Farm to School

National Farm to School Network

Overview

Farm to school is a PSE change and direct education intervention designed to give students in pre-K to 12 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. Farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following: Procurement: Local foods are purchased, promoted and served in school meals or as a snack or taste-test; Education: Students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health or nutrition; and School gardens: Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening. Other PSE supports for Farm to school can include mini-grant programs for building school gardens, linking farmers to school districts in online marketplaces, building farm to school coalitions, hosting state farm to school trainings and more. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating **Intervention Type:** Direct Education, PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

Farm to school targets school-age youth at school settings. Other benefits are documented for school food service, teachers, parents, farmers, and community/local economy. A separate toolkit submission is available for the early care and education environment (ages 0-5). (Note: this intervention can also apply to after-school and summer feeding, and similar programs). **Setting:** School **Age:** Elementary School, Middle School, High School **Race/Ethnicity:** Native Americans/Alaska Natives, All

Intervention Components

Farm to school includes 1) Procurement: using local foods in school meals; 2) Education: creating and promoting curriculum and opportunities for agriculture, food, health or nutrition education; and 3) School
gardens: providing support for schools to develop and maintain school gardens, including mini-grants to purchase garden supplies, technical support via Master Gardeners, etc. and to tie in-school activities with community activities. Other PSE supports for Farm to school can include linking farmers to school districts in online marketplaces, building farm to school coalitions, hosting state farm to school summits and more.

**Intervention Materials**

There are a number of resources available at these national websites:


**Evidence Summary**

Evaluation Reports:

- *Bearing Fruit: Farm to School Program Evaluation Resources and Recommendations* (up to 2009)
  [http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/bearing-fruit-farm-to-school-program-evaluation-resources-and-recommendations](http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/bearing-fruit-farm-to-school-program-evaluation-resources-and-recommendations);

In short, benefits to students documented include:

- Improvement in early childhood and K-12 eating behaviors, including choosing healthier options in the cafeteria, consuming more fruits and vegetables through farm to school meals and at home (+0.99 to +1.3 servings/day); consuming less unhealthy foods and sodas; reducing screen time; and increasing physical activity;
- Increase in knowledge and awareness about gardening, agriculture, healthy eating, local foods and seasonality (in early childhood and K-12 settings);
- Demonstrated willingness to try new foods and healthier options (in early childhood and K-12 settings);
- Enhanced overall academic achievement in K-12 settings; provides children with an understanding of agriculture and the environment; and improvement in life skills, self-esteem, social skills and behavior. Other benefits are documented for school food service, teachers, parents, farmers, and community/local economy.

**Classification:** Research-tested

**Evaluation Indicators**

Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate
intervention progress and success.

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<th>Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)</th>
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**Evaluation Materials**

Various evaluation tools can be found here: [http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources](http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources) and [http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources).

**Additional Information**

**Websites:** [http://www.farmtoschool.org/](http://www.farmtoschool.org/) and [http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school). **Contact Person(s):** Matt Benson USDA Food and Nutrition Service Office of Community Systems Email: farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov or matthew.benson@fns.usda.gov