Farm to Early Care and Education:
Promising Strategies for Lifelong Health and Wellness
Growing Stronger Together

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Presentation Overview

• Introduction to early care and education (ECE)
• Benefits of farm to ECE
• Policies related to farm to ECE
• Models of success
Our Network

- **Advisory Board**: 8 Regional Lead Agencies
- **National Staff**: 51 State Leads
- **Network Members**: 12,000+

Growing Stronger Together
National Farm to School Network is a hub for:

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<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Networking</th>
<th>Advocacy</th>
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Connecting people to:

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<th>Resources</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Policy</th>
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CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM to SCHOOL

- EDUCATION
- SCHOOL GARDENS
- PROCUREMENT
What is Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE)?

- Natural extension of K-12 farm to school model
- Targets children ages 0-5
- Adapts to all ECE settings (e.g., preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start, center-based, programs in K-12 school districts and family childcare homes)
Farm to ECE Objectives

• Increase access to locally-grown, healthy foods
• Provide gardening opportunities and experiences
• Enhance the quality of the ECE educational experience
• Promote and enhance family and parent engagement
• Create a culture of health and wellness in ECE settings
History of Farm to School/ECE

• **Late 1990s** - Farm to school practices develop
• **2002** - First Nat’l Farm to Cafeteria Conference
• **2007** - National Farm to School Network launches
• **2010** - USDA Farm to School Grant Program and National Farm to School Month
• **2011** - NFSN convenes Farm to Preschool Subcommittee, 1st NFSN Farm to Preschool Survey
• **2014** – Farm to Preschool track at Nat’l conference
• **2015** – USDA releases Local Foods in CACFP Memo, 2nd NFSN Farm to ECE Survey
Current Reach

- Results from NFSN Farm to ECE Survey
  - 1,496 ECE sites responded and over half (54.4%) reported participating in farm to ECE activities.
  - Survey respondents in 48 states and Washington D.C. reported farm to ECE activities, compared to 38 states and Puerto Rico in 2012
  - Potential for growth:
    - 29% of survey respondents plan to start in the future
    - 74% of programs currently purchasing local anticipate increasing local purchases
- USDA Farm to School Census (2012)
  - 30% of school districts participating in farm to preschool
Why Farm to Early Care and Education?

Same reasons as Farm to School!

Kids WIN  Farmers WIN  Communities WIN
BENEFITS OF FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION
Enhanced Educational Experience

• Alignment with ECE standards and systems
  – State Early Learning Standards
  – Head Start Program Performance Standards

• Experiential education is the norm
  – Supports appropriate physical, social, emotional development

• Links to K-12 farm to school movement
Unique Opportunities for Local Food

- Flexibility of purchasing
  - Varying class and program sizes
  - Year round programming
- ECE Priority Areas
  - Experiential learning opportunities
  - Family style meals
- Supporting success in CACFP
- Capitalize on K-12 successes and infrastructure
Parent and Community Engagement

• Emphasis on parental engagement
  – Most successful parent engagement actively engages with experience and feedback
  – Food and gardening experiences encompass multiple learning objectives

• Children as agents of change

• Impact on caregivers
  – Prioritize healthy eating
  – Expand acceptance of new foods
  – Encourage positive attitudes and modeling
Family Engagement Opportunities

- Family dinners
- Family taste tests
- Cooking classes
- Community supported agriculture
- Pop up farmers markets
- Story time

- Garden days
- Field trips
Health and Wellness

• Early obesity prevention
  – Influence development of eating patterns and preferences
  – Increase knowledge and improve food choices of parents and caregivers
  – Rely on parents/caregivers to create food/activity environments
  – Increase availability of healthier foods

Credit: Willamette Farm & Food Coalition
Spectrum of Opportunities for Obesity Prevention in the Early Care and Education Setting

- Improved Nutrition, Breastfeeding, Physical Activity and Screen Time Policies, Practices, Environments
- Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Licensing & Administrative Regulations
- Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS)
- Funding & Finance
- Pre-service & Professional Development
- Facility-level Interventions
- Technical Assistance
- Access to Healthy Environments
- Early Learning Standards
- Family Engagement
- Emerging Opportunities
CDC Spectrum of Opportunities for Obesity Prevention in the ECE Setting

- Alignment with Farm to ECE
  - Facility Level Interventions
  - CACFP
  - Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)
  - Access to Healthy Environments
  - Early Learning Standards
  - Family Engagement
Early Childhood Obesity: Evidenced Based Protective Factors

- Introduced to a wide variety of flavors, textures, and foods
- Fruit and vegetable consumption
- Mindful eating is fostered (awareness of hunger and satiety)
- High fiber and nutrient rich diet
Supporting Healthy Habits

• Early childhood is a critical time for development of taste preferences\textsuperscript{3}

• Repeated exposure to fruits and vegetables increases preference, a predictor of future consumption\textsuperscript{4-8}
Farm to ECE and F&V

- Farm to ECE activities contribute to increased willingness to try and reported liking of target fruits and vegetables\(^9,10\)
- Farm to ECE participation contributes to increased fruit and/or vegetable intake\(^11,12,13\)
Farm to School and Student Health

- Farm to school participation contributes to:
  - Choosing healthier options at school meals
  - Consuming more fruits and vegetables at school meals and at home (+0.99 to +1.3 servings/day)
  - Consuming less unhealthy foods and sodas
  - Reducing screen time
  - Increasing physical activity
Farm to Early Care and Education Policy

• Federal
• State
• Programmatic Policy

We call on Congress to continue its support of FARM TO SCHOOL SUCCESS with the FARM TO SCHOOL ACT

#CNR2016
Federal Policies and Programs

- Child Nutrition Reauthorization
  - Farm to School Act
  - Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG)
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
Types of State Farm to School Policy

- Coordinator Position
- Appropriations
- Grant programs
- Reimbursement programs
- Statewide programs
- Farm to preschool/ECE
- School gardens
- Local preference laws
- State database or directory
- Pilot programs
- Task force/council/working group
- Food hubs
- Wellness or food security policy
- Economic inequality
- Promotional events
- Resolution or proclamation
Farm to ECE State Policy

- **DC Healthy Tots Act**
  - CACFP expansion
  - Increased meal reimbursements
    - Local 5: Additional 5 cents per lunch or supper with at least one local food component
  - Wellness Grants

- **Strategies for Success**
  - Model on existing legislation
  - Leverage federal programs
  - Stakeholder collaboration
  - Public support
ECE Wellness Policies

Language to support farm to ECE activities:

• Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Policy\textsuperscript{15}
  
  – “Meals and snacks will be purchased using \textit{locally produced} fruits, vegetables, and other whole food items directly from farmers to the maximum extent feasible.”
  
  – “\textit{Preschool gardens}, including container gardens, are strongly encouraged and every child will be given the opportunity to garden where feasible.”
  
  – “I will provide \textit{nutrition education} that highlights \textit{local foods} and may include hands on activities such as taste tests of local fruits and vegetables, gardening, and visits to farms or farmers’ markets or visits by local farmers.”
MODELS OF SUCCESS
Taking Root Tennessee – Knoxville, TN

- Project of CACFP Sponsor, Our Daily Bread
- Garden installation and education for ECE sites
- Provider trainings
- Capitalize on network built by CACFP
Taking Root Tennessee

• Community Impacts
  – Contributes to success for CACFP programs
  – Providers change eating habits and become role models
  – Increased demand for local produce, new markets for small farmers
Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation – Brooklyn, NY

- Nations first community development corporation
- Farm to ECE Components:
  - Coordination with food hub to provide produce boxes for families
  - Modify type of food served in child care
    - increase access to local F&V
  - Gardens and garden education
  - Provider training and support
  - Parent engagement
Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation

• Aims and scope:
  – ECE sites as models of health
  – Influence parent food choices and increasing engagement to promote healthy lifestyles
  – Farm to ECE as a catalyst for change in community food systems
Renewing the Countryside - Minneapolis, MN

• Adapted to rural communities
• Focus on small centers and home providers
• “Train the trainer” model to create network of trainers
• Peer learning groups for ongoing support
Renewing the Countryside

• Keys to Success
  – Training integrated into existing professional development system
  – Utilize existing curricula and activity resources
  – Close community partnerships to leverage shared goals
Growing Stronger Together

8TH NATIONAL FARM TO CAFETERIA CONFERENCE
MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER
JUNE 2-4, 2016 | MADISON, WISCONSIN
Questions?

Contact: Lacy Stephens, MS, RDN
lacy@farmtoschool.org
References


References


Save the Date!

Promoting Healthy Weight 2.0

Friday, September 30, 2016
12:30pm – 5:00pm EDST (onsite)
12:45pm – 5:00pm EDST (online)

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