Growing Healthy from the Start with Farm to Early Care and Education in Native Communities
June 2019 – NIHSDA Management Training Conference

Presentation Overview

• Introduction to the National Farm to School Network
• Farm to Early Care and Education Basics and Benefits
• Farm to Early Care and Education and Food Sovereignty
• Digging into the Core Elements: Key Approaches
• Group Activity: Taking Farm to ECE to Your Community
• Share Back and Discussion

INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK
OUR NETWORK

OUR CORE FUNCTIONS

A hub for:

- Information
- Networking
- Advocacy
- Resources
- People
- Policy

Connecting people:

WHAT IS FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION?
Farm to Early Care and Education
• Group of strategies and activities that offer:
  – increased access to healthy, local foods
  – gardening opportunities and
  – food, nutrition and agriculture education activities
• Targets children ages 0-5
• Adapts to all types of ECE settings and geographic locations

Photo Credit: Ali Stone for Gardeneers

WHAT IS FARM TO ECE?
COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ECE

WHY FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION: IMPACTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH
WHY FARM TO ECE?

KIDS WIN

FARMERS WIN

COMMUNITIES WIN

Family and Community Engagement

Alignment with ECE priorities and goals

Advancing Equity

Enhanced Educational Experience

Health and Wellness

Program and Learning Standards

Health and Wellness

• Early development of eating pattern and physical activity habits and preferences
• Rely on parents/caregivers to create food/activity environments
• Increase availability, acceptance, and consumption of healthier foods
• Increase knowledge and improve food choices of parents and caregivers
The CDC’s Spectrum of Opportunities Framework for State-Level Obesity Prevention Efforts Targeting the ECE Setting

**CDC Spectrum of Opportunities for Obesity Prevention in the ECE Setting**

1. Organize stakeholders statewide to develop access initiatives
2. Launch or strengthen statewide Farm to ECE initiative
3. Develop guidance, tools, and incentives for central kitchens
4. Strengthen fresh food procurement and distribution chains

**Enhanced Educational Experience**

- Experiential education is the norm
- Enhanced learning environment
- Supporting school readiness and appropriate development
- Alignment with ECE standards and systems
Meeting Programmatic and Early Learning Standards

- Family Engagement and Farm to ECE
  - ECE serves the whole family
  - Influence multiple settings (ECE site and home)
  - Children as agents of change
  - Emphasis on family engagement
    - Most successful parent engagement actively engages with experience and feedback
  - Connect to community, culture, and heritage
Family Engagement Best Practices

• Include the whole family
• Communicate frequently and in different ways
• Provide opportunities for different levels of engagement
• Capitalize on drop-off and pick-up times
• Cultivate an environment that promotes health
• Support parents in playing an active role in learning

Family Engagement Opportunities

• Family dinners
• Family taste tests
• Cooking classes
• Story time
• Garden days
• Field trips
• Community supported agriculture (CSA)

How can farm to ECE advance equity?

• Increasing quality of ECE settings
• Supporting just and equitable food systems
• Farm to ECE as a mirror and a window for children, families, and providers

Approach is everything
Indigenous people have been foraging, hunting and growing foods to feed our communities since time began. We have always been sustainable in our production methods, caring for the health of the earth and all beings while sustaining life for the people. This is food sovereignty.
Through our connection with the land we learn to live in balance with all relations, we eat seasonally and locally from what the land provides us, and share the bounty of harvest with our communities. This is farm to school.

Farm to School employs us to use the same strategies that were used to colonize our people, to decolonize future generations and take back our food sovereignty.

NFSN: Lessons Learned

Because our communities and schools are so diverse there are no "best practices" for farm to school in Native Communities.

But there are "best ideas":
- Homegrown solutions work best
- Self-sufficiency supports health
-authentic indigenous food traditions
- Connecting families and schools
- Empowering the school community = change
- Think relational not transactional
- Embrace traditional economies
HEAd START AND FARM TO ECE
A NATURAL ALIGNMENT

Growing Head Start Success with Farm to ECE
Aligning Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Early Learning Outcomes Framework with Farm to Early Care and Education Opportunities

Program Performance Standards and Farm to ECE
• Community assessment
• Family engagement and support
• Community partnerships
• Enhancing learning environment
• Child nutrition
• Staff development and wellness
• Administrative standards
| Procurement: | • Include traditional foods and foodways in meals, snacks and taste tests in programs that serve American Indian and Alaska Native children. |
| Gardening: | • Utilize Head Start gardens to grow traditional foods to support connection to and preservation of tribal language, culture and community |

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### Early Learning Outcomes Framework and Farm to ECE

**Domain Map**

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Communication
- Cognitive, Motor, and Physical Development

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### Gardening: Hands-on, experiential learning opportunities to facilitate understanding and connection to how food grows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Domain: Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal (EY-1):</strong> Child maintains focus and sustains attention with support.</td>
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| Children actively participate in adult-led multi-step 
**seed planting activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Domain: Creativity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal (EY-2):</strong> Child shows imagination in play and interactions with others.</td>
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<td>Children use blocks and manipulatives to &quot;build&quot; gardens and mimic plant growth.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Task Domain: Relationships with Other Children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal (EY-3):</strong> Child relates and engages in play with other children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children work together to achieve common goals such as planting, weeding or watering the plants.</td>
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</table>
### Education: Classroom and community experiences that connect curricula and learning to food, nutrition, and agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Domain</th>
<th>Elements</th>
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| Language and Phonological Awareness | Teach farm and garden-related songs or rhymes that utilize rhyming words. For example, "Wow! Who! I saw a cow, a cow and it went moo. Why said Wow! Wow! Little Boy Blue, Little Boy Blue, on Blue on My Home."
|                | Read a poem, such as "Little Red Hen," and then engage in sensory play and storytelling of the story using actual seeds, flour, and wheat. Use the local grains to make "White is a Log." |
|                | Goals 3-7 Sub: Child demonstrates understanding of sequence by retelling or reciting the story. |

**DIGGING INTO THE CORE ELEMENTS**

**Education**

- Farm and garden books
- Cooking activities
- Taste tests
- Sensory exploration

*Photo Credit: Expanding Family Childcare and YMCA of Madison, WI*
Education (cont.)
• Field trips – farms, gardens, farmers’ markets.
• Special visitors - farmers, chefs
• Learning how food grows and where it comes from
• Math, science, literacy lessons

Curriculum Resources

Key Approaches for Education
• Frame within existing structures and activities
• Align with learning and programmatic standards
• Build provider knowledge and confidence

Photo Credit: Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation
Mystery Bag

Early Learning Alignment

- Sensorimotor
- Nutrition
- Expressive Communication

Gardening

- Containers
- Raised Beds
- In ground gardens
- Hydroponics
- Vertical gardening

Photo Credit: NFSN

Photo Credit: Fairyland Family Childcare, YMCA of Madison, WI, Taking Root Tennessee, IATP Farm to Head Start
Key Approaches in Gardening

- Start small
- Create a team
- Identify resources and supports
- Clarify goals
- Connect to education curricula
- Integrate traditional and modern gardening approaches

Three Sisters Garden Stretch

Early Learning Alignment

- Culture
- Gross Motor Skills
- Early Reading and Book Appreciation

Local Foods

- Meals
- Snacks
- Taste Tests

Photo Credit: Fairyland Family Childcare, IATP Farm to Head Start
Local Food Opportunities in ECE

- Flexibility of purchasing
- Varying class and program sizes
- Year round programming
- ECE Priority Areas
- Experiential learning opportunities
- Family style meals
- Best Practice in CACFP

Local Foods in the CACFP Meal Pattern

Local foods, gardening experiences, and food and nutrition education support:
- Fruit and vegetable variety
- Increased whole grains
- Reduced sugar in snacks and beverages
- Acceptance and enjoyment of healthy foods.

Local Foods Resources
Key Approaches in Local Foods

- Build on existing systems and partners
- Know the audience – barriers and assets
- Start with dialogue
- Identify flexible approaches

Taste Test Activity

Early Learning Alignment

- Culture
- Sensorimotor
- Language and communication

Bringing Farm to ECE to Your Community

- Goal: Identify a farm to ECE activity (gardening, local food procurement, food, nutrition, and agriculture education) and modify it so it is applicable in your ECE setting and culturally appropriate for your community.
Questions and Discussion

NFSN Farm to ECE Resources

- NFSN Farm to ECE Landing Page
  - [www.farmtoschool.org/ECE](http://www.farmtoschool.org/ECE)
- Fact Sheets
  - Getting Started with Farm to Early Care and Education
  - Local Purchasing for Family Child Care Homes
  - Local Procurement for Child Care Centers
- Resource Database
  - [www.farmtoschool.org/resources](http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources)
- NFSN Farm to ECE Quarterly Webinars
- NFSN Farm to ECE Listserv

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