



Farm to School Tool Development: Guidance for farm direct purchasing and kitchen produce handling in a large district central kitchen foodservice model

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Background

Increased childhood obesity and interest in local food systems have led school districts to consider farm to school programs. Schools face many hurdles in implementing farm to school. This includes challenges in produce handling, recipe development and local food purchasing.

Large urban school districts, such as Kent School District, present particular challenges due to larger volumes required from local farms. Recently updated legislation to the Farm Bill (2008) and Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (2010) have detailed specifications on purchasing local, unprocessed products for schools which can outweigh benefits of purchasing these foods for schools. In addition, variability in school foodservice systems require creative processing of raw produce for acceptability and quality to meet established food standards.



Objectives

Develop tools that will aid procurement and serving local food in Kent School District (KSD) by:

- Tailor recipes that incorporate WA-grown produce to the central kitchen foodservice model and appeal to students
- Enhance quality, preparation and promotion of local produce used
- Provide guidance on regulatory framework, such as farm food safety in school food purchasing

Actions

In order to develop proper tools, the following was done:



- Reviewed KSD's needs based on participation in various farm to school related activities and primary needs assessment previously completed by WSDA
- Observed central and satellite kitchen systems on equipment use and current procedures for handling raw produce
- Researched select seasonal WA-grown produce (winter squash, beets, turnips) that withstand central kitchen storage, processing and distribution
- Requested informal feedback and administered surveys on document drafts and recipes from relevant stakeholders

Deliverables

- *Farm to school Food Safety Checklist and Supplement:* Guides farms on school food safety expectation and standards for raw and fresh produce and explains agricultural practices of local farms
- *Farm Profiles and Communication Vendor Log Template:* This spreadsheet helps school districts to track local food deliveries and prices, especially when they do not meet specification/standards
- *Sample invoice for farms to Kent School District template:* A standardized invoice that streamlines communication between schools and farmers

- *In-service training to Central Kitchen foodservice staff:* Covered topics on marketing nutrition tips to students, a case study of a farm to school strategic plan and review of tools created. Provided samples such as "Vegetable Wedges" and "Rainbow Salad" that featured local turnips and beets
- *Farm profiles aimed for parents for KSD's website:* Profiles of farms featured in school food will be posted on KSD's website to increase awareness, support and sustainability of farm to school efforts
- *Fresh produce Food Safety Checklist and Tips handout:* Tips to improve local produce quality and appeal to students as well as produce specifications that best meet central kitchen needs
- *Recipe development:* After identifying locally grown produce compatible with central kitchen operations, recipes were tested for high volume production with the goal to preserve taste, appeal and nutritional quality

Potential Contributions

Materials from this project will be part of a larger project that contain other farm to school resources that can assist school districts interested in implementing farm to school. This project overlaps with the CPPW grant with the Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network and Washington Environmental Council to create a guide on local food procurement for schools.



Future information regarding this project will be at www.wafarmtoschool.org

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