

A Food Justice Analysis of Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

CSA: Community Supported Agriculture

FNS: Food and Nutrition Services

FTS: Farm to School

HB: House Bill

HHFKA: Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act

MHS: Molalla High School

NSLP: National School Lunch Program

ODA: Oregon Department of Agriculture

ODE: Oregon Department of Education

OFSSGN: Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network

OSU: Oregon State University

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

## ABSTRACT

In the United States the food system operates using a capitalistic model controlled by for-profit entities, which frequently operate large monopolized food companies. As a result of unequal power within the food system, this imbalanced model created a system plagued with a plethora of inequities that affect people in a variety of negative ways. While the food system impacts everyone, people of color and from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to suffer a disproportionate amount of the negative consequences, further marginalizing and disenfranchising these groups of people. Unequal access to healthy food jeopardizes the health and wellbeing of people and communities worldwide. These inequities not only negatively impact people currently, but also perpetuate inequities within the food system for future generations. There are many different ways people engage in addressing problems within the dominant food system paradigm. A prominent example is farm-to-school (FTS) programs, which are emerging as a unique type of school food program that aim to address inequities within the current school food system. These programs strive to connect local farmers with school cafeterias, and aid in coordinating the delivery of fresh and healthy food to school districts across the country. This paper focuses specifically on Oregon FTS and the unique multistakeholder model utilized statewide called the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network (OFSSGN). This research explores whether or not food justice is being addressed by FTS efforts, and examines which programs are being implemented by OFSSGN's to reach their projected goals.

*Keywords:* food justice, food insecurity, Oregon farm-to-school (FTS), school food, sustainable food systems, local food, family engagement, school garden

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network (OFSSGN) Coordinator Rick Sherman, who directs Oregon Department of Education's (ODE) role in Farm-to-School (FTS), nominated Molalla High Schools' (MHS) multicultural club advisor Kelly Douglas as the recipient of the Oregon Public Health Institute's Health Genius Award for her role in FTS and School Garden efforts. The bulk of this project was centered on the MHS club Kelly started last fall named "The 4-H Culture Club." Inception of this club was centered on teaching tolerance, kindness, togetherness, and educating students to be self-sufficient with skills of choosing to cook and eat healthy meals. This newly formed club quickly became the largest group on campus, with more than 150 members, which is more than one-third of the total student population at MHS. Together the student members of the club with help from Kelly Douglas completed several 12-hour volunteer workdays and eventually constructed the 500<sup>th</sup> school garden in Oregon, which includes raised beds, walking paths, and an outdoor classroom. The food that is grown on school grounds is integrated into meals cooked at Culture Club meetings, as well as to provide some ingredients for school meals, and also shared with the larger community by way of the local farmers market (Flavin, 2014, p.1-3). Additionally, Kelly Douglas and MHS is currently working with a regional food distribution company in order to increase the amount of fresh and local produce served in the cafeteria, as well as to provide fresh snacks after school. This story illustrates one specific example of current Oregon FTS programs efforts, and provides an example of positive momentum in OFSSGN's program efforts. However, this research goes beyond this example and critiques the ability of these programs to address food justice.

Schools nation wide participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), which is a “federally assisted meal program operating in over 100,000 public, non-profit, and private schools as well as residential childcare institutions” (“National School,” 2013, p.1). At the federal level NSLP is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and at the state level by The Department of Education for each state. In 2012, according to the USDA, NSLP “provided nutritionally balanced, low cost or free lunches to more than 31 million children each school day” (“National School”, 2013, p.1). Additionally, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon (2015) claimed that NSLP provides nutritious food to school-aged children, and supports manageable food prices by channeling farm surpluses into the school food system (“School Lunch,” 2015, p. 1). NSLP has typically been a dominant school food model available to school districts nation wide. While this program claims to be making positive changes to school food there remains criticism in terms of whether or not goals towards building alternative and sustainable school food programs are actually being met. Many scholars voice recommendations within their research to focus attention and build alternative school food plans geared more toward health and sustainability as a way to mitigate inefficiencies and inequities that are present within dominate school food programs. According to Parish (2011), “farm to school programs are school-based programs that connect schools (k-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition educational opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers” (p.412). While there are several types of alternative school food systems FTS programs are quickly emerging as a prevalent type of innovative school food model. FTS programs are one type of alternative school food model that aims to challenge the dominant food regime, and address inequities within the current system for children in schools throughout the United States.



The Oregon Profile of Hunger reported that 195,093 children under the age of 18 are living under the federal poverty line, and 13.6% of households in Oregon are labeled as being food insecure (2013, p.1). According to Andersen (1990), “food insecurity ” exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain” (p. 1576). Despite united efforts of public policy leaders and organizations that support alternative school food models like FTS, and other social service programs throughout the state that strive to mitigate this issue, Oregonians continue to suffer from high levels of food insecurity. Given the current level of food insecurity for Oregon residents specifies the basis for why we need to be critical about FTS program goals and the way these programs are implemented. This analysis helps create a better understanding of the current, and potential future impact of FTS programs in order to examine their claims to support a more equitable school food system. This research helps gain insight about whether or not high levels of food insecurity can be mitigated through FTS initiatives and legislation.

Creating a just food system is vital for the health and wellbeing of people and the environment, however implementing the necessary changes can be difficult, and even harder when aiming to execute large systemic change. One possible intersection to engage a large population of people from diverse backgrounds is through targeting schools as a platform for addressing food insecurity through establishing a school food system that supports food justice. In the United States most children attend school on a daily basis, and all of them eat food while at school. Currently FTS programs are being implemented in many states across the country, according to the first ever Farm-to-School Census completed in 2013 for the 2011-12 school year, approximately 23.5 million students participate in FTS programs each day (“United States Department of Agriculture: National,” 2013, p.1). This scenario provides an opportunity to

educate children about food and health, as well as to provide them with the skills necessary to facilitate healthy food choices at mealtimes. Due to Oregon's high levels of food insecurity for much of the state's population, and based on the OFSSGN model that is being positively recognized in Oregon, this paper will focus specifically on Oregon FTS programs, and will explore this model in more depth in order to analyze whether or not Oregon FTS programs are addressing food justice for Oregon's students.

Oregon FTS has constructed a unique what they call a "cross-sector" or multistakeholder model called Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network (OFSSGN). The groundwork for this unique model resides in grand efforts to collaborate two separate governing entities: Oregon Department of Education (ODE), and Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). ODE and ODA are the two main Oregon State Government organizations that support OFSSGN, however ODE and ODA rely heavily on partnerships with several other organizations that assist in and support FTS goals and efforts at variety of levels. Parish (2011) states that while "there is currently no significant National Farm to School program or guidelines. Farm to School can generally be characterized as a grassroots movement at the local level, either by state, county, school district, or individual school" (p.414). While some critics might say that this lack of cohesiveness could be a problem, it also allows for each school district with the desire to participate in FTS program a variety of resources at their disposal and the support to help create a program that meets the needs of the children within their district. At the national level the USDA Farm to School program is operated by the "department of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) which has seven regional offices around the country; in each office is a FTS Regional Lead who is available for providing FTS related support for state agencies and other entities in their region." Each year, USDA awards up to \$5 million in grants to help schools connect with

local producers and teach kids where their food comes from (United States Department of Agriculture: National, 2013). Each school district then works with federal, state and local organizations that provide resources to assist in FTS program implementation, this allow each district to create a unique version of FTS geared specifically towards addressing the diversity of student needs within a particular place and time. Together these factions all support OFSSGN in their goal that aims to positively impact the health and well being of Oregon children and families by coordinating the delivery of farm fresh healthy food to school districts and communities across the state.

Veteran educator, scholar, and ODA's previous FTS advocate and representative who was instrumental in creating OFSSGN, and successfully promoted FTS legislation that changed policies and practices within the state of Oregon, Michelle Ratcliff (2012) explains some of the variance in FTS programs:

FTS programs vary according to place and the people who run them. They typically include one or more of the following program components. They connect local farmers, fishers, ranchers, and food processors with school cafeterias in preschools, grades K through 12, and colleges. They serve and promote locally produced agricultural products on the lunch line, and they connect youth to food production and preparation through activities such as school gardens, field trips to farms, and chefs in the classroom. Increasingly, Farm to School programs also include cross promotion of schools' featured local foods in retail outlets, healthcare facilities, and other institutions. (p. 315)

In the following chapters, I first describe the social equity of food, and examine the extent to which food insecurity plagues individual access to healthy food. Next I explore the framework of food justice and further investigate the discourse in defining this complex term, and explain the importance of this task. Next I situate food justice as a social problem rather than an individual problem, this will assist in further explanation of external factors and influences which are outside an individual person's control that contribute to unequal distribution and access to healthy food, especially for those residents living within already marginalized

communities. After describing this social problem, I consider the possibility of FTS programs as a possible solution to address food injustice, and situate the scope of this research by providing a synopsis of school food programs first in general, and then narrow further to introduce FTS programs as an alternative type of school food program. Through this inquiry I assess the services provided by OFSSGN, compared with food justice tenants, and then finally compare Oregon's FTS intended program goals to three different assessment tools. Through this process I identify whether or not Oregon FTS programs are addressing food justice in program implementation, and I pinpoint the specific types of programs being implemented to carry out program goals.

## **Chapter 2: Background and Significance**

The main problem explored through this research is high levels of food insecurity with and emphasis of this experience of Oregon residents. In order to understand the concept of food insecurity it is necessary to discuss the root causes of this problem, as well as the levels of injustice that exists in regards to the access of healthy food. This research explores FTS programs as a means to create food justice and in turn decrease food insecurity rates among Oregon residents. In this section, I first describe the social equity of food and the extent to which injustice plagues individual access to healthy food. Next I explain food justice as a social problem by describing the societal causes and effects of food insecurity for the individual. Thereafter I define food justice based on academic research in order to provide a framework that I use to evaluate whether or not Oregon FTS programs are addressing food justice. Finally I explore research articles conducted by scholars within this or related fields of study about research findings in regards to school food programs in general, and their conceptualizations of possible positive impacts that alternative types of school food programs and their the ability to address food insecurity through creating a just school food system that actively advocates for food justice.

While there are many types of school food programs, this research focuses on FTS programs, as an example of one specific type of alternative school food program. After explaining FTS programs in general terms, I introduce Oregon FTS and the organizations that make up OFSSGN. Lastly, I assess OFSSGN program implementation efforts in addressing food justice. I have specifically chosen to focus this research on Oregon FTS programs in part because OFSSGN has gained positive attention on a local level, as well as on a national level. In 2013 the completion and release of the first ever national USDA FTS Census names Oregon FTS program efforts as ranking in the top states for FTS program success nation wide (“United States

Department of Agriculture: Oregon”, 2014, p. 1). High levels of food insecurity within Oregon, coupled with new legislation and policy that assists and supports FTS program implementation creates momentum for the betterment of alternative school food programs both in Oregon, as well as the possibility to create further impact across the country. This credit is cause for attention to further research and critically examine this topic in order to contribute to continued research on this subject.

## **2.1. Social Equity of Food**

Consumption of food is one of a few basic human needs and all people require eating in order to live a healthy and productive life. In addition to food providing a vital function with the physical body, food can also “be a powerful metaphor for the way we organize and relate to society. Beyond subsistence, food is a social and cultural expression of individuals. It acts as an entry point into larger debates and discourse around a multitude of issues” (Levoke, 2006, p. 89). Importance of food for a variety of reasons is clear, and yet many people lack the resources that provide them with access to a healthy diet. As Morales (2011) stated, “paradoxically, many Americans, particularly low-income people and people of color, are overweight yet malnourished. They face an overwhelming variety of processed foods, but are unable to procure a well-balanced diet from the liquor stores and mini-marts that dominate their neighborhoods” (p. 149). According to Feeding America, “15.8 million children under 18 in the United States live in households where they are unable to consistently access enough nutritious food necessary for a healthy life” (2015, p. 1). Food insecurity is harmful to all people, however it can be particularly devastating among children due to their increased vulnerability and the potential for long-term consequences. There are currently one billion people going hungry in the world even though food is being produced for the United States to feed approximately 14 billion people, well

over the current world population of 6.9 billion, and far exceeding the projected population of 9 billion in 2050 (“WBI”, 2011, p. 1).

National attention is being directed toward making changes with the goal to create a food system that is justly and equitably available for all people. For example Michelle Obama’s Lets Move, “is a comprehensive initiative, launched by the First Lady, dedicated to solving the problem of obesity within a generation so that kids born today will grow up healthier and able to pursue their dreams” (“Let’s Move,” 2010, p. 1). This initiative aims to meet their goal through educating and encouraging people to eat healthy food and to increase the amount they exercise. Additionally, new farm bill legislation passed by President Obama in 2014 supported the change of national nutrition requirements for school food programs across the country. This bill passed through Congress authorizes nutrition and agriculture programs in the United States for the years of 2014-2024. The bill authorizes \$956 billion in spending over the next ten years, of which \$756 billion would be for nutrition programs (“Agricultural Act, 2014, p. 1). These efforts are leading policy and legislation in a positive direction, however they are not enough to solve a social problem as deep rooted as food insecurity.

## **2.2. Food Justice**

### **2.2.1. Economic, Social, and Environmental Aspects of Food Justice**

Food justice issues stem from a long history of multifaceted levels of oppression against minority groups. Loo (2011) stated that “achieving justice is not only a matter of redistributing goods, it is a matter of correcting disparities in social, political, and economic standings to allow those who have been historically underprivileged to advocate for their concerns” (p. 789).

Throughout time, social, political, and economical influences have shaped the world into the way we experience it today. These inequities plague many peoples’ everyday lives by continuing to

increase levels of injustice within communities, especially within the food system. Achieving food justice is not simply about increasing food production, and providing grocery stores with food. Levels of discrimination and oppression must be addressed, and elected officials and other people in positions of power need to encourage and help advocate as well as assist people who have historically been marginalized to promote and fight for their own needs.

In order to understand to further the social, political, and economic influences and their impact on food justice, Raine (2005) describes determinants of healthy eating in two ways, individual determinants and collective determinants. He states:

Individual determinants of healthy eating are described as a person's physiological state, food preferences, nutritional knowledge, perceptions of healthy eating and psychological factors...[while] collective determinants include a wide range of contextual factors such as interpersonal environment created by family and peers, the physical environment, which determines food availability and accessibility, the economic environment, in which food is a commodity to be marketed for profit, and the social environment, in which social status (income, education and gender) and cultural milieu are determinants of healthy eating that may be working "invisibly" to structure food choice. (p. S8)

The social impact of food justice come from people, or media, and can create and perpetuate social inequities. The political impact of food justice includes policies and initiatives that establish and maintain the United States political system. The economic impact of food justice explains how the economy, and changes within the economic system affect the price and availability of food. In addition, the economic impact also illustrates the experience of the individual and the financial inequality that exists within certain communities. As Raine's (2005) explanation of healthy eating explains a person's ability to eat healthfully depends not only on their individual understanding of eating healthy, but is also contingent on the collective and societal impact experienced by an individual or group. These factors are social, political, and economic, all of which shape individual and collective experiences. Unfortunately, the way people experience and participate with food given the factors listed above are subject to levels of



systemic oppression that impact knowledge and access to appropriate and healthy food for themselves and their families.

People are born into diverse families and reside in vastly different types of communities. Because of a wide variety of variables everyone obtains different levels of socioeconomic status based on class, race, gender, place, and time, this includes dominant systems that govern the systems, which make up society within the United States. Depending on a person's socioeconomic status, this detail can determine many aspects to life including levels of education and careers, opportunities, access to necessary services, and participation in life and as it pertains to food. These circumstances establish the foundation for social, political, and economic capital, which influence individual and community health on a variety of levels including involvement within the food system. In Raine's (2005) analysis of determinants of healthy eating she argues that individual determinants are not sufficient enough to explain people's food behavior. This research indicated that in order to understand the influences of peoples eating behavior one must first explore the impacts of the collective society. At the center of food justice, the inequalities that are woven throughout each integral juncture deeply and directly impact many people's ability to successfully participate within the food system such that their basic need for obtaining nutritious food is met. This collective analysis details how the communal environment impacts the individual, and also allows for a more holistic explanation that explains food justice as a social problem, not simply an individual choice or problem. There is much thought that food justice issues are simply individual or personal issues, which must be solved by the individual by way of making "better" choice, but what happens when certain communities are not given this choice due to high levels of systemic oppression? This view is simplistic and does not encompass the many influences that society forces upon the people. Food justice issues can only

be explained by a multifaceted web of injustice that predetermines both individuals' and communities' ability or lack thereof to participate in the food system.

### **2.2.2. Food Justice as a Social Problem**

Mills' (1959) "sociological imagination" helps to further explain food justice as a social problem. He defines sociological imagination as "the vivid awareness of the relationship between experience and the wider society, and enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (p. 6). One benefit of this landmark work is that it allowed sociologists, other academics, and scholars to apply this concept to real world problems and establish a cause and effect model of social relationships and situations. According to this definition, academics and researchers had the capacity to see how social situations play out taking into consideration the differences between people, and the understanding that all situations and outcomes in society have an explanation of how and why it happened. Some of the influences that Mills noted specifically that shape and effect social situations and outcomes include, but are not limited to social factors, social contexts, time, personal preference, and place. Given these influences one could suggest that food insecurity and food injustice are issues that stem from a plethora of systemic pressures that don't benefit all people equally. According to Mills (2000):

Issues have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of his inner life. They have to do with the organization of many such milieus into the institutions of an historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieu overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social and historical life. (p. 8)

This explanation helps set the stage for identifying food justice as a social issue. Food justice actors must work together and incorporate cooperation between organizations and institutions at local, state, and federal levels. Mills (2000) wrote "an issue is a public matter: and

often involves a crisis in institutional arrangements, and often too it involves what Marxists call contradictions or antagonism” (p. 9). Food justice is absolutely a public matter, and clearly involves a “crisis in institutional arrangements” both past and present. This explanation of food justice as a social problem is important for two reasons. First it allows there to be an explanation of how the food system has become so unequal and unfair over time. Second, and more importantly, it allows for thought, practice, and action in order to create food justice for all people.

### **2.2.3. Multiple Definitions of Food Justice**

Food justice is a concept that is defined in many different ways by a variety of scholars from several academic disciplines and backgrounds. According to Sbicca (2012):

The concept of food justice is multifaceted and is often employed by food justice activists with contrasting understandings of the content of food justice itself. Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) note that food justice “remains a relatively unformed concept, subject to multiple interpretations” (p.6). This in turn bears potential perils for discursive expressions of food justice, the practices of food justice activists, and the stated goals of food justice organizations (FJO’s). But little research has paid attention to the complications arising from the socio-historical context of food justice that inform understandings of food justice among activists as well as discourses of food justice organization’s. (p. 456)

This quote explains that there are a multitude of definitions of food justice, acknowledges that there are more influences that contribute to this concept than recognized by academics, and explains the importance of continuing food justice research. Discourse of defining food justice is important for a variety of reasons. Without an established definition for food justice there is a potential for people, business, and groups to be working toward different goals, even though they believe they are working toward the same outcome. Sbicca (2012) explained, “the ongoing mobilization process also faces complications stemming from diverse individual interpretations of food justice—that may not be reflected in the stated goals of food justice organizations—as well as structural constraints” (p. 455).

In addition to potential complications and misunderstandings between individuals and communities the definition of food justice also has an impact on environment justice and sustainability. According to Alkon & Norgaard (2009) “the concept of food justice will contribute to environmental justice work in the following ways. In articulating a demand for access to healthy food, these cases contribute to the developing focus on racially stratified access to environmental benefits within environmental justice” (p. 301). All participants fighting for food justice are dependent on knowing what it is they are fighting for and what is needed to accomplish the end goal. Sbicca (2012) explained, one of the “struggles of the food justice movement have thus been how to effectively bridge diverse concerns into one social movement that fully addresses the panoply of problems in the agrifood system” (p. 456). While there exist many hurdles in establishing food justice for all “food justice may help activists and policymakers working on food security to understand the institutionalized nature of denied access to healthy food” (Alkon & Norgaard, 2009, p. 289).

**Table 1. Definitions Food Justice**

<b>Discipline/ Organization</b>	<b>Citation</b>	<b>Definition of Food Justice</b>
Sociology, Criminology, Agriculture and Law	Sbicca (2012)	“Food justice thus pursues a liberatory principle focusing on the right of historically disenfranchised communities to have healthy, culturally appropriate food which is also justly and sustainably grown” (p. 456)
Agriculture <i>Note: this definition is adapted from Ontario’s Public Health Association</i>	Levoke, (2005)	“all people have access to adequate amounts of safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate food, produced in an environmentally sustainable way and provided in a manner that promotes human dignity” (p.91).
Sociology	Alkon, A., Norgaard, K. (2009)	“Access to healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food—in the contexts of institutional racism, racial formation, and racialized geographies” (p. 289).
The Community for Global Justice	Community Alliance for Global Justice (2013)	Food justice is the right of communities everywhere to produce, distribute, access, and eat good food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community. Good food is healthful, local, sustainable, culturally appropriate, humane, and produced from the sustenance of people and the planet
Food Justice Certified: Agricultural Justice Project	Stanford, (2011)	A new Food Justice label launched by the Agricultural Justice Project this summer seeks to offer consumers a guarantee of “fair pricing for the farmer and just working conditions for farm and food business workers. Food Justice Certified is designed for all agricultural production systems, fiber and cosmetics as well as food.”
Just Food	Just Food (2015)	Food Justice is communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat [food that is] fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and grown locally with care for the wellbeing of the land, workers, and animals”
Food Justice Work Group, Portland / Multnomah Food Policy Council	Defining Food Justice	The Food Justice movement envisions a food system that is inclusive, community-led and participatory, without the exploitation of people, land, or the environment. It identifies and acts to remove the significant structural inequities that exist within our food and economic systems. Food Justice activists seek to establish healthy, resilient communities with equitable access to nourishing and culturally appropriate food.

#### **2.2.4. Five Characteristics of Food Justice**

As illustrated in Table 1, there are a variety of definitions to explain food justice. For the purposes of this research, the definition of food justice that will be used throughout this analysis includes five key tenants which include food that is: healthy, culturally appropriate, as well as locally, sustainably, and justly grown.

The first tenant incorporates the necessity of food being healthy and nutritious. Oregon schools are required to utilize these dietary guidelines when evaluating food served at mealtime, which includes FTS programs. Parish (2011) describes USDA's Dietary Guidelines by stating:

Participating schools must serve lunches that meet the applicable recommendations of the USDA's most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These guidelines include: eating a variety of foods; choosing a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables, and fruits; choosing a diet moderate in sugars and salt; and choosing a diet with thirty percent or less calories from fat and less than ten percent from saturated fat. In addition, lunches must provide at least one-third of the daily Recommended Dietary Allowances for protein, iron, calcium, and vitamins A and C. (p. 413)

The second tenant identifies the requirement for culturally appropriate food. Charles (2014) states, "Culturally appropriate food is understood as food that corresponds to individual and collective consumer demand and preferences, in line with national and international law" (p. 1). Food and eating serves many purposes above and beyond feeding the body. Food is also a representation of race, culture, and self-expression, thus it is important to provide access to food that represents the different cultures and taste buds of people who are consuming it.

The third tenant is that food is grown locally in relation to the community and school district that it serves. This includes where food is grown, purchased, distributed, and served.

Wascalus (2014) described the notion of local food as depending:

On the geography and climate of a given area, as well as the seasonality of foods; local can mean food grown or produced within a specific distance from a school, such as 50 miles, or it can mean food grown or produced within a specific area, such as five contiguous counties. Local can also encompass larger regions, such as an entire state or even a group of states. (p. 4)

While the criteria for local food is quite broad, the importance of establishing boundaries in regards to what is recognized as local is important so far as transparency, as well as to support economically sustainable communities. Within the Oregon Health Impact Assessment (HIA),

this document define local as food “items produced, packed, packaged or processed within the state of Oregon” (2011, p. 1).

The fourth tenant is that it is imperative that food is grown in a sustainable manner. A sustainable food system is one that is relational, proximate, diverse, ecologically sustainable, economically sustaining, just/ethical, sacred, knowledgeable/communicative, seasonal/temporal, healthful, participatory, culturally nourishing, and sustainably regulated (Kloppenburger, et. al, 2000, p. 177). Practices used to grow food must be executed in a sustainable manner; this includes growing, processing, marketing, and the distribution of food. In addition, sustainable growing practices cannot negatively impact the workers and employees, or the environment now or for future generations.

Lastly, the fifth tenant is that food must be grown justly. Agyeman, et. al, (2003) argue for “just sustainability” which is defined as practices that “ensure a better quality of life for all, now, and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, while living within the limits of supporting ecosystems” (p. 2). The concept of justly grown food is similar to sustainably grown food, although the difference is the extent to which the integrity of the ecosystem is not altered or changed in a negative way from growing the food. Food that is justly grown incorporates both the practices used to grow the food and the conditions in which the farmworkers encounter while maintaining their job duties on the farm. In order for food to be justly grown, growing practices cannot negatively affect the earth’s ecosystem, or the people who work to grow or prepare food.

This definition for food justice provides a framework that will be utilized throughout this paper, however it also provides some guidelines by which to address the social problem of food insecurity. A clear definition of this concept allows there to be a concise framework in order to address and potentially establish solutions toward the betterment of the identified social problem.

According to Alkon & Norgaard (2009), “food justice serves as a theoretical and political bridge between scholarship and activism on sustainable agriculture, food insecurity, and environmental justice” (p. 289).

### **2.3. School Food Programs**

Throughout history governments, states, communities, and individuals have attempted to respond to issues of food insecurity and work toward food justice. One way that this is illustrated is through government initiatives regarding funding and the implementation of new or revised programs that encompass advocating to increase access to healthy food for all people.

Additionally, grassroots involvement and alternative interventions are on the rise within the social service and public health sector. These efforts collectively aim to find solutions in order to create a just food system, however injustice in the food system remains. One example of how actors within the food movement are attempting to achieve food justice is through the implementation of school food programs. School food programs come in many different shapes, sizes and practices, however they all claim to increase levels of food justice for all participating students. According to scholars there are many ways in which school food programs can help contribute to food justice goals.

School food programs are a type of program that provides food for children at school during meal and snack time. School food programs exist in all public, private, and charter schools, as well as child care types of organizations that are required to provide food for the children that they serve on a daily basis. These programs range from federally funded programs like the NSLP, to social and public health programs like FTS and Farm-to-Preschool programs. In Oregon during the 2011-12 school year, 304,847 students participated in the NSLP. Of the total students served by NSLP, 73% of them automatically gain access to healthy local food through the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program (“Oregon Profile of Hunger”, 2013, p. 1).



This figure demonstrates a large population of people that can be reached through school meal programs.

Using schools as a point of intervention is advantageous because all children are required to participate in school, therefore providing an opportunity to reach a large population of people by utilizing FTS programs as a possible alternative to challenge dominate school food programs, and help aid in addressing food insecurity levels by creating a just school food environment. Additionally, schools naturally have an assorted population in regards to class, gender, race, and culture, so intervening at this level has the potential to reach a large population. More importantly it serves as a way to reach a diverse populace, which helps to reach underserved communities may come from already marginalized circumstances.

School food programs have the ability to impact food insecurity on a variety of levels, and through implementing alternative school food programs there exists one potential avenue to address food justice by creating a school food system that is equal for all people. Poppendieck (2010) described the importance of school food reform:

It is not only the convergence of agendas and the addition of new voices that make this time for school food reform. It is also the urgency of the underlying concerns to which school meals are addressed. Hunger is on the rise. Our children's health is deteriorating. The environment is under assault. School food reform holds the promise of addressing all of these issues. That is why it cannot wait. (p. 7)

Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between highly processed food and food related diseases such as obesity, type II diabetes, and heart related diseases. These food and health related diseases are at the highest levels in history for children and adults worldwide. According to Feenstra and Ohmart (2012), "despite being one of the richest countries in the world, hunger as a result of inadequate, nutritious food is still a problem in the United States. Now, it is also frequently accompanied by overweight, and obesity" (p. 281). Furthermore,

changes that increase healthy food in schools can create improved levels of learning and knowledge for students, as well as for parents. For example, through food curriculum, and school garden experiences children and their parents are given access to information about healthy food. This knowledge provides social capital for students and their families that can benefit them throughout many arenas in their life (Joshi, Azuma, & Feenstra, 2008, p.231). Pierre Bourdieu's definition of social capital as "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 119). According to this definition it becomes clear that the amount of social capital that an individual or community has is directly correlated to levels of opportunity and access to education, jobs, information, networking and relationships that people have. Varied levels of social capital directly affect an individual's life and future in regards to social, political, and economic resources that are accessible.

In addition to positive individual and community impacts toward food justice, some scholars explain that school food programs also have the ability to impact the food system on larger systematic level. School food programs have the ability to shift market power toward a more localized food market through increased values-based purchasing. Theoretically "values-based supply chains have emerged with the increasing demand for food that can be identified with merits such as "sustainable," and "local. These supply chains focus on the environmental and societal benefits of supporting small to midscale sustainable farmers" (Galarneau, Millward, and Laird, 2013, p. 7). Additionally, increased food purchasing from local farms and decreased purchasing from large monopolized food companies creates an opportunity "to at least partially shift the highly unequal balance of market power" (Friedman, 2006, p. 395). Furthermore, increased local purchasing sets the stage to create long-term sustainability within these local food

systems because the money spent in the community stays in the community and builds on creating long term sustainable food supply market.

Another benefit of school food programs' fight for food justice is that there is an opportunity to establish better relationships between small farmers and local buyers. Frieddman (2007) wrote, "one of the lessons collectively learned by Local Flavor Plus is how to use the legal framework of nonprofit organizations to enable relationships between small farmers and institutional buyers" (p. 395). Forging new relationships between different food system participants has positive implications for a more optimistic future in regards to food system exchange and interactions. In addition to strengthening farmer and buyer relationships, school food programs have the potential to work toward activism and change in food policy. This type of system "aims to reconnect food producers and consumers and utilizes the public plate to educate civil society about sustainable development" (Morgan, Sonino, 2008, p. 19). By using teamwork and collaboration between systems not only can school food systems improve, this type of positive change can also provide an opportunity to create a more just food system that can benefit a larger population.

School food programs have an opportunity to positively impact children's and families' lives by increasing levels of food justice for all people. This research will investigate the intended and implemented potential impacts of school food programs in order to further understand ways of creating food justice. I investigate Oregon FTS programs as a specific example of a school food program, and evaluate to what extent this type of program is addressing food justice with the goal of refining solutions to help create a more equitable food system for all people and communities. I chose to examine FTS because they are a prominent

example of a school food program that incorporates many of the aspects listed above, including local supply chain, education and growing food on site of the schools.

#### **2.4. Farm-to-School Programs**

FTS programs “introduce more fresh fruits and vegetables into school meals and snacks while connecting regional farms with schools. They also enhance nutrition education, and more broadly and positively change children’s understandings of and relationship to their food” (Galarneau et. al, 2013, p. 1). In 2010 congress passed the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) with bipartisan support to help ensure every American child had access to the nutrition they need to grow into healthy adults. One goal of the law was to help reduce America's childhood obesity epidemic and reduce health risks for America's children by helping schools across the country provide balanced meals allowing children greater access to healthy foods during the school day. USDA based the new school meal standards on independent, expert recommendations from the Institute of Medicine to ensure kids are being fed healthy food at school (“Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act,” 2010, p. 1). FTS enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools. Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as education opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons and farm field trips. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities (National Farm to School Network, 2015). Oregon FTS incorporates nine local agencies and organizations some at the government level, and some that are of non-profit status that collaborate services provided and comprise OFSSGN.

## 2.5. Oregon Farm to School Legislation 2007 and 2008

In order to understand the multi sector collaborative model unique to Oregon FTS programs, it is necessary to explain the legislation that changed the infrastructure for the FTS model. Sobel, Pelissier, and Griffin (2013) of Ecotrust and Upstream Public Health have described the House Bills (HB) that generated the changes they proposed to do. The Oregon Legislature first considered farm to school and school garden legislation in 2007 when a coalition of over 80 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Oregonians endorsed a trio of farm to school and school garden bills. These bills proposed to:

- HB 3307 - Create a single focus position within the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to ready the Oregon agricultural community to work with Oregon schools;
- HB 3476 - Create a farm to school program in the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and reimburse school districts that utilize Oregon agricultural products; and
- HB 3185 - Provide grants to schools throughout the state to start or maintain school gardens. (p. 2-3)

Sobell et al. (2013) explained that while all three of the bills passed unanimously through the House Subcommittee on Education Innovation and the full House Education Committee, no immediate action was taken to meet the proposed purposes of the bills. Then in 2008, as a part of the Supplemental Session, the Oregon Legislature finally took action and responded to the urgent need to fill an inter-agency gap in coordination related to farm to school and school garden programs between the ODE and ODA. The urgent need for coordination resided in the fact that Oregon was breaking new ground FTS program coordination, and combining the efforts of two different agencies. While ODA had a coordinator position to work with the agriculture community, ODE was the agency designated to regulate school food, thus the need for a coordinator to bridge this gap. In response to this problem, “legislators unanimously passed a bill (HB 3601A), which created a position of authority for a Farm to School and School Garden

Coordinator as a part of the Oregon Department of Education Child Nutrition Program who would be in charge of coordinating efforts” (Sobell et al., 2013, p. 3).

## **2.6. Oregon Farm to School Legislation 2011: House Bill 2800**

In 2011, the OFSSGN submitted House Bill (HB) 2800, requesting \$22,600,000 out of general funds to:

- Reimburse school districts up to \$0.15 cents per meal for the purchase of Oregon grown or processed food products
- Fund food-based, agriculture-based, and garden-based educational activities in school districts

Grants received under this bill, require each school district to spend 87.5% of funds on food reimbursements, and 12.5% of funds on related educational activities. The House and Senate voted unanimously to support House Bill 2800, although the total budget of the bill was substantially reduced to \$200,000 (Sobell et al., 2013, p. 2). Despite the reduction in funding, in a year when many other programs endured large funding cuts or were eliminated entirely, FTS and school garden advocates considered this new funding from the state a significant win.

## **2.7. Proposed Oregon Farm to School Legislation 2015: House Bill 2721**

In spring of 2015 House Bill (HB) 2721: Farm to School and School Gardens was introduced into Oregon legislation. Oregon FTS continually makes changes to their multistakeholder FTS model in the hopes to improve FTS program implementation efforts. This new HB proposes four main agenda items: first, to give all districts a fair share of the food funds, based on school lunches served. Districts will be required to track and report on local purchases; second, if passed this bill will allow all school districts to use the funds for local foods for any school meal programs, not just lunch; third, continue to award the funds for “agriculture, food and garden-based education” by competitive grants, but let non-profit organizations and commodity commissions also apply for grant funds; and lastly, to expand the total funding to \$5.6 million to benefit all districts, and to let farmers and processors count on consistent buyers

(Ratcliff and Griffin, 2015). If this bill passes, Oregon FTS efforts will increase not only on a financial level, which will allow for expansion of these programs in order to serve more children and families. In addition, it will enhance school gardens and food education curriculum taught at school. These changes have the ability to impact a larger population of students, as well as increase community engagement such that actions toward creating food justice can be offered to more family and community members. This policy change is another example that illustrates positive momentum that is happening in Oregon in hopes of creating a more just school food system for children and their families. This also shows why it is a critical time to examine the efficacy of OFSSGN in addressing food justice needs.

## **2.8. Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network (OFSSGN)**

The creation of this multistakeholder collaborative model created a new option and the space to create an augmented FTS model, and provided an opportunity for OFSSGN to break new ground that aim to create positive changes to typical school food system in Oregon schools. OFSSGN's infrastructure is supported by nine major organizations, which includes both government, and non-profit agencies. All decisions made for FTS program efforts are guided by a steering committee that is comprised of strategically nominated individuals elected to serve the network each year. Steering committee members are those actively involved in the network and provide support for FTS efforts throughout the state; most typically these members are representatives from the nine major organizations that make up OFSSGN. The mission statement of OFSSGN is, "to convene statewide leadership to promote the health and well-being of youth, families, farms and the environment by increasing access to locally grown and locally processed food in schools, and by supporting food and garden-based education in Oregon" (Sobell et al., 2013, p.3). The collaborative model Oregon has put into place requires that each organization

play a unique and vital role in the implementation of FTS programs for schools statewide. Each of these organizations support FTS program efforts using a variety of specific methods and programs, which are intended to carry out program goals and agency mission and values. According to the HIA (2011) “six literature reviews and one meta-analysis of more than fifty individual studies indicate a strong association between multi-component programs with elements changing the school food environment (such as gardening), an increase in fruit and vegetable offerings (e.g. salad bars, fruit baskets, snacks), taste testing, menu development, cooking and nutrition curriculum (in the garden, classroom, at home) and an increase in student preferences for, and consumption of, fruits and vegetables” (p. 41).

The agencies listed in Table 2 each contribute to the OFSSGN. Together these organizations work together to create and provide support for FTS programs in Oregon. According to the USDA Census there are approximately 188 public school districts in Oregon, 82 of which participate in FTS program efforts. This includes 714 schools, and 366,066 children who daily have access to, and participate in FTS programs in the state of Oregon. Because FTS programs are not currently managed or regulated through one specific governmental agency or any supervising organization, it takes a team with a strategic and collaborative plan in order to facilitate the necessary parts and program implementation, which work to create a successful model that works for each school district.



**Table 2. OFSSGN Partnership Organizations**

<b>Organization That Make Up OFSSGN</b>	<b>Type of Organization</b>	<b>Role in Oregon FTS</b>
Corvallis Environmental Center	Non-Profit 5013c	Tasting Tables, Local Food Purchasing, Activities for Children
Ecotrust	Non-Profit 5013c	Policy, Local Food Purchasing, FoodHub, Farm-to-Preschool
Growing Gardens	Non-Profit 5013c	Sustainable School and Community Gardens
Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)	Government	Sustainable Agriculture, Local Farming, Food Safety
Oregon Department of Education (ODE)	Government	Education Curriculum, School Gardens
Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Services	Non-Profit 5013c	Sustainable Gardens, Food Preparation, Food Safety, Nutrition Education
Rogue Valley Farm to School	Non-Profit 5013c	Garden Programs, Local Agriculture, Environment
Upstream Public Health	Non-Profit 5013c	Policy, Legislation, Health Impact Assessment
Willamette Farm & Food Coalition	Non-Profit 5013c	Food Education and Activities: Farm Field Trips, Cooking, Garden Based Learning, Family Engagement Activities.

*Corvallis Environmental Center (CEC)* is a 501c3 non-profit organization based in Corvallis Oregon that was founded in 1994 as a grassroots effort to take action on a number of environmental issues. Their mission is to educate, engage, and inspire people to get involved in creating a healthy, and sustainable community. The CEC fills an important niche in their community—educating and assisting people in the areas of local food security, environmental education, and energy conservation. Every year they directly reach more than 10,000 people through the activities of core program areas. CEC works directly with Corvallis School District’s Food and Nutrition Services on district-wide procurement of local food to be used for school food meals and snacks. Their role in FTS is to make connections between the food system and the school system through three main FTS projects: tasting tables, local procurement, and activities for children. This organization plans and implements hands-on activities for children,

both in the classroom and in the community. These activities also include participation in school garden efforts. Some of the specific programs they offer for children are monthly tasting tables, after-school cooking clubs, summer food camps, and farm field trips. (Corvallis Environmental Center, 2015).

*Ecotrust* is a 501c3 non-profit organization based in downtown Portland that was founded in 1991. *Ecotrust* is a hybrid organization with more than two-dozen for-profit and nonprofit partnerships within their organizational network, these partnering organizations work on a variety of levels including national, state, and local. *Ecotrust* provides national, regional, state, and local support and a variety of services that support their guiding principal, which describes conservation and economic development throughout America. *Ecotrust* has acted as the lead agency for the 8-state western region of the National Farm to School Network since 2007, and supports programs in Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington. *Ecotrust* is a founding member of the OFSSGN as well as its Policy Workgroup, helping to support statewide farm to school programming and advocate for legislation to support Oregon foods in Oregon school meals, strengthen the agricultural economy, build community, and create new jobs in Oregon. *Ecotrust* works with schools, childcare centers, hospitals, and colleges to increase procurement of local foods. One of the key tools they use is FoodHub, which is an online directory and marketplace for buyers and sellers of regional food. This tool is used to connect small and middle-sized farms with schools and school districts to help aid in building relationships with local farms for schools to purchase local food. *Ecotrust* co-leads the National Farm to School Network's efforts to coordinate a national Farm-to-Preschool (FTP) initiative, leading a statewide Farm to Preschool Coalition in Oregon, and exploring ways to connect low-income and minority producers and consumers in the food system (*Ecotrust*, 2015).

*Growing Gardens* is a 5013c non-profit organization that was originally inspired by the legacy of Dan Barker's Home Gardening Project that built over 1,400 Home Gardens in Portland between 1983 and 1996. When Dan transitioned from building gardens to building a foundation supporting the start-up of programs across the country, a new and separate organization was incorporated in 1996 as the Portland Home Garden Project. Building home gardens and responding to local demand for school gardens and other organizations creating garden-based education programs, so in 1998 they changed their name to Growing Gardens to reflect the breadth of mission. This organization's main focus is to organize, build, and sustain community gardens throughout the state of Oregon. Growing Gardens strategically built locations in several parts of the state and explain this is to ensure their efforts to be wide spread. They build gardens in neighborhoods and schools, with a focus on low-income communities, with a purported goal of reaching children and families who are at a higher risk of food insecurity. This organization teaches classes and workshops for example, Learn and Grow Workshops, which are provided for all members in the community to participate in and learn about building, and sustaining personal or community gardens. Growing Gardens aims to create school and community gardens that are just and sustainably grown, as well as maintained such that all people and communities have access to fresh and local food that is affordable. (Growing Gardens, 2015).

*Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)* is a state governmental agency that focuses on ensuring food safety for all people in Oregon. In 1931 the Oregon Legislature consolidated 13 boards, bureaus, and commissions to create the Oregon Department of Agriculture. They also work to protect natural resources of Oregon, and promote expanding market opportunities for Oregon farmers and agricultural products. ODA's participation in FTS program efforts is to support and regulate sustainable agricultural processes for farmers and consumers. They also

have a primary role in regulating food safety and conservation efforts in general as well as for FTS programs (ODA, 2015).

*Oregon Department of Education (ODE)* is state governmental agency originally founded in 1859 that strives to foster excellence for every learner through innovation, collaboration, leadership, and service to our education partners. The State of Oregon's public education system consists of public school districts and education service districts with their own respective governing bodies. The Oregon Legislature created the Oregon State Board of Education to set the educational policies and standards of Oregon's state schools and community colleges. In addition they serve as a central organizer for all education related activities that are implemented within Oregon public schools. ODE supports food service providers, farmers, educators, as well as parents and community members by incorporating purchasing of local food for school meals, farm field trips for students, and other community educational programming. Specifically, ODE supports FTS by regulating FTS curriculum with programs like Oregon Harvest for Schools and the FTS newsletter, which provides educational materials for children in school and families at home. They also support school garden efforts, and (ODE, 2015).

*Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Services* was founded in 1911 and is an extension program of OSU main campus based out of Corvallis Oregon, although there are office locations in all 36 counties in Oregon. OSU Extension staff work with businesses, people, growers, foresters, youth, and community leaders. They see first-hand what's working, and what's not working, in Oregon communities. Extension educators consult with scientists at Oregon State University, where they "focus their research on the real issues important to real people," which results research that helps to guide this program to circle back to the community through extension programs. This organization supports FTS programs in a variety of ways:

OSU Extension Services compile data into the School Wellness and Nutrition Survey, which provides schools with feedback about program implementation; they provide assistance and support for Oregon small and local farms; promote sustainable gardening using research-based techniques; deliver the latest research on preparing food safely and food preservation; assist in supporting Oregon's Nutrition Education program; and develop programs such as 4-H and Family and Community Health in order to connect youth to educational programs. While their services are wide spread, their primary role in FTS is to support in building and sustaining school gardens. School gardening instruction is cultivated by the Planting Seeds of Change project – a consortium of OSU Extension Master Gardeners and 4-H, the school district's principals, horticulture and nutrition staffs, Oregon Department of Agriculture, FTS program, as well as local businesses and organizations (Oregon State University Extension Services, 2015).

*Rogue Valley Farm to School* is a 5013c non-profit organization that is based out of Ashland Oregon. This organization aims to educate children about the food system through hands-on farm and garden programs, as well as increasing access to local foods in school meals. They work to inspire an appreciation of local agriculture that improves the economy and environment of our community and the health of its members. They also support local agriculture by providing farm education, assisting in supporting relationships between schools and farms to increase local food purchasing for school meals, and to increase the amount of fresh and healthy food that is available for school meals. Rogue Valley Farm to School has arrangements with three local farms that serve as educational farm sties. Each site is a working farm that opens its gates for local students to experience hands on farm education. Farm sites are located in several southern Oregon cities, which allow easy access for school districts in each region. Each farm site has outdoor kitchen facilities to help educate students about food related

skills like preparing and cooking food. Rogue Valley FTS also assists in maintaining school gardens, farm-to-cafeteria programs, and farm field trips, and helps to educate children about the food system through hands-on farm and garden programs, and by increasing local foods in school meals. They work to inspire an appreciation of local agriculture in order to improve the economy and environment of the community and the health of its members (Rogue Valley Farm to School, 2015).

*Upstream Public Health* is a 5013c non-profit organization based in Portland Oregon. This organization was founded in 2002 and claims to promote the social, economic, political, and community conditions that improve the health and well being of all Oregonians. They work to create and change public health policy and legislation for the betterment of Oregon residents. Their objective is to address the most prevalent and pressing health issues, and work toward improving all people's quality of health in the State of Oregon. Through creating change in policy and legislation within the state infrastructure they have the opportunity to impact individual and community health both for the individual, as well as on a larger systemic level. On the federal front, Upstream partners with the Health Impact Project and The Kids' Safe and Healthy Foods Project to conduct a HIA examining how stronger nutritional standards on snacks and drinks sold in schools might affect student health and school finances. Upstream Public Health's main roles in FTS efforts are as a co-lead to OFSSGN's Policy Workgroup to ensure more Oregon produced and processed foods are available in schools, and to support FTS policy and legislation that aims to increase access to healthy food for Oregon children and communities (Upstream Public Health, 2015).

*Willamette Farm & Food Coalition* is 5013c non-profit organization that is based out of Eugene Oregon and provides services to Lane County school districts. This organization began

in 2007 and aims to provide food education, and increase the amount of local food that is used in meals served in schools. They work with children in school, and through the new Family Outreach Program, which claims to increase low-income families exposure and access to fresh, locally grown foods by offering community activities and supplemental food resources and services. Implementation of community outreach programs engages families and the broader community with information and activities regarding healthy food, and the nutritional and physiological benefits it provides. Their main roles in FTS are providing food education activities such as farm field trips for children and families, teaching cooking preparation methods, garden based learning, and through offering family engagement activities (Willamette Farm and Food Coalition, 2015).

## **2.9. Research Questions**

OFSSGN's multistakeholder model has the possibility to create change within school food programs by addressing inefficiencies within the dominant school food system, especially because program mission, values, and goals claim to be facilitating a school food system that is more equitable and just. Since the inception of FTS programs they appear to have acquired a positive reputation by students, school staff, parents, caregivers, and community members alike. While there holds great opportunity for a program like this to help create change that supports a more just food system, it is worth critically examining whether or not their goals are actually being addressed. Therefore, my research explores two main questions. The first question asks, in what ways does the OFSSGN program address (or claim to address) food justice for Oregon residents? My second research question asks, in what ways are the specific programs and services provided by OFSSGN organizations addressing (or failing to address) food justice? These two questions are important because they provide a contextual analysis of OFSSGN's

goals and services, and these questions provide the framework for identifying the strengths and weaknesses in OFSSGN's ability to address food justice for Oregon.



## **Chapter 3: Methods and Methodologies**

### **3.1. Professional Experience**

I conduct this research of food justice and school food programs with a critical perspective, both from personal experience working as a social worker and a researcher. During my time as a mental health social worker I observed first hand the intersections of poor health that results from poverty, poor nutrition, and insufficient food access and education. Working in direct service and crisis intervention stabilization services for children with severe mental health issues for six years I observed many people's poor health and many of the real life consequences of a lack of access to healthy food. Interactions with these families in their homes imprinted both visually and emotionally on my view and understanding of the need for food justice. Knowing what these injustices look like up close and the multitude of reasons for why they exist, helps me as a researcher to understand the depth of social injustices within low-income communities, while also giving me insight toward possible solutions. As a part of my duties I preformed home visits to meet with parents, coupled with school visits to work with the children while they were in school. These experiences together provided me insight as to the opportunity school food programs present to help promote food justice. Because of my professional experience working with communities and families I am passionate about correcting and alleviating social injustices which led me to research possible solutions toward improving community food justice. I use this insight as a catalyst to investigate and challenge the extent to which school food programs are actually aiding in the social movement to address food insecurity levels in Oregon.

My hypothesis is that FTS program efforts are creating positive change toward a more just food system, but I remain critical about FTS programs because despite FTS program initiatives, levels of food insecurity remain above the national average in Oregon. This indicates that these efforts are not solving this social problem, and that there is a need to improve FTS

efforts in order to better address food insecurity and help to create food justice for future generations. Therefore, I am examining whether or not OFSSGN is addressing food justice through program implementation.

### **3.2. Epistemology**

My epistemological orientation as a social constructionist will allow my research to explain what people say about food justice and the relationship between people and food in the context of school food programs. A social constructionist perspective assumes that knowledge, understanding, significance, and meanings are not developed solely within the individual but rather these are components that are developed and understood in coordination with feedback from social groups, or scholars from knowledge communities. The social constructionist position does not mean people do not have independent ideas. Instead it is through a lens of social context that people's knowledge and ideas are ultimately given meaning. This orientation influences the way I interpret the topic of food justice, in that it provides a foundation to explain food justice through a collective understanding, rather than through one individual experience. This will support my ability as a researcher to explain food justice more adequately, holistically, and accurately from the perspective of the communal experience. This orientation is appropriate for my research because the issue of social inequities that contribute to food injustice can only be understood through examining the overall social construct to better understand the impact this social problem has on the individual and the community as a whole. I will look to FTS programs in Portland, Oregon, as a specific example of a school food program that aims to address food justice. My decision for using Oregon FTS programs is because of my experience working inside schools and witnessing FTS program efforts. I intend to examine through this research how FTS programs promote or fall short of promoting food justice.

### 3.3. Methods

As explained in Chapter 2, many scholars have made claims that school food programs have the ability to positively impact food insecurity through creating a more just school food system. This research will look specifically at Oregon FTS programs, with research questions framed as: to what extent do Oregon FTS programs address food justice? And through which specific services provided are they able, or not to address this?

I begin by collecting data on Oregon FTS programs, and more specifically that of program implementation techniques. I gathered this data through examining government and non-profit websites and exploring program goals and intentions. While I use some quantitative data from government, state, and local websites in the form of percentages and averages, this research is qualitative in nature. This research is majorly qualitative because it examines what Oregon FTS programs aim to do, analyzes assessments for whether or not these programs are meeting their goals, and examines if the programs are contributing to food justice within Oregon school food systems.

After examining the nine organizations websites that make up the partnerships of OFSSGN, as well as available literature, I identified that there are six collective services provided by these organizations in the context of FTS program implementation. The six main services facilitated through these partnering organizations include: healthy food initiatives, garden programs, food education curriculum, food policy, local purchasing, and family engagement. After identifying the services provided by OFSSGN I then utilized three assessment tools that I reference in order to determine whether or not OFSSGN is meeting its' goals.

The reference tools that are used throughout this research are: the 2007 Survey of School Food Service Providers in Oregon, the 2011 Health Impact Assessment (HIA), and the 2013 National Farm to School Census. I analyzed these assessment tools for the impact of specific

program implementation and examine whether or not these programs are addressing food justice for Oregonians. I looked specifically at what types of programs are being offered through OGSSGN partnerships, and whether or not these programs identify food justice tenants in their goals or program criteria. Then I assess and contrast these sets of data to determine whether program goals and food justice tenants are being executed in program implementation.

Throughout the next chapter I further examine each of the six services provided by OFSSGN: healthy food initiatives, garden programs, food education and curriculum, food policy, local food purchasing, and family engagement. I then compare each of these services to the five food justice tenants from Chapter 2, which are: food that is healthy, culturally appropriate, locally, justly, and sustainably grown. In order to assess whether or not food justice is being addressed by OFSSGN, I start by examining the six services provided by OFSSGN, then compare these services to the five food justice tenants. Lastly, I examined to the assessment tools for whether or not the services provided are actually addressing food justice.

## **Chapter 4: Results, Analysis, & Contribution**

The identified research problem is that the dominate food system in place throughout the United States is not equitable for all people, and continually increases food insecurity especially for those within already marginalized communities within Oregon. While there are many social, political, and economic reasons that explain the vast inequities, the purpose of this research is to investigate whether or not Oregon FTS programs, are addressing food justice. In order to assess whether or not food justice tenants are being addressed I examine FTS programs and implementation methods through the food justice framework explained in Chapter 2. These main questions are important to this research in order to critically examine the approaches used by Oregon FTS programs, as well as to gain further understanding and insight to how this type of a school food program is or is not addressing food insecurity by creating a school food system that creates food justice for Oregon schools and communities.

### **4.1. Analysis**

First I read each OFSSGN website and cataloged program goals and services provided. This allowed for me to easily identify the main services provided by these organizations. After identifying what each organization aims to accomplish through their program implementation, I was able to analyze OFSSGN services, program goals, and intended outcomes according to five food justice tenets. Last, I compared services provided and food justice tenants with three specific assessment tools used by Oregon FTS. Examining each of these steps permitted me to determine to what extent the OFSSGN is addressing their goals toward food justice. Throughout the next sub-sections I further explain the services provided by the partnering organizations that make up OFSSGN, using the food justice framework.

#### 4.1.1. Healthy Food Initiatives

Providing and improving healthy meals for children at school is one program goal set by OFSSGN. According to Sullivan et al. (2013), OFSSGN goals aims to “increase participation in the school meal program to improve access to nutritious meals; increase consumption of vegetables and fruits to improve nutrition and health outcomes” (p.1). Oregon schools work with OFSSGN and local farms in order to increase the amount of healthy food being served during mealtime for the betterment of children’s health and wellbeing. Together Corvallis Environmental Center, Ecotrust, Rogue Valley Farm to School, Upstream Public Health, and Willamette Farm & Food Coalition work with and support schools throughout Oregon in providing healthy food for schools to use in meal planning and preparation. Providing healthy food for children during mealtime claims to addresses food justice in several ways. According to Ratcliff (2007) “farm-to-school programs have been shown to increase children’s consumption of produce thereby improving childhood nutrition” (p. 1).

In 2007, Upstream Public Health introduced and helped win the passage of Oregon school nutrition standards that eliminated junk food served in and purchased from machines at Oregon schools. Furthermore, in 2008 and 2009, they also led the effort to pass menu calorie labeling at county and state levels (Upstream Public Health, 2015). Additionally, according to Ratcliff from the Results from the 2007 Survey of School Food Service Providers in Oregon:

Most schools reported offering salad bars as part of their meal service (74.3%) and of these, almost all reported that salad bars are being used by their students (97.2%). The average number of vegetables served in salad bars was 4.3 fresh, .8 canned and .4 frozen. The average number of fruits offered was 2 fresh, 1.5 canned and .1 frozen. In addition, school salad bars offered an average of 1.4 servings of whole grains and 1 serving of meat or a meat alternative. (p. 3)

However contrary information is presented in the HIA (2011), which:

Predicts that healthy food policy will have a smaller impact on schools that only expand their food offerings to include more fruits and vegetables in the current salad bar, or

begin using salad bars, instead of incorporating Oregon products in all meal items. Oregon school districts already offer meals that aim to meet USDA guidelines, and many include fresh salad bars. Only two studies indicated nutritional gains for children participating in farm to school and school garden programs; gains included exceeding nutrient standards in protein, calcium and vitamin C, as well as falling below the standard for total fat content. (p. 31-32)

The previous information indicates that healthy food initiatives address increasing the amount of healthy food in schools both in program goals, as well as assessment tools.

Making healthy food available at school five days a week aims to increase children's access to healthy food often to foods they may not otherwise have access too.

While many schools and organizations claim to recognize the importance of providing food that is culturally appropriate and meets food needs based on cultural background of students at their schools. While some scholars reference this indicator as important, not only does OFSSGN not address this as a program goal, in addition, the only place where any language close to this is referenced is in the HIA (2011), Meyer (1998) wrote that "the variables most correlated with student satisfaction of school meal programs included the following: variety, flavor and attractiveness of food; food options that met students' cultural preferences; and a courteous nutrition service staff" (HIA, 2011, p. 40). In summary, the importance of culturally appropriate food is not mentioned in OFSSGN program goals, and sparsely mentioned in assessment tools.

Furthermore, an explicit program goal of OFSSGN is to increase the purchasing of local food within the FTS model. Sullivan et al. (2013) described in program goals the importance to "support economic development by increasing market opportunities for farmers, ranchers, fishers, local food processors, local food distributors, and food manufacturers" (p.1). Local food purchasing is a vital aspect to addressing food justice because the purchasing of local food benefits children's health and wellbeing as well as profits farms and the community as a whole. New Economics Foundation researcher David Boyle (2009) explained that, at the most basic

level, when you buy local more money stays in the community” (p.1). According to Results from the 2007 Survey of School Food Service Providers in Oregon:

The vendors that food service providers purchase from include Sysco (57.3%) and Food Services of America (30.1%), Duck Produce Delivery (16.1%), Franz Bakery (15.4%), McDonald’s Wholesale (12.6%), Spring Valley Dairy (10.5%), Umpqua Dairy (10.5%), USDA Commodities (9.1%), Costco (8.4%), Alpenrose (5.6%) and United Grocers (5.6%). (Ratcliff, 2007, p. 2)

The importance of this quotation is that of the eleven vendors listed above that provide both food production and distribution, all except 3 are local Oregon companies. This indicates that much of the foods provided to schools under FTS program implementation are local companies, and also provides the information that shows that healthy food initiatives demonstrate importance around local food purchasing both in program goals, as well as in assessment tools.

Oregon FTS programs foster relationships with local farmers’ and aim to increase the amount of food from these farms. One of OFSSGN’s program goals is “to promote environmental stewardship” (Sullivan et al., 2013, p.1). While promoting “environmental stewardship” briefly addresses the idea of growing and maintaining sustainable food farms, this could be something that OFSSGN could create an augmented plan for better addressing this topic. While increasing purchasing of food from local farms that operate with sustainable practices can have the ability to address food justice tenants, this is not a concept that is fully addressed. At the same time, according to the HIA, in Oregon “between 2006 and 2008, the total land in organic production increased 86.7 percent from 69,988 to 130,644 acres, responding to this demand” (2011, p. 47). This information illustrates that sustainability is somewhat being addressed in program goals, and partially being addressed in the assessment tools.

Lastly, while healthy food initiatives may have the potential to promote food that is justly grown, unfortunately this concept is not mentioned in OFSSGN program goals, or in the



assessment documents being used to assess for this research. This shows that healthy food initiatives within Oregon FTS are not addressing justly grown food in program goals or assessment tools.

#### **4.1.2. Garden Programs**

In the United States school garden programs date back to the early 1900s. According to Hosty (2012), “the federal government established the Bureau of Education’s Office of School and Home Gardening, which promoted school gardens and provided how-to pamphlets and course guidelines” (p. 4). School gardens are outdoor classroom that provide hands-on opportunities for students to experience growing, cultivating and harvesting their own food. Many Oregon schools incorporate food grown in school gardens in order to provide the school with healthy food as ingredients for school meals. According to ODE there are approximately 1,200 schools in Oregon, and currently there are 582 school gardens in schools throughout the state (ODE, 2015). Together, Corvallis Environmental Center, Growing Gardens, Rogue Valley Farm to School and ODE work with schools to help build and sustain school gardens as a teaching and educational tool for a variety of classes and subjects, as well aims to increase local on-site produce for school meals.

Within OFSSGN’s program goals, there is a section on school gardens, which states that they aim to “increase the percentage of schools in Oregon that have edible gardens that are contribute some produce to their school’s meal program” (Sullivan et al., 2013, p. 4). According the National FTS Census (2013), edible school gardens are established in “41% of Oregon schools, and in addition to buying local products and building school gardens, school districts in Oregon are promoting locally produced foods at school in general (44%), holding taste tests/demos of locally produced foods (37%), and conducting student field trips to farms (36%)” (“Oregon is Bring the Farm to School,” 2013, p. 6). Assisting schools to build the infrastructure

to establish, grow, and sustain school gardens aims to address food justice tenants in several ways. The gardens built help “to engage youth in learning about natural resources, healthy living, and nutrition” (Hosty, 2013, p. 19). In addition, school gardens also provide an opportunity to assist the schools with fresh healthy food that can be used as ingredients in healthy school meals if enough food is grown to contribute. The HIA (2011) reports that HB 28000 will have a strong positive impact on food and garden-based education. The policy is written to support grant funding for 150 gardens every two years. This policy will likely increase the amount of food, nutrition and agriculture programming in K-12 education for schools with gardens and help establish gardens in schools without them (p. 39). Given this information school gardens help facilitate increasing the amount of healthy food served to schoolchildren, which is both addressed in program goals, as well as within the assessment tools.

Additionally, gardens are a great opportunity to grow specific foods that aim to meet the cultural food needs of students of diverse backgrounds. According to Lovell (2010), urban agriculture can provide increased levels of “access to rare ethnic foods that are typically not available in existing markets” (p. 2503). However, while there are many goals associated with garden programs, nowhere in this documentation describes providing or increasing food that is culturally appropriate. However, according to the HIA (2011) described that “House Bill 2800’s reimbursement and garden grant programs improve the quality and diversity of food offered during school meals. While the HIA minimally mentions foods that are diverse, this concept does not address in program goals, which indicates that garden programs only somewhat address culturally appropriate food.

Likewise, growing food in gardens on school grounds is about as local as food can be. Within OGSSGN program goals utilizing school gardens for local produce is mentioned in one

place and states that they aim to “increase the percentage of schools that incorporate school garden produce into cafeteria meals” (Sullivan et al., 2013, p. 3). Within the assessment tools, using school gardens to address local food procurement is not directly mentioned in parallel to each other. This indicates that while school gardens are being addressed in terms of local food procurement, although this concept is not addressed this same way in assessment tools.

Sustainability is at the forefront of school garden efforts in Oregon, and the supporting agencies see to it that school gardens are planted and sustained while upholding these values. Additionally, utilizing food grown in school gardens has the potential to promote sustainable growing practices and aims to invest in and supports sustainably grown food. However, within the OGSSGN program goals school gardens are not identified as addressing growing food sustainably. While there is some language about improving knowledge about the environment, nowhere does the word sustainable or sustainability exist in correspondence with building or maintaining school gardens. On the contrary, within the HIA (2011) reports that:

Several prominent statewide plans identify FTS and school gardens as viable school based environmental strategies to address hunger, food insecurity, childhood obesity, and to promote environmental literacy. Despite this support, current Oregon education standards do not require students to learn about food systems or production. (HIA, 2011, p. 37)

While Oregon FTS program goals do not address sustainability in terms of school gardens, similarly the language within the HIA does not directly use the word sustainable, this assessment document does make a connection between gardens and environmental literacy.

Similarly, in regards to the concept of justly grown food and school gardens there is no mention of this concept in OFSSGN program goals, and this type of language does not exist in any of the assessment tools either.

### **4.1.3. Food Education**

Food education is a highly discussed topic throughout Oregon FTS literature and established program goals. Education can take on many forms including in-class curriculum, farm field trips, and garden lessons, all of which are supported by OFSSGN and the improvement of educational activities. Educational curriculum and activities aim to teach students knowledge regarding nutrition and food preparation techniques. Some scholars have found that there is a need for motivational and instrumental or how-to knowledge in order to provide effective nutrition education (Sims, 1995, p. 287). These education methods teach kids about healthy food, and discuss the importance of consuming nutritious food in maintaining a healthy mind and body. OFSSGN advocates for field trips, and hands on learning experiences that can expose children to new food items, and information about them. Rogue Valley Farm to School describes that first hand exposure and information gives children a context they can understand to help guide and encourage healthy eating habits now and for the future. Together Corvallis Environmental Center, ODE, OSU Extensions, Rogue Valley Farm to School, and Willamette Farm & Food Coalition collaborate with the goal of creating and implementing educational activities that teach children about food both in the classroom, as well as in the community.

Food and health education claim to address food justice in numerous ways. OFSSGN goals state that there exists an “easily accessible compilation of Farm to School and School Garden curricula available. These materials are specific to Oregon, reviewed/approved by the OFSSGN, place-based, tied to academic standards, Oregon’s Environmental Literacy Plan, and include preschool through high school curricula” (Sullivan et al., 2013, p. 4). Through food based education activities teachers are able to educate students about healthy food choices, as well as offers them a platform to teach students about different cultures. According the HIA

(2011) “the grant program leading to an increase in educational activities, student learning, student gardening, food-based activities, positive learning behaviors and dietary preference changes” (HIA, 2011, p. 35). According to the data above utilizing food education to promote healthy eating is addressed both in program goals, as well as in the assessment tools.

Educating students about food and nutrition does provide an opportunity to explore and learn about foods from different cultures. However, while there currently exists several program goals regarding education curriculum and activities nowhere do these educational programs mention teaching about the culturally appropriateness of food. Similarly, within the assessment tools there also is no mention of educational programs addressing this either.

Additionally, food education aims to help students understand the benefits of buying and eating local food. According to program goals OFSSGN, explains that they aim to “increase the percentage of students who are receiving educational activities that are able to demonstrate knowledge of where their food comes from and how it is grown” (Sullivan et al., 2013, p. 4). At the same time, the assessment tools used do not directly connect food education with teaching about local food.

Teaching children about sustainability and educating them to grow food using sustainable practices is important and vital to maintaining the health and wellbeing of the environment and communities worldwide. Instilling the next generations of children with this knowledge aims to improve environmental conditions due to the growing concern regarding increasing levels of damage that over years people and businesses have inflicted upon land, water, air, and animals. There needs to be a greater urgency to teach children about this trauma inflicted on the environment, in order to establish inefficiencies and more importantly to find solutions that can be implemented to stop the environmental devastation. Food education and curriculum taught

through FTS programs have the ability to assist in these efforts. One of OFSSGN's stated goals is to "increase the percentage of students receiving educational activities who are able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and motivation to make responsible food choices, and how they impact their health, the environment and the community" (Sullivan et al., 2013, p. 4). While the word sustainability does not technically exist within this written goal, it appears to be hinted at by the language about "impacting the environment," although to satisfy addressing this food justice tenant, OFSSGN's goals do not clearly mention utilizing food education curriculum to teach sustainability. On the other hand, within the HIA (2011) there is a whole section called "environmental health," this section "examines the potential effect of HB 2800 on demand for food produced using sustainable production methods, as well as on greenhouse gas emissions...examines the potential impact of reimbursement funds and education grant activities on environmental health outcomes" (p. 44). While it is ambiguous if this HB itself will affect the demand for alternative agriculture methods. However, the HIA (2011) stated, the policy will give schools that want to purchase and teach about sustainable products the ability to do so (p. 46). The concept of using food education to address sustainable growing practices is hinted at, but not technically addressed in the program goals, however it is discussed in great detail within the assessment tool.

Lastly, the concept of justly grown food through the service of food education curriculum is also lacking. Nowhere in OFSSGN's program goals do they mention food that is justly grown. The language that exists refers to the environment, not in relation to the treatment of the ecosystem or the people who work on the farms. Similarly, justly grown food is also not mentioned in relation to food education within the assessment tools.

#### **4.1.4. Food Policy**

OFSSGN benefit greatly from partnerships with Upstream Public Health, and Ecotrust because these organizations work together toward creating progressive changes in food policy and legislation in order to establish improved food system infrastructure that supports FTS program efforts. Policy change efforts work towards creating and changing public health policies and legislation that support FTS program efforts on all levels. They fight for State and local policy and legislation in order to create a solid foundation for a successful FTS and school garden program such that as many children as possible have the opportunity to experience and learn from. The stronger and more appropriate the policies are which back the OFSSGN, the sturdier the program as a whole can be built on and maintained for children statewide. The HIA of 2011 concluded that:

Farm to School and School Garden proposed legislation contains two major provisions: a reimbursement program for school meals and a grants program for school gardens and agricultural education. The legislation would: (1) allocate \$19.6 million in state funds, equivalent to 15 cents per lunch and 7 cents per breakfast, to reimburse schools for purchasing Oregon food products, and (2) provide \$3 million in competitive education grants to support food, garden and agriculture activities, up to 150 school teaching gardens each fiscal year. The funding for the program would come from the Economic Development Fund, which is a portion of the Oregon Lottery Fund. (p. 2)

Policy and legislation play a vital role in everything including OFSSGN's work with FTS programing. Specific policies and legislation are needed in order to carry out FTS program implementation and positive growth. Policies and legislation play a huge role in terms of addressing food justice. Upstream Public Health plays a large role in facilitating necessary policy changes, which permit OFSSGN to continue to grown the FTS program in the State of Oregon and address food justice for all Oregon residents.

OFSSGN has 4 main goals that involve policy: first, that state funding is available for every school district for purchasing Oregon-grown and processes foods; second, funding for

OFSSGN programs and staff within ODA and ODE in order for them to provide support for FTS and school garden implementation; third, funding for HB2800 which includes funding for districts, ODE in terms of local procurement, linking cafeteria with classroom and garden activities, as well as to encourage community support; lastly, increased support to incorporate food from school gardens into meals served in schools (Sullivan et al., 2013, p. 5).

Policy and or changes in policy can have a direct affect on providing healthy food in schools. In 2007, Upstream Public Health “introduced and helped win passage of Oregon school nutrition standards that got the worst junk food out of Oregon schools. Then in 2008 and 2009, they led the effort to pass menu calorie labeling at the county and state levels” (“Healthy Schools”, 2015 page 2). In Addition “Ecotrust provided an additional 7 cent meal subsidy for two school districts to buy Oregon products to determine the effects that added money would have on school district purchasing” (HIA, 2011, p. 15). Through policy change Upstream Public Health and Ecotrust have supported new policies for increasing the amount of healthy food in schools. Based on this information food policy and increasing healthy food in schools is being addressed in OFSSGN program goals, as well as within the HIA of 2011.

While there is the possibility to address the importance of providing culturally appropriate in schools through policy changes, at this point there is no mention of this in OFSSGN program goals, and similarly there is also no mention of this language in any of the assessment tools.

Creating policy that supports local purchasing of food for schools is an important aspect of maintaining and creating progressive evolution of OFSSGN. Within the program goals regarding policies that address and support the local procurement of food, OFSSGN makes clear that it is important for state funding to be “available for every district for purchasing Oregon-



grown and processed food products that meet certain criteria. Funding is also available for food-based, agriculture-based, and garden-based educational activities, through HB2800 or equivalent. This funding is established as permanent/recurring in the state budget” (Sullivan et al., 2013, p.5). This program goal is based from HB2800, which is also discussed extensively throughout the 2011 HIA in order to maintain that the HB is maintaining as proposed. Utilizing policy to promote local food purchasing is addressed in OFSSGN program goals as well as throughout the assessment tool.

In regards to sustainably grown food and policy implementation there remains no language of this within program goals, however it is addressed within the assessment tools. The HIA (2011) explained that:

Ownership of farmland in Oregon is different than in the rest of the nation, as most farms are family-owned. In 2007, 85.1 percent of farms were owned by an individual or family, 5.8 percent were family-held corporations, 7.5 percent were partnerships, while less than 1 percent were non-family corporations. This ownership provides greater capacity for farmers to try production innovations. Oregon is unique in that producers are increasingly trying new methods that may reduce greenhouse gas emissions...in 2009, Oregon was ranked fifth in the nation for producing on-farm renewable energy, because between 200 and 499 farm operations are developing renewable energy including wind, solar and methane digestion. (p. 46)

While there remains no mention of policy addressing sustainable farming practices within OFSSGN program goals, this concept is discussed within the assessment tool. Lastly, utilizing policy to address justly grown food is not addressed in either program goals or in assessment tools.

#### **4.1.5. Local Food Purchasing**

Increasing the purchasing local food is a fundamental part of Oregon FTS programs. In total there are nine main goals that involve local food procurement as it relates to FTS program efforts, and increased local food purchasing has the ability to address food justice tenants.

Utilizing near by farms not only helps schools obtain fresh, healthy, and local food, but also

positively impacts whole communities. Buying local food not only benefits the farmers directly, but it also keeps money spent purchasing local food within the community that it was bought. In fact, a study by Oregon State University economist Bruce Sorte shows that for every Oregon job directly created by school districts purchasing local food, additional economic activity creates 1.67 more jobs. Kasandra Griffin of Upstream Public Health states, “Everybody wins with Farm to School, from farmers and ranchers to the folks working at the diners, farm supply stores, and supermarkets in rural Oregon” (Ecotrust, 2015). Together Corvallis Environmental Center, Ecotrust, Growing Gardens, ODA, Rogue Valley Farm to School, Upstream Public Health, and Willamette Farm & Food Coalition collaborate to promote, support, and implement innovative interventions that encourage the local procurement of food both for FTS programs and whole communities

Local food sourcing has the ability to positively impact students’ access to healthy food by increasing nutritious food from local farms. One of the goals established by OFSSGN is to “increase the percentage of the food budget of Oregon school districts that is spent on products grown or processed in Oregon” (Sullivan et al., 2013, p.3). According the 2007 Survey of School Food Service Providers in Oregon, “the most commonly purchased local products are milk (100%), apples (76.5%), beef (66.7%), eggs (66.7%), cucumbers (62.5%) and yogurt (60%)” (p. 3). All of these foods qualify as healthy per the definition used for this research. Increasing healthy food in schools through local food purchasing is addressed in both program goals, as well as assessment tools.

In addition, providing communities with a wider variety of foods provide an opportunity to support the food needs different students by purchasing food that is culturally appropriate

for their student body. However this is not addressed in program goals of local purchasing, and is also not addressed in assessment tools.

Local food purchasing aims to increase the amount of food that is grown, produced, and distributed within Oregon. OFSSGN describes a variety of goals that support school districts to be able to purchase Oregon products in several ways: the first option is to buy food directly from local farmers on an ongoing basis, the next selection is to purchase through a distributor, third they are able to go through a growers' cooperatives for local purchasing, and lastly they can utilize innovative procurement strategies not listed such as forward contracting. In addition to these purchasing methods for school districts, OFSSGN has taken this concept one step further and has a goal that will allow "farms in all regions of the state to have access to a distribution network to distribute their products directly to Oregon schools" (Sullivan et al., 2013, p.3).

According to the 2013 National Farm to School Census, during the 2011-12 school year the Oregon school food budget was \$39,667,177. Of the total food budget for the whole school year, \$9,505,911 was spent on healthy local food, that is a total of 24% of the budget returning back into Oregon economy ("United States Department of Agriculture: Oregon," 2013, p. 3). This data is consistently addressed in both program goals, and assessment tools.

Local food purchasing provides an opportunity to grow food that is sustainably grown. However, throughout the intended goals of OFSSGN there is no mention of sustainably grown food in relation to local food purchasing. Likewise the only mention of sustainably grown food through local food purchasing within the assessment tools was noted in regards to potential changes toward more sustainable farming because of the hopeful increase of income for farmers connected to local purchasing. According to the HIA (2011), "in four studies of Farm to School procurement that provided direct sales data, total annual sales resulting for farmers ranged from

\$8,000 to \$55,000, with programs varying considerably in size and number of operational sites. Sales were spread over 2 to 27 farmers, with estimated average annual sales per farmer ranging from \$845 to \$7,650. We expect to see the same range of annual sales in Oregon” (p. 41). With increased amounts of food purchased from near by farmers will provide farmers with the financial capital and consistent orders to fill for FTS program needs, and that of the community around them, they will have the ability to advance sustainable practices guided by the policies made, and the voice of the community for equity.

Lastly, while the concept of justly grown food is important at a variety of levels, and while local food purchasing has the prospect to address justly grown food through local food purchasing the data shows that this effort falls short. There remains no mention of justly grown food in relation to locally purchased food, and this concept is also not mentioned throughout the assessment tools as well.

#### **4.1.6. Family and Community Engagement**

Increasing families and community engagement with Oregon FTS program efforts is a growing area of concentration, and has been identified as a vital program component in addressing food insecurity for Oregon communities. Current research indicates a larger importance than previously thought about food culture within the home, and the affect that family of origin and the knowledge behind these culture at home in relation to the food choices that children make. According to the HIA (2011), in reference to family engagement with health food, reported that “farm to school and school garden programs help with relationship building among students, between farmers and school district personnel, among garden community participants and parents, between students and teachers, and between parents and their school aged children” (2011, p. 12).

It has become evident through this research that engaging families and community members in healthy food education and exposure to healthy food is a key aspect in positively impacting community food insecurity through creating a more just food system. Children are only required to attend school for a small portion of time each day, while the remainder of their time is spent in their homes and communities either alone, or with family and friends. According to Parish (2011), “if children have grown up eating processed foods that are high in fat and sugar and taste good to them, it is extremely challenging to brake them of these habits, especially if their parents are not supportive” (p. 420). This suggests that engagement and support from family members or caretakers is vital for both short and long term success of their children participating in a FTS program, learning about healthy food, and consistently choosing to make healthier food choices for themselves. Families must encourage their children to practice knowledge learned through FTS education curriculum. The information taught at school needs to be communicated to parents and caregivers not just for information sake, but more importantly to help support their children. Parents can help their children by getting involved and helping aid them to find innovative and practical ways to integrate new learned food knowledge, healthy eating habits, and food related skills in the home similar to what the children are practicing at school. Changing a person’s behavior or habits takes hard work, and family engagement is fundamental to their children’s success. Together Growing Gardens, OSU Extensions, and Willamette Farm & Food Coalition are working to bridge the learning and healthy food participation gap between school and home.

Increasing and encouraging parent and family engagement to support their children in newly learned information and practice with healthy food knowledge, food preparation, and eating habits can addresses food justice tenants in several ways. With family support with FTS

program information, healthy food education can benefit the whole family because they can take what is learned and increase healthy food consumption for the whole family, as well as the community. While there are a few individual organizations within OFSSGN that provide minimal amounts of opportunities for family engagement in FTS programs, for example OSU Extensions Services offers farm field trips and monthly tasting tables that family is encouraged to join. However, despite some individual organization programs that promote family engagement, OFSSGN goals do not identify this. That being said, the HIA (2011) conveyed “observers note that farm trips, if included in Farm to School programs, provide parents and caregivers with an opportunity to share enjoyable experiences with their children that center around healthy food” (p. 40). This indicates that family engagement in terms of increasing healthy food consumption is not mentioned in program goals, and minimally mentioned in assessment tools.

Additionally, learning with family support about the family’s culture can teach children about their heritage and what is culturally appropriate food from their family of origin. Not only does this teach children about their own family food culture, it also can impact children to be more understanding about different food cultures, which could have an impact on tolerance and understanding of other cultures food. While there is potential increased family to promote a greater understanding of culturally appropriate food this notion is not included in OFSSGN program goals, and additionally is not recognized in assessment tools either.

Engaging families in education about the benefits of and how to purchase local food has the potential to be a positive experience, and widen the scope of population that is being taught these skills. While there are many possibilities for this engagement idea, OFSSGN does not incorporate family engagement with purchasing local food in program goals. On the contrary, the

HIA (2011), explained that family and community engagement can also be supported through policy, and “reported that after a year of participation in the Farm to School program, 97 percent of parents self-reported via a survey that they believe buying locally grown foods is important or somewhat important” (HIA, 2011, p. 41).

Family engagement in terms of teaching knowledge and skills regarding sustainably growing food could be beneficial to empower them with tools to create a healthier life for the whole family, and the community that supports them. However, OFSSGN program goals do not identify this connection or language, and the assessment tools also do not address this concept.

Finally, teaching awareness about justly grown food to families and community members has potential in aiding to address food justice and create a more equitable food system.

Conversely, encouraging family engagement to participate and learn about food that is justly grown and the environmental importance of this for future generations is not addressed in OFSSGN program goals, and similarly is not addressed in assessment tools.

**Table 3. Do FTS Services Address Food Justice Criteria?**

	Healthy Food	Culturally Appropriate Food	Local Food	Sustainably Grown Food	Justly Grown Food
Healthy Food Initiatives	YES	SOMEWHAT	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
Garden Programs	YES	SOMEWHAT	SOMEWHAT	SOMEWHAT	NO
Food Education Curriculum	YES	NO	SOMEWHAT	SOMEWHAT	NO
Food Policy	YES	NO	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
Local Purchasing	YES	SOMEWHAT	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
Family Engagement	<u>SOMEWHAT</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO</u>

After completing this analysis it is clear that OFSSGN is addressing some of the tenants of food justice, while not addressing others. The table above provides a visual interpretation of

the data in order to illustrate which services provided by OFSSGN are or are not addressing food justice tenants. In order to further understand this table: along the left side are the six services provided by OFSSGN, across the top are the five food justice tenants. A “yes” indicates that the tenant is addressed in both OFSSGN program goals, and also in one or more of the assessment tools; “somewhat” indicates that the tenant is addressed in either program goals or assessment tools; and “no” indicates that the tenant is not addressed in either program goals or assessment tools. In summary, this analysis shows that most of OFSSGN services are supporting the food justice tenet of providing healthy food. OFSSGN services are somewhat supporting the food justice tenet of local food. Furthermore, OFSSGN services are not really supporting the food justice tenets of culturally appropriate food and sustainably grown food. Lastly, OFSSGN services are, across the board, failing to support the food justice tenet of justly grown food.

#### **4.2. Discussion and Summary**

Through the combined efforts and collaborative stakeholder model, OFSSGN creates and maintains Oregon FTS programs through a multi tiered approach. Each organization has an exclusive, and yet sometimes overlapping role and together facilitates OFSSGN program implementation statewide. This approach supports each agency to be able to focus their efforts toward separate important portions, which together makes up the whole. In addition to the allocation of services, OFSSGN has strategically put into place a multifaceted approach that encourages teamwork, and support between agencies to carry out program goals. One of OFSSGN’s main goals for FTS and School Gardens in Oregon is to “promote food justice by supporting healthy and equitable community food systems” (Sullivan et al., 2013, p. 1). OFSSGN addresses levels of food insecurity by way of the combined efforts of the network, and the six main services they provide; healthy school food, garden programs, food education, food



policy, local food procurement, and family and community engagement. Each of these services works together, and intertwined to support and balance efforts to create a more equitable and just food system.

While it is clear from the data gathered for this research that OFSSGN is addressing some of the food justice tenets, while at the same time lacking to or not addressing others. Some of the limitations that I found during this research process in terms of Oregon FTS programs and their collaborative approach to address food justice are in regards to the culturally appropriateness of food, and sustainably, and justly grown food. What was found is that while each of these three concepts are mentioned by one or several of the individual organizations, however they are not only mentioned less than access to healthy food, and local procurement of food, but also either disregarded completely or only partially addressed in program goals and within assessment tools. OFSSGN does mention these concepts, or language that is similar to these concepts, however in terms of program implementation it is unclear how they plan to address cultural appropriateness of food for children who identify with different food cultures. In addition it is also vague how OFSSGN address food that is grown both sustainably and justly because these terms are mentioned less or not at all, these concepts are important not only for the purposes of this research, but to address fair and equal food growing and production practices as well as farm worker conditions and rights. Lastly, while a few specific organizations do discuss family engagement activities, the research shows that this concept is not being fully addressed through services provided by OFSSGN as a whole. I recommend that these lacking food justice tenants and the concept of increased family engagement be researched in more detail, and that in order for OFSSGN to better address food justice that they implement these tenants both in program goals, as well as in assessment tools.

That being said, Oregon FTS programs are providing a variety of positive experiences and education for students through specific program implementation. OFSSGN works toward increasing children's access to healthy food while in school by a variety of methods. The results of 2007 survey indicate that a majority of Oregon schools are serving healthy food to students. Survey data indicates that approximately 74% of Oregon schools are providing healthy food at mealtime. Not only is there an increased amount of healthy food provided to children through a reimbursement program given when schools utilize food from local farms for school meals. In addition, they rely on Upstream Public Health to and Ecotrust to promote and fight for necessary changes to alter policy and legislation that supports healthy food in schools. Similarly, school gardens assist teachers in educational activities, and in some cases can also help contribute fresh, healthy, and local food to the cafeteria for meal planning. Lastly, through food education in school, and some limited family engagement in the community these services provide the knowledge and communicate the importance of healthy food for the betterment of the community as a whole. This type of education instills knowledge and teaches related skills to children and families and encourages the support of healthy food habits in the home. While family engagement is one of the food justice tenants that OFSSGN is lacking to address, this idea has potential for increasing healthy food in the home as well as in school.

Furthermore, OFSSGN minimally addresses cultural appropriateness of food in program goals; Additionally, through garden programs and activities children are taught about a variety of foods that may or may not be familiar, however can expose and teach children about foods from a culture that is not their own. On the other hand while culturally appropriateness of food is mentioned by many of these agencies, OFSSGN does state this as one of their goals, and it is not

discussed as often or as concretely as other food justice goals so far as specific ways to increase awareness or to establish a precise plan of action to address this aspect of food justice.

Local food purchasing is addressed in many different ways by most all of the agencies that make up OFSSGN. The main ways that this is addressed is through purchasing healthy food from local farms as dictated through each FTS program. This not only benefits the children at the schools in that the food is fresh, and healthy to help nourish their health and wellbeing. The other important part of local procurement is the effect that it has for the farmers, as well as the community as a whole. Lastly I would like to mention the local procurement aspect to garden programs at schools. Through teaching children to garden can addresses the importance of eating local food, and provide the knowledge and some tools to encourage this behavior for their future food habits.

Additionally, while OFSSGN minimally addresses sustainably and just grown foods in program goals or assessment tools, many of the partnering organizations do address the significance and practice of supporting, farms that utilize these environmentally sustainable business practices. Two of OFSSGN's goals are to "improve knowledge and attitudes about agriculture, food, nutrition, and the environment, and to promote environmental stewardship" (Sullivan et. al., 2013). Both of these goals note concepts that are similar to food that is justly and sustainably gown. Some levels of action are being taken to promote this concept. Oregon Department of Agriculture strongly supports purchasing food from local farms. This helps to increases sustainability in that it decreases the resources necessary to transport food from the farm to the school. Also, the more relationships between local farmers and schools that are established, the more sustainable the FTS connection becomes which only promotes the program to continue to be a viable resource. On the other hand, the concept of "justly grown food" is not

mentioned as much as the concept of “sustainability.” It seems to be implied quite often, although there is less mention of the ways that food being justly grown can be different from food that is sustainably grown.

Lastly, this research demonstrates some ways OFSSGN can offer possible solutions for other school districts to address food injustice and create positive changes for school food systems anywhere. The programs and initiatives implemented by OFSSGN provide Oregon several opportunities to excel and succeed in addressing food insecurity for children and families statewide. If Oregon FTS can implement programs that are moving forward and gaining momentum they will be better able to work toward addressing food justice, this research possibly suggests that the multistakeholder program model used by OFSSGN could potentially be a model used elsewhere in the future to help address food justice in other locations. Every effort that assists in creating sustainable change within the food system is a vital and integral part to the food justice movement as a whole, each small change that is implemented with success provides momentum for the movement in creating change now and into the future.

#### **4.3. Professional Contribution**

Based on what I discovered about whether or not food justice is being addressed through Oregon FTS programs there are several areas including promoting a program that better addresses cultural appropriateness of food, and food that is justly and sustainably grown. While each of these areas could benefit from an augmented plan, I would like to focus my contribution toward the third concept that is not completely being addressed by OFSSGN, which is to family and community engagement. Increasing family and community engagement within Oregon FTS program implementation, which will help to better address high levels of food insecurity for Oregon residents, especially those within already marginalized communities. This is important

because not only can family engagement help to create a better FTS program, it will also help to expand the scope of FTS program information and skills to the larger community. As explained in previous sections I would like to first recommend the need for more research on family and community engagement within FTS programs as it relates to addressing food insecurity, and creating a more just food system that incorporates food justice. I think this factor is vital to addressing community food justice, rather than just food justice for the children while they are in school. Family culture has such a large impact on what children learn, and how they chose to live their lives as adults. I would like to conduct additional research about family and community engagement and the importance of this in addressing of food justice.

For my contribution to this research, I plan to create a new innovative curriculum tool for elementary aged children to use in class, and then also to take home and do with their families. This tool will integrate a holistic approach to food education, and will incorporate fun, integrative, hands-on activities and curriculum from class time. That way parents can be exposed to what children are learning in the classroom, and children will have extra time to practice at home the lessons learned in class. A variety of educational tools and activities are important in order to increase participation for children and adults. The goal of this curriculum tool is to increase participation with healthy food through knowledge and action, and encourage continued participation that can be carried on throughout the child's life in order to create a healthy and successful life for current students, as well as a solid plan to move into the future with new generations of children.

This contribution will be most effectively applied in elementary schools, especially within communities who are exposed to limited access to healthy food. I would like to see this tool be used to help bridge the gap between food and people, but most importantly to help aid

low-income families with typically less opportunities. Teaching about healthy food, and providing families with tools and skills presents an opportunity for them to help themselves create a healthy and sustainable life for their families, and future generations of their family.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

OFSSGN's multistakeholder collaborative model aims to develop and implement an alternative type of school food program. Oregon FTS aims to address food justice by supporting healthy and equitable community food systems in schools throughout Oregon, which not only challenges dominant school food systems within the state, but also offers new innovations that have the potential to be utilized in school districts worldwide. Identifying the model that OFSSNG assembled, and through explaining the ways and methods used to address food justice for Oregon communities can help provide a structure that has potential to aid school food program advocates and workers both in Oregon and elsewhere. With this information and encouragement provides a platform to promote important changes in program implementation such that more FTS programs can better address food insecurity and help to create more just food system.

OFSSGN works to connects local farms with schools in order to aid in increasing children's access to healthy food during meal and snack time by preparing and providing healthy food options for children to eat for breakfast, lunch, and snack during school and after school hours. Additionally, school garden programs have been implemented in many schools statewide that integrate hands-on activities to create outdoor learning environments that can be used in concordance with curriculum taught in school across several different core subjects in order to expose children to growing their own food and learning about familiar and unfamiliar foods. Garden programs also aim to aid in supporting local food growing, diverse varieties of food, and food growing methods that are environmentally conscious. Food education is a vital part of FTS program efforts in that the education and knowledge taught to children about healthy food helps provide information that can increase a child's amount of social capital throughout their lives. Knowledge and skills regarding healthy food and food preparation techniques can be used

throughout their lifetime in order for them to lead a life that incorporates health and happiness. Food education can also contribute to knowledge about cultural appropriateness of food, local food purchasing, and just and sustainable methods to grow food for consumption. Food policy provides a very important platform for program success. Food policy can encompass many facets of school food program, and FTS program support. Appropriate policies that support these programs are vital to addressing food justice, and are necessary to provide the infrastructure for OFSSGN. Without the proper funding, and program support FTS efforts would not be able to be maintained or changed when necessary.

Lastly, the importance of family and community engagement is key is a key finding within this research, and necessary in creating positive and sustainable changes to create a just food system. While engaging children in FTS program efforts is a great start, however without family and community support information and skills taught at school will only remain at school. In order to truly impact the food system at a larger systemic level, communities everywhere need to collaborate and support each other in incremental changes. Knowledge learned in schools needs to be communicated to families and community members such that the information and skills can be also taught to parents and caregivers and used outside of school for the betterment of the community as a whole.

This research identified that the organizations that make up OFSSGN are consistently working to addressing food justice in a variety of ways. However, while there are several aspects of Oregon FTS programs that are going well and creating momentum with integrating innovative positive changes, according to the data gathered OFSSGN is not entirely addressing all food justice tenants as defined for this research. This research found that OFSSGN addresses food justice in so far as their commitment to and action in addressing and increasing student access to



healthy food as well as provide opportunities through exposure to unfamiliar food for students that participate in FTS programs. Additionally, local procurement is at the forefront of Oregon FTS program implementation, and assists programs to maintain and increase the amount of local food that is purchased for school meals. The three main food justice tenants that OFSSGN is either somewhat or not at all addressing are: culturally appropriate food, food that is sustainably grown, as well as justly grown. While these three concepts are all important, the data supports that these tenants of food justice could be better addressed by OFSSGN in order for them to fully address their program goal of promoting food justice and creating an equitable community food system.

In conclusion, there are specific program components that are more successful than others in addressing food justice for children and communities. With increased participation in FTS programs across the country there lies an opportunity to increase the amount of alternative school food programs that address food justice, and increase the chance of creating changes that will lead to the creation of a more just food system. Additionally, in terms of the focus for this research and professional contribution of increased family engagement, I recommend increased opportunities to further engage families so to increase the scope that OFSSGN can influence. School food programs, and FTS programs are in need of continued research in order to investigate and determine the most successful program model for each school district that will work toward building sustainable change and positively contribute to the food movement as a whole starting with one school at a time.

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