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LAUSD District 2

What would you do to leverage the school district's food purchasing power and expand its commitment to the Good Food Purchasing Program? How will you ensure that all five values of the Good Food Purchasing Policy (healthy, sustainable, local, fair and humane) are preserved in the district's food purchases?

Like too many other issues facing the LAUSD, food policy has been affected by a bureaucracy that is too large, unresponsive, wasteful and beholden to the status quo. When the Inspector General's office found that the Food Services division was at "[a minimum being mismanaged and at worst being consistently abused](#)" the result was to force its Director, David Binkle into retirement. Unfortunately, this seems to be the end of any public action.

I have spoken with Binkle and he was very upfront about the problems that existed within Food Services. He maintained that he had also complained about many of these issues but was silenced by those above him, including specifically John Deasy. He was also particularly adamant that his supervisor and Michelle King had signed off on the travel arrangements that were one of the reasons given for his dismissal.

Knowing that there are two sides to every story, I have submitted several public records requests to the District for the documents that would confirm Binkle's allegations. Unfortunately, the District refuses to release this material claiming that they are subject to a continuing investigation. If the operation of the Food Services division is hidden from public scrutiny, how is anyone supposed ascertain how the system can be improved?

The Good Food Procurement also highlights another problem with the District's management as like so many other initiatives, the Board seems to lose interest after the vote is taken. I believe that supervising the Superintendent is one of the most important functions of the Board. It is not enough to simply resolve to do something, the Board must ensure that the Superintendent's office is following the newly established policy. These policies should also include specific benchmarks and the requirement that the Superintendent report to the Board when they are not being met and what is being done to correct the situation.

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If you are elected, how will you increase participation in school meal programs and support schools in becoming champions for nutritious food access? How will you influence meal programs to encourage greater progress in healthy eating?

When speaking with students in the District about my candidacy the first question I am usually asked is “what are you going to do to fix the food?” If we want children to eat healthier, we need to serve them meals that are not only nutritious but appetizing.

As an education advocate, the segments in Michael Moore’s “Where to Invade Next” that dealt with education issues were particularly eye-opening to me. This movie showed that school meals do not have to be served factory style in a school setting. The showcased school served the students were served as if they were in a restaurant with real place settings and freshly prepared food. Lunch was not only a time to eat but a time to learn about healthy eating. It was also explained that this program was being run in a low-income area with limited resources. We need to follow this model.

What would you do to strengthen and expand the district’s support for school gardens?

Having moved to East Los Angeles to become a candidate in this race, I now understand the meaning of a “food desert”. If I do not stop at the supermarket on home from work in Glendale, I will not have access to the same food choices. The discrepancy is particularly noticeable in produce.

School-based gardens would help make fresh produce available to the children of the second district. They would also improve school climate as some green would finally be added to schoolyards that are too often an expanse of blacktop. Opening these gardens to the community would also help to fulfill my vision of schools as the heart of their neighborhoods.

The first step to expanding these gardens to every school requires setting the priority. It also requires working with outside groups who can help fill some of the funding gaps. Since these projects can help to improve the entire community, Neighborhood Councils are one source of assistance that can be leveraged.

Would you support healthy food carts outside of LAUSD schools?

I would support these healthy food carts as long as they were regulated and inspected, the vendors were screened to eliminate possible predators and their locations did not cause traffic hazards. I would also have school administrators work with local markets to get their help in providing better food options to our students.

What would you do to increase the effectiveness of these food waste efforts in LAUSD? How will you ensure each school participates in these programs? Would you support composting the cafeteria food scraps in school gardens?

When students are forced to take food that they do not want, the result is food waste. The Breakfast in the Classroom program needs to be revamped so that children are given options.

They should always be free to not take an item that they know they will not use. Instead of providing milk and other beverages in pre-packaged servings, dispensers should be used.

Yes, I support composting the cafeteria food scraps in school gardens.