

School Wellness Policy Model Language

Farm to School

Background:

Farm to School programs ensure that students have more locally grown foods in their school meal and snack programs. Farm to School establishes connections between schools and local farms to purchase more local produce, improve student nutrition, and promote eating fruits and vegetables. Farm to School programs support local and regional farmers and the local economy by working with local distributors and farmers to purchase locally grown foods.

There are many benefits for starting and expanding Farm to School programs in schools. The Farm to school efforts can increase student participation in the school meal programs and increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, by an average of one serving per day, which can help prevent childhood obesity and improve nutrition. Food purchased through Farm to School can be successful within limited nutrition services food budgets once planning and menu choices are consistent with seasonal availability of fresh and minimally processed local produce. Many schools offer salad bars in their school lunch programs to increase student choices of fruits and vegetables and reflect their student population's ethnic and cultural diversity. Farm to School programs can promote life-long healthy eating habits and improve student knowledge and attitudes toward food, nutrition and agriculture.

Having school gardens can contribute to a strong Farm to School program by providing opportunities for students to get involved in learning how to grow foods. Farm to School increases knowledge and skills relating to nutrition, physical activity and growing food and understanding food supply systems. Additional food-related curriculum can include experiential learning opportunities, such as farm tours, visits to farmers markets, presentations by farmers and chefs in the classroom, culinary education and educational sessions for parents and community members.

A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food is a user-friendly resource that provides guidance to school nutrition directors and food buyers to assist them in increasing purchases of locally grown foods. <http://www.wafarmentoschool.org/Page/74/procurement-guide> The USDA geographic preference rule allows schools to support Farm to School programs by purchasing locally even if the bid price is not the lowest price available. Each school district defines a local geographic area, with many choosing to use Washington-grown.

Sample Model Language:

School District and Nutrition Services will support developing a Farm to School program

- Nutrition Services will develop and implement a plan to integrate local produce into meals served as part of the school meals program. The plan will identify specific strategies and goals to increase the use of local produce.

- Nutrition Services will plan menus to accommodate the seasonality of local agriculture according to availability of produce from local farms and school gardens.
- At least 20% of produce purchased and served will be locally grown fresh produce.
- Increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and opportunities for offering seasonal fresh produce by adding a salad bar as part of Nutrition Services.
- Teachers will be allowed to establish a school garden, including container gardens, as part of curriculum to provide students the opportunity to plant, harvest, prepare and eat the foods grown.
- Teachers will be encouraged to incorporate the school garden as part of curriculum to enrich students' learning opportunities by presenting academic projects around food, nutrition, mathematics, science, language arts and the environment.
- Teachers will use the Farm to School program to promote awareness of how food choices affect our health, communities, and environment.
- Nutrition Services and teachers will be encourage to work together to provide nutrition education such as Harvest of the Month to highlight 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.

Resources:

Sample School Wellness Policy: Farm to School by Public Health Law Center
<http://publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/ship-fs2-schoolwellnesssamplepolicylanguage-2011FarmtoSchool.pdf>

A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food
<http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/Page/74/procurement-guide>

Incorporating School Garden Language into a School Wellness Policies by Wisconsin School

Garden Initiative – Examples of possible school garden language:
[http://www.communitygroundworks.org/sites/default/files/Incorporating School Garden Language into a School Wellness Policy.pdf](http://www.communitygroundworks.org/sites/default/files/Incorporating%20School%20Garden%20Language%20into%20a%20School%20Wellness%20Policy.pdf)

Washington State Department of Agriculture Farm to School Toolkit www.wafarmtoschool.org

National Farm to School Network
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/>

USDA Farm to School
<http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/Farmtoschool/>