ourselves.

Open Comments begin.

Kevin Concannon: we are sticking with the President and pulling for the \$10 billion in the CNR.

Farm to School Highlights from our breakout:

Tony Geraci

- Great Kids Farm highlights
- story of MD peach being \$0.08 and fruit cocktail being \$0.14; in total \$2 million in local purchasing and saved the district \$4 million
- story of kids loving it
- create element for Farm to School to thrive
- students design meals: extra points if locally sourced, follow rules, students all find their niche; ulterior motive: drive up Average Daily Participation, which it did, from 40 to 80% during the time student designed meals were served

Tim Cipriano

- train food service, shared story of CT experience, local food dude

Kevin Concannon

- myths of USDA regulations; need to educate
- talked about the teaching elements of Farm to School: how he visited a school in Somerville, MA where local squash is a teaching experience, used in math class, etc.
- the cafeteria is a classroom AND we need to use the classroom for cafeteria education

Debra Eschmeyer (me)

- thanked USDA for support thus far for Farm to School
- explained what Farm to School is: beyond local procurement, including nutrition ed, etc.
- requested to add link to Farm to School: 'find a local farm OR start a farm to school program on the Let's Move [website page](#) for what your school and community can do
- briefly explained FoodCorps: planting a shovel service ready generation for an AmeriCorps farm to school and school garden program
- Create a youth advisory board to the Childhood Obesity Taskforce to provide a voice and leadership for their own generation
- Establish a MOU that private companies such as Sodexo, Chartwells, Aramark, etc. can sign stating that if a school is under contract with them, they encourage harvests from the school garden to enter the cafeteria

Some other points brought up in this breakout:

- must include juvenile delinquents in our target
- must include pre-k
- research supporting better behavior in schools after eating well
- classroom struggles to promote health and wellness
- frame of wasting potential intellectual capital
- system change, beyond CNR
- incentives for schools to do good
- "practice makes perfect, but actually, practice makes habit." Kenderick Scorza, only student rep attending
- water issue, no bottled water
- cash for cookies: kids have to pay for desserts (suddenly the brownie isn't worth a \$1)

Healthier Food in Schools Top 5 Key Recommendations summarized by Richard Lucas, USDA, from our discussion:

(note: take advantage of all aspects of children's environment: schools, preK, pregnancy, etc.) Kevin Concannon's summary: asks nicely aligned with Child Nutrition Act

- 1) Need for strong national standards for ALL food in schools: meals, snacks, competitive, etc.
- 2) Enhance and ramp up professional training for all those involved in putting food on the tray: food service, custodians, and all adults in the school
- 3) Rethink business of meal production and its delivery: kids involved in preparing food, local procurement, schools gardens, etc. Find funding for this. **We need to rethink the business of meal production and its delivery with programs such as Farm to School. Some of the most fortunate schools have gardens and Farm to School programs. We need to break down the myths of USDA regulations: it is ok to source locally and it is ok to have a garden. The CNR includes funding for Farm to School nationally."**
- 4) Nutrition education needs to happen across all classrooms (again citing farm to school)-- classroom for nutrition education, but also using cafeteria as educational opportunity for a teachable moment
- 5) Integrate incentives to make positive change happen

4:15-5:00

We then reconvened and Nancy-Ann DeParle, Director of White House Office of Health Reform provided the insight of "health reform steps that help with Let's Move!" (*after we provided a standing ovation since she was instrumental in passage of healthcare reform*)

- eliminating pre-existing conditions for children
- menu labeling
- science based education campaign
- award grants to communities encouraging healthy food and active living
- cornucopia for health services researchers
- prevention and wellness benefits

Summary of the Report Back for the Four Objectives from Panel:

(a) Ensuring access to healthy, affordable food;

(note: Kathleen Merrigan summary: food access is a food system issue. Local people need to be in charge. Top 3 out of list of 36 ideas:)

- 1) Culturally competent education (use of the phrase 'food swamp')
- 2) Improve purchasing power
- 3) Breast feeding--mother's milk is the first food

(b) Increasing physical activity in schools and communities;

- 1) Come up with definition of 'what is physical activity?' that is gender inclusive and more activities included beyond sports
- 2) Include physical activity in land use planning, i.e. 'safe routes to parks' not just 'safe routes to schools'; there are park deserts like food deserts
- 3) Research to highlight successful programs
- 4) Focus on all sides of this including the role of the parent

(c) Providing healthier food in schools; and

Kevin Concannon's summary: asks nicely aligned with Child Nutrition Act and side note: take advantage of all aspects of children's environment: schools, preK, pregnancy, etc.

- 1) Need for strong national standards for ALL food in schools: meals, snacks, competitive, etc.
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(d) Empowering parents with information and tools to make good choices for themselves and their families.

- 1) Address the environment, i.e. marketing to children in media
- 2) Again addressing the environment, place better info on packages, i.e. front of package, and look at portion sizes
- 3) Engage parents: plain and simple messaging for PTAs, media, social networking sites, etc.

Conclusion:

After the report out, Melody Barnes thanked everyone for coming including Martha Coven for her work in this convening. Report will be ready by May 9th. Want to provide further comment to the taskforce: write them at letsmove@who.epo.gov

Attendee List from Obamafoodorama:

- Katie Adamson- YMCA of the USA

- Tenley Albright
- Leon Andrews- National League of Cities
- Michael Arnold - Gov. Bev Perdue (D-NC)
- Charles Basch - Teachers College Columbia University
- John Billings - Food Marketing Institute
- Nisha Botchwey - University of Virginia
- Kelly Brownell - Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity, Yale University
- Charlene Burgeson - National Association of Sport and Physical Education
- Paul Caccamo - Up2Us
- Sandra Calvert - Children's Digital Media Center, Georgetown University
- Debbie Chang - Nemours
- Cynthia Chestnut - County Commissioner, Alachua County, Florida
- Kathy Christoffel - Center on Obesity Management and Prevention
- Gail Christopher - WK Kellogg Foundation
- Timothy Cipriano - New Haven Public Schools
- Lorraine Cole - YWCA
- Jerlean Daniel - National Association for the Education of Young Children
- Sarah Dash - Rep. Rosa DeLauro
- Rochelle Davis - Healthy Schools Campaign
- Stacy Dean - Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- Sandra Delack - National Association of School Nurses
- Cari DeSantis - American Public Human Services Association
- Richard Dolesh - National Recreation & Parks Assoc
- Roxanee Dove - National Education Association
- Mario Drummonds - Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership
- Ginny Ehrlich - Alliance for Healthier Generation
- Debra Eschmeyer - National Farm to School Network
- Dwight Evans - PA State Rep
- Scott Faber - Grocery Manufacturers Association
- Tom Farley - NYC Dept of Health
- George Flores - The California Endowment
- Tracy Fox - Society for Nutrition Education
- Naomi Friedman - National Association of Regional Councils
- Carol Lee Israel - Salvation Army
- Tony Geraci - Baltimore Public Schools
- Matthew Gillman - Harvard School of Public Health
- Rev. Douglas A. Greenaway - National WIC Association
- Linda Grefe - Center for Sport in Society
- Jane Anne Harris - Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
- Erin Hart - National Parent-Teacher Association
- Fred "Chip" Heath - Stanford University
- Barbara Hiden - American Beverage Association
- Kimberley Hodgson - American Planning Association
- Debbie Hohlt - Gov. Mitch Daniels (R-IN)
- Jason Hsieh - National Governors Association
- Lynn Keefe - National Eating Disorders Association
- Claire Kenamore - Billings Clinic Pediatrics
- Ikram Khan
- David Kirchhoff - Weight Watchers
- Eileen Kirlin - SEIU

- Jenelle Krishnamoorthy -
- Dale Kunkel - Dept. of Communication, University of Arizona
- Terri Lakowski - Alliance in Support of Athletics Equity
- Jose Lastra - Esperanza
- Madeline Lawson - Institute for the Advancement of Minority Multicultural Medicine
- Martin LeBlanc - Sierra Club
- Penny Lee - Campaign to End Childhood Obesity
- Elana Leventhal - Rep. Pallone
- Becky Levin - AFSCME
- Pilar Lorenzana-Campo - Public Health Law & Policy
- Donald Mathis - National Community Action Partnerships
- Kevin McCartney - Boys and Girls Clubs of America
- John Meigs - American Association of Family Physicians
- Patrice Miller - Sesame Workshop
- Suzen Moeller - American Medical Association
- Meghan Mohoney - Northeastern Center for Sport & Society
- Janet McLaughlin - Share Our Strength
- Eric Olsen - Mars Corp.
- R. Jeff Olson - Association of State Nutrition Network Administrators
- Judith Palfrey - American Academy of Pediatrics
- Lynn Parker - Institute of Medicine
- Margo Pedroso - Safe Routes to Schools National Partnership
- Stephanie Ramirez - National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials
- Thomas Robinson - Stanford Prevention Research Center
- Nancy Romer - Hunter College
- Ahniwake Rose - National Congress of American Indians
- Loel Salomon - Kaiser Permanente
- Marc Schindler - District of Columbia Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services
- Judy Schoenberg - Girl Scouts of America
- Kenderick Scorza - Alliance for a Healthier Generation Youth Advisory Board
- Gabrielle Serra - Rep. Miller (Ed/Labor)
- Lisa Shelton - Rep. Peterson (Ag)
- John Smith - T4America
- Virginia Stallings - Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania
- Sheri Steisel - NCSL
- Tom Stenzel - United Fresh Produce
- Brandon Stevens - Oneida Nation
- Crystal Swann - US Conference of Mayors
- Dawn Sweeney - National Restaurant Association
- Mildred Thompson - PolicyLink
- Joseph Thompson - RWJF Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity
- Elizabeth Walker - National Association of State Boards of Education
- Brian Wansink - Cornell University
- Mary Watson - Action for Healthy Kids
- Erika Watson - Revolution Foods
- Jim Weill - Food Research and Action Center
- Mary Wittenberg - New York Roadrunners
- Margo Wootan - Center for Science in the Public Interest
- Toni Yancey - UCLA