

**Progress Report for Lewis County Community Health Partnership:  
Assessing the Food Environment in Centralia and Chehalis Secondary Schools**

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This progress report is intended to share some preliminary findings of our project with members of the Lewis County Community Health Partnership. Since we last met in late March, we have made significant progress in our examination of the school nutrition environment. Our work focused on two facets of school nutrition: the internal and external school food environment. The food environment within each school was examined using a survey instrument prepared by Shoko Kumagai, RD, a MPH practicum intern at the University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition. This instrument collected data on school nutrition policies, and other relevant variables. Data on physical activity resources was also collected. The external food environment was examined by Colin Rehm using geographic data in a Geographic Information System, focusing on the distribution of different food sources in relation to the four study schools. While many studies have examined the food environment within schools fewer studies have addressed the potential influence of the external food environment, or the food sources that are located nearby schools. Examining the external food environment should remain a central component of nutrition surveillance, since many schools have an open-campus policy. The external food environment may also influence students in a closed-campus since students may skip class, or pass through on their way to and from school. Our assessment of the external food environment is ongoing, and relies heavily on community input and support. Currently, we have not gathered data on food quality or cost. Collecting these important variables in the future will better allow us to accurately and systematically assess the external school food environment. We hope that this initial assessment provides useful information, and may facilitate the development of additional research directions. We plan to produce a more detailed report for presentation to the partnership and interested community parties in late Summer or early Fall.

**Internal Food Environment Centralia and Chehalis Secondary Schools**

An audit instrument was produced by Shoko Kumagai in Spring 2005. Chris Cooper coordinated data collection using community volunteers, including student volunteers and school staff. These instruments were returned to Shoko in late May, and results were compiled. The instrument collected data on the following topics:

- School nutrition policies
- Food choices in Cafeteria
- Open campus policies
- Vending machines
- Fund-raising
- School Physical Activity Policies
- Community use of facilities
- Organized sport activities

Much of the data collected in the instrument informed the examination of the external food environment. We plan to present the full results of the audit at our next meeting.

### External Food Environment Centralia and Chehalis Secondary Schools

Below is a list of food sources within 0.5 miles of each school. Half a mile is the approximate distance that an adolescent can walk during a thirty minute lunch period moving at an average speed of 1.5–2.5 mph. Data on food locations were collected from numerous sources including the Lewis County Tax Assessor’s Database, online directories and InfoUSA. Eleven food classes were used (bakery, candy store, coffee shop/espresso stand, convenience store/gas station w/convenience store, fast food, grocery store, butcher/meat, specialty, pharmacy, pizza and restaurant). In addition to examining the food sources within walking distance we also analyzed food sources within a driving distance of WF West High School, the only high school with an open-campus.

#### Centralia Middle School

2 Grocery Stores (Fuller’s Market Place and Safeway)

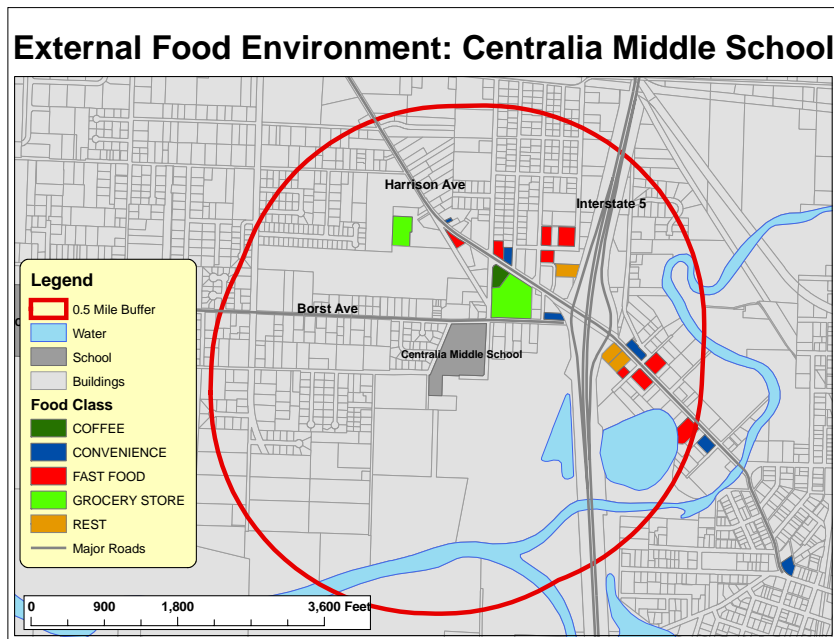
3 Convenience Stores (Gregg’s AMPM, Borst Park 76, and Handy Corner)

7 Fast Food Restaurants (Wendy’s, Dairy Queen, Burgerville USA, Arby’s, McDonald’s, Taco Bell, Jack in the Box and Bill and Bea’s Drive-In)

3 Restaurants (Shari’s, Casa Ramos, and Denny’s)

1 Coffee (Starbucks)

1 Pizza (Papa Murphy’s)



#### Centralia High School

There are no food sources within 0.5 mile of Centralia High School.

**WF West High School**

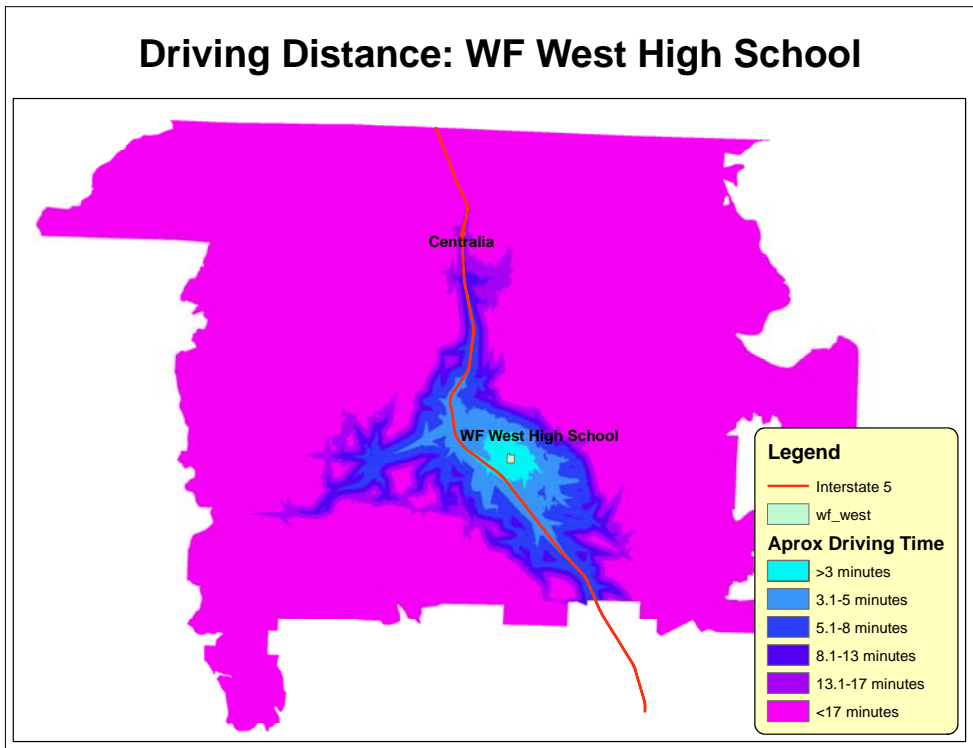
- 3 Grocery Stores (Fuller’s Market Basket, Safeway, Rejo’s Discount Grocery)
- 4 Convenience Stores (AMPM, Chevron, Jackpot Food Mart and Market Street Market)
- 2 Fast Food Restaurants (Jack in the Box, and Dairy Dan’s Drive-In)
- 4 Restaurants (Denny’s, Kit Carson Restaurant, Taceria Juqulipa and South Pacific Bistro)
- 1 Coffee (Perk’s Espresso)
- 1 Pizza (Cruiser’s Pizza)
- 1 Pharmacy (Rite Aid)
- 1 Candy (Kate’s Candy)

**Chehalis Middle School**

- 1 Grocery Store (Rejo’s Discount Grocery)
- 2 Convenience Stores (Interstate Chevron and Jackpot Food Mart)
- 1 Candy (Kate’s Candies)

**Examining Driving Distance**

It is essential to examine driving distance in addition to walking because many students may drive to school. Having the ability to leave school at lunchtime via car also influences the scope and size of the external food environment. We modeled driving distance from WF West High School by assigning an average speed to different classes of roads. For example, one can drive further in a shorter amount of time along Interstate 5 than along a small residential road with a speed limit of 25 mph. The map below approximates driving distance (time) from WF West High School.



Within a 17 minute driving distance of WF West High School, there are more than 100 food sources including 17 convenience stores, 20 fast food restaurants, 7 full service grocery stores and 6 coffee shops. This area includes all of Chehalis, and most of Centralia. Due to the limited geographic scope of the Twin Cities area, estimating driving distance is not crucial, since most destinations are within a reasonable driving distance. This method may have more utility in a more densely populated area.