

CONSCIOUS KITCHEN AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

SY 2022/23 (Sept - Dec)



THE START

Beginning in SY 2022/23 the Conscious Kitchen Ambassadors Program (CKAP) joined the After School Program in the WCCUSD. Our work is not only for the students, but also with and by them! This signature Program trains student leaders from elementary schools across the district to become educated, empowered, advocates for healthy, organic, regenerative food. With after-school learning, hands-on culinary workshops, tastings of and developing new menu items, visits from farmers and local chefs, and other fun food activities, their experiences are enriched and feedback is valued! We also engage UC Berkeley students majoring in food systems and environmental studies as Next Generation Food System Leaders – working with them to educate, inspire and empower elementary school student leaders in the district focused on the Conscious Kitchen meal program in partnership with the WCCUSD Food Services Dept. We determined that if there was support and coordination internally at school sites, it would strengthen the outcomes of the program and allow for deeper engagement and continuity at the school sites where CKAP would take place.

We set out to enlist participation from 8 schools to test the waters and quickly realized more time would be required to cultivate all the relationships that would allow for success. The process starts with approval from the school **Principal**. They identify a **lead teacher** to lead the process internally (the teacher receives hourly compensation for their work). The final steps are meeting with the **Lead Teacher** and the **After School Program** lead. When everyone is on board, we begin the process of developing the program, dates and other logistics with the lead teacher.

THE JOURNEY

We identified two schools to start off the 2022/23SY, (Michelle Obama School and Ford Elementary School) to launch the program at the end of September. Both schools had active participation and engaged students in this program the previous school year. As well, two great teachers signed on to help with applications, logistics, continuity and opportunity in between the CK staff visits. Our goal was 4 schools and 4 visits each. Based on the hosting of our Project Salad event in October, we also identified Soskin Middle School as one we wanted to pilot with (given there were a group of 6th graders involved) as well as Peres School. We had interest from Montalvin but it has been hard to find a lead teacher at this site to take on the role of conducting outreach with interested students and working with the after school coordinator on scheduling and logistics. We worked most consistently with the students at Michelle Obama and Ford Elementary starting with a “Meet & Greet” special program followed by three visits to introduce three lessons, activities, tastings, and special guests.

CKAP SCHOOL OUTREACH PROCESS

- FSD Barbara Jellison lets Principal know about the opportunity and its connection to Conscious Kitchen and school meal program
- Letter and packet to Principal from Conscious Kitchen team in follow up to gauge interest ([letter/flyer link](#))
- Principal sends letter to prospective lead teacher to enlist their participation ([letter link](#))
- CKAP team meets with lead teacher to fill them in on expectations and answer all questions (teachers were asked to be present for 4 visits Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec)
- Teachers are asked to circulate the applications to 4th - 6th graders who are interested (lead teachers talks to classroom teachers about the opportunity)
- Up to 14 students who fill out applications will be selected to be a CK Ambassador

LESSONS, ACTIVITIES, TASTINGS

Meet and Greet ([link to agenda](#))

- Students gathered with the CKAP team including, teacher, Kelly Cary, CK staff representative, Caralee Ellis and Food System leader from UC Berkeley, Arianna Standish to learn what it means to be Conscious Kitchen Ambassador and how to be leaders amongst their peers.

Lesson 1: Organic Food / Activity : Food Web ([link to lesson](#))

- Two of the CK organic farmers (Javier Zamora, JSM Organics and Paul Kolling, Nana Mae's Organics) joined the group to share their journeys as farmers with the Ambassadors and the importance of organic practices given their impacts on the people, animals and planet. This was followed by a "Food Web" activity to understand impacts of harmful practices and underscoring intentional ways of growing food in healthy ways. The Ambassadors helped us lead this activity.

Lesson 2: Seasonal Nutritious / Activity: Produce Pals ([link to lesson](#))

- Ambassadors enjoy a tasting of fresh, local, organic, seasonal fruit and vegetables, and learning all about the nutrients and positive impacts associated with the rainbow of colors that make produce so beautiful and vibrant. This was followed by a creative activity in which students created their own "Produce Pals" using the seasonal bounty they learned about and tasted that day. Once they photographed their art, many of the kids couldn't wait to eat their creations!

Lesson 3: Food Justice / Food Culture

- During the fall we developed and taught a Food Justice lesson ([here](#)) focused on food access and food culture. After teaching this lesson we realized that the cultural aspect of the lesson resonated most with students. As a result, we will transition next semester to Exploring Food Cultures ([here](#)).

- This lesson was developed with an MPH Nutrition intern from New York University. We wanted to feature a common ingredient across cultures and selected rice cooked in different ways with different spices to create entirely different dishes, bound together by an easily recognizable grain.” ([Verde Magazine](#)).
- The lesson opens with a video about school lunches around the world giving the Ambassadors the opportunity to explore a variety of culinary cultures and discuss them. This was followed by a tasting of rice served with a variety of toppings representing different regions of the world (Caribbean, Central/South America, East Asia) to taste, share cultures, ask questions and offer feedback. Feedback from each tasting is reviewed by the Food Services leadership team. The kids have really enjoyed this lesson.
- Food Justice lesson report [here](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

There were a few additional opportunities that we coordinated with school sites given the capacity of their lead teachers and schedules

Pozole with Chef Omar Huerta (Obama)

- We asked students for broad feedback about the school food program – how they liked it and what suggestions they would offer. One of their suggestions was to serve Pozole, Mexican Soup. To their surprise, we invited Chef Omar to their last class. He prepared an organic version of Pozole, beautifully made that the kids loved. They got to spend time with Chef Omar who has a Mexican restaurant in Oakland and has kids that have attended schools in the WCCUSD.

Clif Bar Tasting (Soskin, Obama)

- Our longtime partner, Clif Bar, is in the research & development process of an organic, USDA school compliant breakfast bar as there are currently no organic options for schools to incorporate. The Clif Bar team did taste tests of the bars with five WCCUSD school sites from elementary through high school. They each had to fill out a survey with their input. The students loved the bars. They will probably be available in a year.

Soskin Training (Soskin)

- In preparation for the Project Salad event which occurred on October 12th, selected students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade worked with the CK team to enhance their leadership skills through various role playing activities including:
 - How to greet and engage in conversations with adults
 - Plating and proper serving techniques
 - How to work with adult volunteers in partnership
- The entire after school program student population participated in a composting training hosted by Republic Services on Tuesday, October 4th
 - Composting was set up as a demonstration during the Project Salad event

SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

Michelle Obama Elementary School

Teacher Liaison: Lisa Jako

Ambassadors: 12

Number of visits: 6

- Meet & Greet with Farmer Al Courchesne, Frog Hollow Farm
- Organic Food / Spider Web activity
- Seasonal / Nutritious / Activity: Produce Pals
- Food Justice / Multicultural tasting
- Clif Bar tasting
- Pozole tasting with Chef Omar, Executive Chef, Calavera, Oakland

Ford Elementary School

Teacher Liaison: Tessa Flaro

Ambassadors: 12

Number of visits: 4

- Meet & Greet with Farmers Paul Kolling, Nana Mae's Organics and Javier Zamora, JSM Organics
- Organic Food
- Seasonal / Nutritious / Activity: Produce Pals
- Food Justice / Multicultural tasting

Peres K-8

Teacher Liaison: Kelly Cary

Ambassadors: 16

Number of visits: 1

- Seasonal / Nutritious / Activity: Produce Pals

Soskin Middle School

Teacher Liaison: Adrienne Loftus + Michael Bell

Ambassadors 6/7/8 (3 of participants)

Number of visits: 5

- Project Salad service training
- Project Salad event training to welcome dignitaries
- Project Salad: Compost lesson / Compost implementation pilot
- Project Salad event to coincide with National School Lunch Week
 - Ambassadors served and welcomed guests
- Clif Bar tasting