



Question-and-Answer for Barry Schuster, CEO of the Center for Food Service Research, and author of:

**“Superman Is Not Coming To Your School-
Lessons in Increasing Revenue for
Every School District in America”**



Question One: Your book is titled “Superman is not coming to your school”- what is that title referring to?

Answer: I’m a big fan of Geoffrey Canada who started the Harlem Children’s Zone to improve the lives of disadvantaged students in the New York area. His belief as a child was that Superman would come to the school and rescue him. It has become a metaphor for outside forces helping the school system.

In actuality – with the economy and the future of education funding in this country, the reality is that Superman is not coming to the schools. It is going to be up to the schools themselves to create a new paradigm of funding for school systems to make up the reduced governmental funding for school budgets we are facing in the near future.

My book is written to discuss the available opportunities for school funding that will benefit school districts around the country – with the number one funding source being the additional revenue that a high performing Food Service program can provide for schools.

Question Two: You say that your idea for food courts in schools has increased revenue at least \$1.2 Billion dollars in the 30 years since you created this concept. That’s a tremendous amount of money, I’m not sure even Bill Gates has given that much to public schools.

How did you determine this amount, and pardon my bluntness – but how could a nobody like you benefit schools in such a large amount?

Answer: I don’t mind you being blunt – in all actuality, I am a nobody. My ability to increase revenue for schools over \$1.2 billion in this timeframe is a testament to the power of the Food Service program to generate phenomenal amounts of revenue for schools – if they are operating at high effectiveness.

In actuality, the \$1.2 billion figure that I mentioned is actually low – because I only calculated the increase in revenue for the most recent 12 years – and I did not include the amount of the increase for the first 18 years after I started this program – which is probably in the range of \$400-\$500 million dollars additional revenue.

As you say, I am a nobody, simply a businessman who has looked at the Food Service program potential as a business model – with the additional benefit of feeding hungry students healthy meals so that they might learn to their highest capacity.

I only harnessed the financial power of the Food Service program with our themed dining room food courts to benefit all schools.

Question Three: My recollection of the food program when I was in school was unappetizing food glopped on a tray as the lunch ladies exhorted us to “move down the line”. What has changed in Food Service to make it more inviting?

Answer: We are very lucky to have a Food Service program sponsored by the US Department of Agriculture whose focus is the health and well-being of the 50 million students in American public schools.

The biggest change in recent years has been the adoption of the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 – which mandates changes in the menu to reflect lower sodium content, no trans fats, and an expanded range of calories per meal to prevent obesity.

As you are aware, the CDC – Centers for Disease Control – has stated that one out of three students is obese. This is due to improper nutrition and a sedentary lifestyle many students face today.

This Crisis facing our country today is one where many of the students will develop long-term chronic diseases – such as diabetes, heart problems, kidney problems – and other illnesses that will be very costly to our nation and to the ability of these students to live a healthy life and work to make a living.

Question Four: How can the school Food Service program affect these Students?

Answer: According to the U.S. Census Department, median income for American families has reduced to \$50,000 a year. Many families are struggling to afford food for their children.

In fact, the government has a statement called “food insecurity” to describe the situation many of these families face. This statement means many people are going hungry in our country.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, more students now qualify for the “Free and Reduced” meals program in schools than ever before.

If you were a mother looking to feed her family on a reduced budget – your goal is to provide food with the densest calories so her children don’t go hungry. Fresh vegetables and fruits are not dense.

Foods with the densest calories for the lowest amount of money are found in the drive-through lines of fast food restaurants. It is very important to provide students with the healthiest meals possible so that they can achieve their highest potential of learning.

The school food program – based on the requirements of the new Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 – provides the healthiest meals that most students will get during the day. It is tremendously more important than ever that the school Food Service program reach the maximum number of students – for the students’ benefit and also for the revenue that is produced that can help schools with their budget problems.

Question Five: When I was in school, we went down the food line and ate what was prepared that day. What is different in school meals today?

Answer: Until about 10 years ago, in the words of a Southern expression – “you tooked what was Acooked”- there was only one main course and a small selection of vegetables. Today many schools have the same type of selections as you see at the food court in the mall – with choices ranging from hamburgers, sub sandwiches, salads, pizza, and other ethnic foods – with a large selection of vegetables and fruits available to the students.

In most High Schools, kids have the same selection of menu items as are found in fast food restaurants – but prepared under USDA guidelines for nutritious meals.

In any school, with the large number of students from different cultures and having different food requests and needs- the school Food Service program has to satisfy many different constituencies.

Let’s use the example of Thanksgiving dinner: in the classic Norman Rockwell painting of the family at Thanksgiving dinner – the mother is proudly displaying the Turkey and the table is filled with the standards of sweet potato pudding, corn casserole, and pumpkin pie.

Today, the picture is considerably different:

Daughter Sarah is a vegan,

Son Brian brought his girlfriend, Robin – who has celiac disease and requires food that is gluten-free.

Uncle Fred is diabetic can’t have large amounts of carbohydrates or sugar.

Cousin George has food allergies – and has a very specific diet to follow.

And the mother has developed allergies to nuts – means the pecan stuffing recipe has to be changed.

While this picture of the modern-day family Thanksgiving dinner may sound humorous, it is the menu planning reality in schools today. Schools are expected to provide foods that are in line with the dietary and health requirements of the students.

Question Six: I have heard about a program in many schools called the backpack program, can you tell me about that?

Answer: That’s a very good question and it is a function of our economy. The backpack program is designed to provide food for many students over a weekend – because the reality today is that many students will leave school on Friday and not have a meal until they return to school on Monday.

In the richest country in the world, that should be considered scandalous.

The focus of my program with themed dining rooms is to increase student participation in the Food Service program – to bring more students in for healthy meals – and to increase revenue for schools.

You might not know this, but the school Food Service program is the only Department of the school that makes money. If you consider the academic departments such as math and history – these departments cost the school money to pay teachers, buy textbooks and materials.

The Food Service program is the only Department of the school that brings in revenue – since most of the program is funded by the US Department of Agriculture – which is truly a marvelous government program in action.

Question Seven: It's in vogue for people to complain about programs, why are you saying that the Department of Agriculture is doing a good job with the school Food Service program?

Answer: To understand the role of the US Department of Agriculture and how effective it is in feeding kids healthy meals, we have to go back to the beginning of the National School Lunch Program which started in 1946.

Sen. Richard B Russell of Georgia knew that many young men could not serve in the military during World War II because they were malnourished and did not meet the fitness standards for service to defend our country. He promoted this legislation – which has actually two functions: number one – to provide meals to students to prevent this malnourishment in the future, and number two – to provide a secure and steady market for American farmers for their produce and other agricultural products.

This was a masterful blending of two purposes that worked out well for all parties.

Let's fast-forward 65 years till today, and we have a situation where one out of three students are **Mis-nourished** – which is a very unhealthy condition.

Paradoxically, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US military services, the situation is causing the exact same scenario as it did 65 years ago. In other words almost one out of four students (both male and female this time) are physically not fit for service to defend our country.

This is actually of great concern to the future of our country on two levels – number one-military service to defend our country, and number two – the cost to our healthcare system of this pandemic of students that will have chronic diseases in the future will be overwhelming to our economy.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, currently in the United States of America there are 22 Million diabetics, and 70 Million Pre – diabetics. The prediabetics are people, who if they do not change their eating and activity habits, will develop diabetes in the future.

With all the complications of diabetes – such as heart problems, kidney problems, vision and limb problems – the projected expenses to provide health services to these people could be crippling to our economy in the future.

Question Eight: You mentioned “food insecurity” earlier – how can the school Food Service program help this problem?

Answer: As I state in my book, schools are going to have to develop a new paradigm for funding to replace the reduced budgets they are receiving tax dollars and also from reduced approvals of school bond issues.

The easiest way for schools to generate revenue – and also provide a community service – is to open the schools in the evening for community feeding programs. Each school has a complete kitchen that restaurant owners are envious of. The school dining room has not been used after the lunch program, and we have created a model program for community evening meals that will provide healthy meals to hungry adults and children – and also provide additional revenue for schools.

The breakfast and lunch programs in a school system – once the programs operate at a high level of efficiency – are only the tip of the iceberg for new revenue streams for schools. Opportunities for Food Service to provide catering for school and community functions, catering to business and fraternal groups, and providing the evening meals program- offer phenomenal opportunities to generate huge amounts of revenue for schools.

Question Nine: But aren't schools feeding all their students right now?

Answer: When we talk to Superintendents and Board Members about this, their belief is yes – they are feeding all their students.

But the reality is that they are feeding all their students that come into the cafeteria! There are many students that do not eat breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria, in fact, the reality is staggering!

According to the US Department of Agriculture and various state Boards of Education, in the 65 years of the school lunch program, no large school system with over 20,000 students has achieved reaching more than 60% of their kids for lunch – and in many districts it's considerably less.

With regard to the breakfast program, no large school district has ever attracted more than 25% of their students to the breakfast program – and in many districts it's considerably less.

What these figures indicate is that there is a tremendous potential for additional revenue for schools using a business model that can coach school Food Service programs in marketing to their students – in the same way that fast food restaurants -such as McDonald's- markets to customers to increase their sales.

In fact according to the US Department of Agriculture, in schools throughout the United States of America, there is a potential additional revenue stream of over \$21 Billion dollars a year – and all schools have to do is attract the students that are in their classrooms to come into the Food Service program for healthy, nutritious meals.

This \$21 Billion Dollars a year additional revenue is based on only attracting the additional students that are sitting in chair desks now – we don't even have to go outside the school to find new customers for them!

And like I say, once the Food Service programs are performing at a high effectiveness level, these additional sources of revenue such as catering and evening meals can provide additional Billions of dollars of revenue to the schools – plus perform a huge community service.

Question Ten: You make a statement that Food Service can be the saving factor of the school districts. Isn't that a bold statement to make?

Answer: Yes, it is a bold statement – but in this depressed economy with reduced budgets for schools- and schools having to eliminate program such as art, music, and sports to accommodate these reduced revenues – it is more important for schools to look to the Food Service program as a revenue stream to benefit the districts to save these important programs from elimination.

School is not just academics, but exposure to cultural and artistic learning that will benefit all students.

Our schools students are always being compared to the performance of students around the world. The overwhelming advantage that we have in this country for our students are the programs that are not considered academic. If we eliminate these programs due to budget cuts, all our students lose.

That is why the Food Service program is of such tremendous value – again for two reasons:

1. to provide students with healthy meals to reduce the effects of Mis- nourishment
2. to help schools capture this additional revenue stream to be able to afford keeping these important programs give our students an edge over students from other countries.

Question Eleven: You are the CEO of the Center for Food Service research. That's not a government institution – what do you do?

Answer: The role of the center for Food Service research is to identify and quantify methods to maximize the student participation rates and the revenue stream of the Food Service program to benefit students in schools.

Our role is to quantify the value of the Food Service program and to develop methods to market school Food Service program to the students – in the same way that McDonald's markets their restaurants to develop customers.

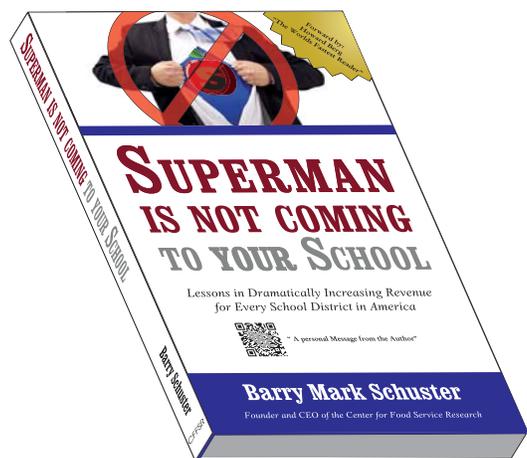
While most governmental agencies are looking at Food Service to develop new menus and sponsoring “quinoa cook-offs”, our function is to develop programs that help school districts maximize revenue and increase student participation rates in the meals program.

Most government agencies are focused on menus – which are actually the easiest module of Food Service program to change. The most pressing need is to develop a marketing program that creates desire among students to come into the dining room for breakfast and lunch.

Our focus is to apply business principles to the Food Service program to operate it in the most effective manner – like the most successful restaurants in America.

Using the same marketing techniques the most successful fast food restaurants use to entice students to walk in the front door and spend money – we will succeed in improving participation rates and revenue for school districts.

The benefit to the students is to provide the healthiest meal options that they will receive on a daily basis – with the intent of reducing the pandemic of obesity and chronic diseases that the students will face the future.



Contact Information for Barry Schuster:

Telephone: (682) 422-7797

e-mail: Info@CFFSR.org

For Media contacts with Barry Schuster, please visit Media@CFFSR.org for a request form.