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Nutrition for Health



HOW TO MAKE FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS MORE SUCCESSFUL

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Farm to School (F2S) programs help schools create a healthy environment while also advancing educational objectives. The popularity of F2S programs increased with the passage of the 2004 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, which encouraged improved access to local foods in schools. The re-enactment of the Child Nutrition Act in 2010 (known as the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act) provides new opportunities for schools to build effective F2S programs.

Advantages of Coordinated F2S Programs

Coordinated F2S programs help children better understand where their food comes from and how their food choices can influence their health, environment and community. F2S programs also directly support local farmers, help to strengthen local food systems, and support health and nutrition education.

Tips for Enhancing the Effectiveness of F2S

The underlying concept/rationale behind F2S programs is that students will be more interested in healthy foods if they know something about them. Therefore, a key aspect of effective F2S programs is to provide information about the source of the food, production methods and/or nutrition and health information. The most successful programs utilize an integrated approach that links the incorporation of local produce with educational and health-related goals in the school. To enhance programming effectiveness:

- Incorporate annual farm visits to show children where and how foods are produced.
- Provide hands-on learning by involving children in school gardens.
- Promote recycling and composting food and plant waste for nurturing the garden.
- Integrate F2S programming with educational curricula (See web resources below).
- Provide taste testing opportunities to increase interest in new fruits and vegetables.
- Offer parent/community educational sessions to build community interest and support.

Important Considerations for Setting up F2S programs

- Ensure fair and open competition among potential qualified vendors. Check state guidelines or the USDA F2S website.
- Ensure that foods served to children are purchased from a safe and approved source.
- Ensure safe practices within the school for handling and processing of food.

Resources for Additional Information

Many resources are available to support F2S programs. Cooperative Extension offices serve as outreach centers for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and are positioned to support state and local coordination of F2S programs. (Visit <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension/index.html>). State agencies of nutrition programs and other state groups can also serve as sources of information. National resources include:

- National Farm to School Network: <http://www.farmentoschool.org>
- Background on USDA Farm to School Program: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/>
- Implementing Farm to School Programming: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/implementing/default.htm>.
- USDA Team Nutrition: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/>
- USDA Farm to School Team: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S/

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Tips!