

# **J**ohn Bennett Creative Services *for Child Nutrition Professionals*

***Below are some talking points you can use if you are asked by local media or other groups to comment on Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution, the "reality" show that returned to ABC last week. Look these points over carefully, and revise to fit your situation or call us for a revision, or further help.***

***Keep in mind that it is always acceptable, when a reporter calls, to tell him or her that you are taking care of something right now and to please give you a number to call back in just a few minutes. Then, gather your thoughts and composure, look over the talking points again, and call back promptly.***

***It's also acceptable to use the talking points when addressing the media as a group or individually. Get to know the material and try not to simply read, but use the points to refer to and keep yourself on track.***

***Finally, don't feel pressured to say more than you know or can accurately say. Stay "on message" and stick to the points below, even if you have to repeat key phrases, and resist the all-too-human urge to blather on. Say what you have to say and then stop – it's up to them to frame a new question, so don't let them use "the roaring silence" to get you to keep going kind of aimlessly.***

***Try to come off as accommodating and eager to help, rather than defensive or trying to hide something.***

***AND PLEASE – call or contact us if you need more extensive or specific help or preparation.***

### ***Talking points:***

1. Let me first say that our primary commitment is always to the ***health and well-being of the children in our school system.***
2. The “Food Revolution” is a television program designed to attract viewers and sell advertising. Naturally, then, the show plays up conflict and controversy. For example, the 57 tons per week of sugar that the show dramatically claims kids in Los Angeles get from flavored milk looks like a lot when it’s dumped on a single school bus. But that only equals about 14 grams of sugar a day for each of L.A.’s 700,000 or so students. That’s only about 60 calories per day. ***And national health groups ranging from the American Academy of Pediatrics to the American Dietetic Association all support low-fat and fat-free milk in schools, including flavored milk.*** Milk in schools is a crucial source of calcium and other key nutrients for kids -- and a fairly minimal source of sugar and calories.
3. We’re undertaking a “food revolution” of our own in our schools, but without the benefit of the publicity that a show like Mr. Oliver’s can stir up (not to mention the deceptive editing and ominous soundtrack). Our meals are required to average less than 30% calories from fat, and we meet that threshold by serving healthier recipes of old favorites, like pizza with lowfat cheese and whole-wheat sandwich buns. We serve 100% fruit juice instead of fruit drinks with added sugar. ***We routinely provide healthier meals to our children than they get at restaurants or convenience stores, or even at home, in some cases.***
4. Last year, the show focused on a poor, rural school district and this year it’s a gigantic urban district. Most districts, including ours, don’t fit those extremes. We’re proud that

**our** school meals program is locally-run by folks right here in (Name of school district) and we're also proud of the food we serve – xxxxxx lunches and xxxxx breakfasts every school day, that's xxxxxxxx meals a year -- and every single one of them healthy.

5. We prepare and serve those meals without any direct funding from local taxes or our school board. Anybody that tries to manage a family's food budget can understand the pressures we face. Our primary funding is through meals that kids buy and federal reimbursements for free meals that we serve to kids who qualify. Currently, that reimbursement is \$2.68 (? Still true) for each free meal we provide, while the average cost to prepare and serve a meal is more than \$3.00 and rising. Considering this disparity, we're even prouder that we're able to serve healthy meals every day.
6. We prefer to use and serve local foods and healthy options, but because our budgets are so limited and our staffing and preparation time short, many foods we typically can afford to buy are processed. But we try to make those foods as healthy as possible by smart purchasing and menu creation. (Use your own examples; here are some from another district):
  - a. We offer whole grain/enriched pasta (Barilla); whole grain pancakes, rolls, and buns; whole grain pizza - at the high school, we make our own pizza with whole wheat dough from a local company.
  - b. We serve fresh fruit every day, and have for 20 years.
  - c. We serve reduced fat mac and cheese and other low fat or reduced fat dairy products
  - d. We buy locally grown apples, and this spring we are working with an Ashtabula organic farmer to be able to offer organic produce in the fall.
  - e. We offer a daily salad choice as well as vegetarian meal daily at all buildings.

- f. The yogurt we purchase contains real fruit and no artificial colors or flavors or gelatin.
7. Oliver initiated a similar splashy campaign in his native country of England, and *The Daily Telegraph* in London reported that “Most schoolchildren are refusing to eat school lunches following the introduction of healthy menus after a campaign by Jamie Oliver.”\* In West Virginia, “After two months, kids hated the new meals, milk consumption plummeted, and many students dropped out of the school lunch program altogether.”\*\* ***We want kids to actually eat our healthy meals.*** Our menu as planned today -- Mac and cheese, cinnamon applesauce, green beans, and milk -- provides 581 calories, with just 22% of calories from fat. (Note -- *It’s powerful to have a concrete example like this ready with local numbers*) ***That’s a healthy meal that kids will eat, not an unrealistic publicity gimmick for a TV show.***
8. We get some food, including some ground beef, from USDA programs. We would love to source our ground beef closer to home or have USDA provide more detailed sourcing information, and we support efforts to make this possible, especially by raising the funding for our programs.
9. We hope the publicity for Jamie Oliver’s reality show will shed light on the true reality of the daily miracles we work with so little time and money (although Americans also seem increasingly to be on to him – ratings for the first show were down nearly 40% from last year\*\*\*).
10. ***Our food revolution is a quiet one, and one that we fight every day for the health and well-being of our children.*** We’re willing to undertake this fight, but we need the public’s understanding. We’ve enjoyed great support from our community, and, believe me, that support makes the battle for healthier kids much easier – and much more likely to succeed.

- \* <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/5787464/Most-pupils-shunning-school-dinners-after-Jamie-Oliver-campaign.html>
  
- \*\* [http://www.alternet.org/story/146354/how\\_tv\\_superchef\\_jamie\\_oliver%27s\\_%27food\\_revolution%27\\_flunked\\_out](http://www.alternet.org/story/146354/how_tv_superchef_jamie_oliver%27s_%27food_revolution%27_flunked_out)
  
- \*\*\* <http://insidetv.ew.com/2011/04/13/jamie-olivers-food-revolution-doesnt-cause-one-in-the-ratings/>