

Protocol for Fresh Snack Pilot Project

The listing below is the work of several people who have had the opportunity to manage or take part in existing fresh fruit and vegetable snack programs in New Mexico schools. Farm to School or Farm to Cafeteria programs, as they are known, have been spreading throughout the US in response to the increase in childhood overweight; childhood nutrition-related diseases, such as type-2 diabetes; the increase in the availability of unhealthy foods; the lack of physical activity; and, other factors. All of this and more have labeled this the first generation that will not live as long as their parents. Providing a fresh fruit or vegetable snack to schoolchildren has been shown to help to stem the tide of this unfortunate situation.

Congratulations on being named as a snack program school. We hope that you can use this information to help your snack program get off to a great start.

Getting Started

- Who are the people **on the team**? Administrators, food service, teachers, parent groups, student groups, community service organizations, the school nurse. The more people who are involved, the more buy-in you will have for the process and the more help could possibly be available when necessary.
- Plan snack **menu** and schedule. Using produce in season decreases cost and improves the freshness and taste of the foods.
- Estimate **quantities** required based on number of students per classroom and days per week of delivery.
- Develop plan and schedule for **ordering and delivery** of fresh produce to cafeteria. Will the foods be from a local grower or through the standard method of purchasing from a produce broker, or a combination? What seasonal produce is available in your area and when are these foods be available?
- Develop plan and schedule for **classroom delivery** and/or pick up of fresh snacks.
- Consider preparation **space and equipment**. Cool or cold space, knives, prep machines, more counter space, bus tubs, etc.
- Determine if you **have enough staff** to do the work of preparation and delivery to the classroom or other location. Can other people like parents or community helpers help out if it is ever necessary?

Buying local fresh fruits and vegetables

When buying fruits and vegetables, you must consider a number of factors such as price, product selection, product availability, reliability of seller, and delivery service and schedule.

- Determine the purchasing system. Work with individual growers or with grower coop or Department of Agriculture or community group? Can you buy from a farmer's market or a local retailer who carries local products? Use the Farm to Table FTS Directory as a resource.
- Determine what and how much to buy. Be aware of the number of units or servings in a standard packing box and how that relates to the numbers of servings you need. Will it be by unit or by the pound?
- Be specific when ordering fresh product. Make sure you use only the best product, especially when introducing new foods to students.
- Document purchasing process.

USDA's *Food Buying Guide* is a valuable tool that can assist you in the purchasing process.

Purchasing from non-local sources

Some snack programmers buy only from non-local sources, such as wholesalers, brokers, or local retailers.

- Who is responsible for choosing the weekly snack produce?
- Ordered through the normal purchasing system with the same broker?
- Delivered along with the regular deliveries?
- Billed into a separate program account. How will this be kept separate from regular ordering?

Delivery to School Cafeteria

Farmer, farmer's representative or community helper delivers to the cafeteria. Deliver at the same time every week and to the cafeteria manager as arranged. Bring invoice and put the produce into the appropriate location, cooler or other location.

Receiving

- Inspect for ripeness. For under ripeness or over ripeness and for other qualities. Determine if snack needs refrigeration or not. For items that sometimes come under ripe (bananas, pears), consider ordering 2 weeks in advance so that you can control the ripening process.

Storage

Weekly delivery requires room for storage of farm fresh produce. Ideal storage:

- Temp: 32-36°F, Humidity: 85-90%. Store non-refrigerated produce at room temperature (such as tomatoes and potatoes).

- Enough space to allow air to circulate.
- If fruit is not ripe when you receive them, keep them at room temperature to ripen, and then place in refrigerator. (Pears are a good example of fruit that is generally received unripe, left at room temperature to ripen properly, and then refrigerated for only a short amount of time before consumption.)

Preparation

- Wash fresh produce under running water.
- Slice produce if necessary. Sometimes slicing an apple for K, 1st, and 2nd is appropriate, but for the rest of the grades it is not. (Remember loose teeth and/or braces!)
- Sort into bins, one for each classroom, with the proper amount of servings for each room. Put things like carrot sticks into baggies (4 sticks per serving for Elementary). Do this just before delivery.

Delivery to Students

Determine necessary equipment, such as:

- Bins, lids for each classroom
- Napkins
- Gloves
- Containers or baggies for cut-up fruit and vegetables
- Need student(s) from each classroom to pick up the snack from the cafeteria and take to their classroom. Or use a delivery system by a particular group of students assigned to this task to deliver to all the classrooms or other location, such as a kiosk.
- How are the bins etc, going to get back from the classroom to the cafeteria and when. They need to be washed out right away.
- Another extra piece of equipment will be garbage bags to put extra baggies and such in. This is a good opportunity for classroom worm bins or school compost programs to be started to use the extra organic materials that come from these snacks.

Associated Education

Nutrition education and other associated education will go a long way to reinforce all of our need to consume more fruits and vegetables and help to make new foods more acceptable to students.

- Try a “**Tasting Day**”, where students are exposed to several varieties of newer foods, once a month, perhaps a select group of seasonal foods could be highlighted, ask the group to vote for their favorites, have an

- essay contest on the subject, get the students to put information into the school newsletter, etc.
- There are several existing **nutrition education** programs that can be accessed. They could be delivered in the classroom, school assemblies, health fairs, after school programs, or snack pilot kickoff programs.
 - Other ways to deliver the message: informational materials, such as fliers, pamphlets, 5 a day materials, T-shirts, posters, banners, buttons or making regular public address system announcements.
 - Institute BMI scans by the nurse's office. Get a pre-snack screening of height, weight, age, and any existing medical conditions. Try to get similar information a year later, to try to measure the snack programs' success.
 - Other forms of **evaluation** - changes in paying attention in class, discipline issues, number of unhealthy snacks brought from home, and student's consumption of fruits and vegetables at lunch.

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Some of the schools that have had snack programs in New Mexico are Monte del Sol Charter School, Santa Fe Public Schools; Hayes Middle School, Albuquerque Public Schools; Van Buren Middle School, APS; and, Valle Vista Elementary School, APS.

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To get more information on any of these subjects, including contacts for locally produced foods, please contact:

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