

Farm to School



Objective

- *Establish Farm to School programs in schools to promote healthy eating, support the local economy through the procurement of local products, and teach students about the origins of food.*

Key Messages

Farm to School programs support the local economy.

- Farm to School programs support the local farming economy by increasing market opportunities for farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors and food manufacturers.
- Each dollar invested into Farm to School gives back \$2.16 to the local economy.¹
- Farm to School programs increase community awareness and interest in purchasing local foods.

Farm to School programs increase student fruit and vegetable consumption and knowledge of nutrition and the food system.

- Students who participate in Farm to School programs consume .99 - 1.3 more servings of fruits and vegetables per day and are more willing to try new and healthy foods at home and in the cafeteria.¹
- Studies have indicated student knowledge increases on the topics of produce seasonality, growing cycles, sustainable agriculture, fruit and vegetable consumption recommendations and identification of healthier foods in the supermarket after involvement in a farm-to-school program.²

Farm to School programs generate revenue.

- Schools that have a Farm to School program have reported an increase in student meal participation resulting in increased revenue generation through the school meal program.¹
- Studies have indicated that a farm to school salad bar is a popular option with students and that many students prefer the farm to school meal over what was served prior to sourcing local foods.²
- Teacher and other school staff purchasing of school meals has been reported to increase with the introduction of a farm to school salad bar option.²

Sample Policy Language

“The school district will support the development of farm to school programs to help students eat more nutritious foods and promote healthier lifelong eating patterns; support the local economy and local farmers; and teach students about the origins of their foods and how they are grown.”





Key Strategies

- **Assemble a team of people interested in promoting Farm to School.** Include wellness committee members, teachers, parents, students, food service staff and local farmers on your district's Farm to School team.
- **Determine your goals based on the three C's of Farm to School: Cafeteria, Curriculum and Community.** (View the Minnesota Toolkit for School Foodservice in the "Resources for Implementation" section below for more details). Be sure to create goals that include all three elements. If you are just starting, keep goals simple.
- **Identify the menu items you want to source locally.** A list of the most commonly sourced Farm to School items in Minnesota can be found under "Resources for Implementation."
- **Develop a purchasing strategy and start procuring local products.**
 - Your procurement strategy will depend on your current and preferred procurement methods and might include procuring local products from current vendors/distributors or setting up direct purchasing relationships with farmers or cooperatives of farmers.
 - Your procurement strategy will depend on the school's capacity to process local products like fruits and vegetables. If your school does not have the ability to process (wash, cut, or cook) produce, than you may want to purchase already processed local products through a distributor.
- **Develop marketing materials to promote Farm to School among parents, staff, and students.**
- **Incorporate Farm to School education into the classroom, cafeteria, or before and after-school programming.** Education may include local food taste testing, farmer visits, field trips to local farms, or farm and food based curriculum.



Success Stories

Dover-Eyota Public Schools, Eyota, MN

From cans to canning: how Dover-Eyota transformed its school food:

http://mnfoodcharter.com/news/from-cans-to-canning-how-dover-eyota-transformed-its-school-food/?utm_source=Food+Charter+Newsletter&utm_campaign=0b07c64b4a-May_Newsletter_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5c2cf4ae69-0b07c64b4a-55332413

Boston Public Schools, Boston, MA

Farm-to-School

In Boston Public Schools, community partnerships helped sow the seeds for a successful Farm to School experience. From facilitating an initial Farm to School feasibility assessment to engaging youth in the cafeteria about nutritious food choices, community partnerships, along with district commitment, play an important role in the ongoing successes of the district's Farm to School efforts. Visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/reports/boston/1.htm> for more information.



Resources for Implementation

- **Minnesota Department of Health—Farm to School Guide:** A helpful tool for starting a Farm to School Program <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/cdr/nutrition/docsandpdf/f2s.toolkit.pdf>
- **Minnesota Toolkit for School Food Service:** <http://www1.extension.umn.edu/food/farm-to-school/toolkit/>
- **UW-Madison Farm-to-School Toolkit:** <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/toolkits/>
- **Minnesota Foods in Season:** <http://www1.extension.umn.edu/food/farm-to-school/toolkit/sourcing-food/foods-in-season/>
- **Dig in! Standards-based Nutrition Education from the Ground Up (5th & 6th graders):** http://teamnnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/dig_in.html
- **Farm to School Youth Leadership Curriculum:** <http://www.iatp.org/issue/farm-to-school>
- **Legal Issues Impacting Farm to School and School Garden Programs in Minnesota:** <http://publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/ship-f2s-school%20garden%20legal%20issues-2011.pdf>
- **Harvest of the Month, Network for a Healthy California:** Educational tools that can be used to promote local fruits and vegetables which includes menu language and draft newsletters to parents and community members in both English and Spanish. <http://www.harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/download.asp>
- **Examples of Contracts for Local Food Procurement:**
 - **Saint Paul Public Schools RFP for Local Produce:** <http://food-hub.org/files/resources/SaintPaulPublicSchoolsLocalProduceStory%20and%20RFP.pdf>
 - **Michigan Farm to School Vendor Questionnaire: determine if a farmer meets your criteria:** http://www.mifarmtoschool.msu.edu/assets/farmToSchool/docs/STEP3_Sample_Vendor_Questionnaire.pdf
 - **Portland Public School Farm to School RFP: Harvest of the Month** http://food-hub.org/files/resources/PPS%2520HOM%2520RFP_2007.pdf
 - **Get Local & School Menu Templates:** <http://growing-minds.org/get-local-at-school/get-local-school-menu-templates/>
 - **Sample Harvest of the Month Menu Schedule:** <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/foodservtools14/4-incorporate-local-foods/harvest-of-the-month-sample-calendar.pdf>
 - **Free Farm-to-School Promotional Materials:** <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/foodservtools14/4-incorporate-local-foods/harvest-of-the-month-sample-calendar.pdf> and <http://www.farmtoschoolmonth.org/resources/>

Sources:

1. *National Farm-to-School Network.* (n.d.). *The benefits of farm to school.* Retrieved online from http://www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications_514.pdf
2. *Joshi, A., Azuma, A., and Feenstra, G.* (2008). *Do farm-to-school programs make a difference? Findings and future research needs.* *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition.* Retrieved online from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/19320240802244025>

Smart Choices is a partnership of the Dakota County Public Health Department and school districts in Dakota County committed to making the healthy choice the easy choice by creating opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity before, during and after school.

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