Fresh from the Farm
Using Local Foods in the Afterschool and Summer Nutrition Programs

FOOD RESEARCH AND ACTION CENTER

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Fresh from the Farm: Using Local Foods in the Afterschool and Summer Nutrition Programs

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The Food Research and Action Center is the leading national organization working for more effective public and private policies to eradicate domestic hunger and undernutrition.

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Executive Summary

Food is an important part of any quality afterschool or summer program. It helps attract children to the program and ensures that they have the energy to fully participate in all of the educational and enrichment activities. The nutrition quality and appeal of the meals and snacks is crucial.

Providing healthy meals and snacks is particularly important given the rapidly increasing prevalence of childhood obesity in the U.S. Children on average are not consuming the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables. Since 1980 the number of young people who are overweight has more than tripled, with 31 percent of school-age children overweight or obese. Obesity is linked to lower academic achievement, depression, and chronic health problems. By providing healthy food, nutrition programs can play a critical role in preventing obesity and improving overall health. These programs can model healthy eating habits, teach nutrition, introduce children to nutritious foods they have never tried before, and replace a less healthy afterschool snack with a nutritious alternative.

One creative strategy to improve quality and appeal is to make local produce part of the meals and snacks through Farm to School programs. There now are more than 2,500 Farm to School programs in schools across the country. These schools include local produce from nearby farms as part of their breakfast and lunch offerings. Afterschool and summer programs are just starting to explore the Farm to School program as a way of incorporating local produce and provide healthier, more child-friendly food. Serving local produce can have positive effects for children, farmers, and the community.

Federal funding for meals and snacks is available to schools, local government agencies, and private nonprofits that serve low-income children and can help support Farm to School initiatives. The National School Lunch Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program are federal programs available to help cover the cost of providing healthy food to children participating in out-of-school time programs. Afterschool and summer programs interested in participating in the federal nutrition programs should contact the state child nutrition agency for more information on how to enroll. A complete list of state agencies is available at www.frac.org/afterschool.

There are nutritional guidelines for the afterschool and summer nutrition programs based upon four components: milk, fruits and vegetables, grains, and protein. The nutritional guidelines help to ensure that children are eating nutritious meals and
snacks. Including locally produced foods in the menus is a great way to make the meals and snacks more appealing to children.

Afterschool and summer programs will need to determine how to access local products for their program. This guide outlines strategies and approaches for accessing local products such as working with an organization that is already using local produce, collaborating with the area school food service director or operating the Farm to School program independently.

When programs tout the advantages of eating more fresh fruits and vegetables and offer appealing fresh produce in snacks and meals, children receive hands-on experiences that support that message. Finally, for Farm to School programs to be most effective, it is helpful to tie farm fresh products in meals with experiential education components such as a children’s garden, nutrition education or field trips.

It is important that all children have access to nutritious meals afterschool and during the summer months. Serving local food through Farm to School initiatives is an exciting way to accomplish this goal.
Enroll in the Child Nutrition Programs

Costs can limit an afterschool or summer program’s ability to serve healthy food, but federal funding for meals and snacks is available to schools, local government agencies, and private nonprofits that serve low-income children. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) are federal programs available to help cover the cost of providing healthy food to children participating in out-of-school time programs.

These child nutrition programs provide crucial funding for meals and snacks served at afterschool and summer programs. The federally-subsidized meals and snacks attract children to out-of-school time programs, which allow them to learn, and be active and safe, while their parents are working. The food helps keep hunger at bay so that children are engaged and ready to learn. It also supports healthy eating, nutrition education, and physical activity. All are important parts of an afterschool or summer program.

These nutrition programs reimburse afterschool providers for the food they serve on a per child per meal basis, so funding grows as the program serves more children. An afterschool program serving snacks would receive about $133 per child and about $489 per child for providing suppers, during the 2007-2008 school year (assuming the program operates for 180 days and it receives the highest rate of reimbursement). An eight week summer nutrition program would receive up to $206 per child for serving breakfast and lunch. Each year the meal reimbursement is further adjusted for inflation.

The first step to providing local food to the children at afterschool or summer programs is to select the nutrition program that matches the needs of the program and contact the state child nutrition agency for more information on how to enroll.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) reimburses afterschool programs for providing meals and snacks to children age 18 and under. In most states, being able to serve a meal in addition to, or instead of, a snack is an exciting new opportunity to combat hunger and improve health. To participate, the program must be located in a low-income area where 50 percent or more of the children in the local elementary, middle, or high school qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Meals can be served during the school year on after school, weekends, school holidays, and school

Nutrition Funding Adds Up:

• Serving afterschool meals to 50 children during the school year (180 days) adds up to $24,450 per year in federal reimbursements.
• Serving breakfast and lunch in the summer to 50 children for 8 weeks adds up to $13,000 in federal reimbursements.
breaks. Meals can be served at any point during the program, even when children first arrive. Both snack and supper may be served depending on the length of the program. And schools that have extended the school day by an hour or more also can participate in this option under CACFP (and in NSLP snacks which are explained below).

The program receives the highest rate of reimbursement “the free rate” for all of the suppers it serves. Funding for afterschool suppers can add up to $490 per child if the afterschool program operates for 180 day. The afterschool program would receive an additional $133 if it also serves a snack.

In areas that do not qualify for the 50 percent free and reduced price eligibility, CACFP also continues to offer reimbursement to feed children under age 13 up to two meals and a snack each day. Programs operating after school could provide a supper and a snack, and weekend programs could provide breakfast, lunch, and snack. Meals can be served any day of the week. To participate, the children in the program are individually qualified for free, reduced-price or paid school meals, which determine the reimbursement rate that the afterschool and summer program receives.

When does CACFP work best?

- The school wants to serve a meal instead of, or in addition to, a snack.
- The afterschool program is community-based and not sponsored by a school.
- The afterschool program is run by the local government agency or nonprofit.
- The afterschool program wants to have control over the menus and/or serve meals in addition to snacks.

The National School Lunch Program

Schools can provide snacks through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to school-sponsored afterschool programs. This model works well for afterschool programs that do not have the capacity to administer the child nutrition programs themselves. Individual schools designate which afterschool and summer programs in the community are school-sponsored. The afterschool program does not have to be operated by a school or located on school grounds. Afterschool programs in low-income areas automatically receive the highest rate of reimbursement for all of the snacks served. Programs not located in a low-income area are reimbursed based upon the children’s eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals.

During the summer or year-round schools’ extended breaks, schools can use the NSLP to feed children at schools, parks, swimming pools, summer programs, churches, low-income housing complexes, and any other location where children congregate.

Under the summer option, a site located in a low-income area where (50 percent or more of the children in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals) can
provide up to two meals a day in the summer. A site serving primarily low-income children (at least 50 percent of the children enrolled must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals) also can provide up to two meals a day. A site serving primarily migrant children can provide up to three meals a day. A summer camp can provide up to three meals a day, but it is reimbursed only for meals served to children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

**When does NSLP work best?**

- The afterschool or summer program is school-sponsored.
- The school food service department is willing to provide healthy snacks and meals to the afterschool and summer program.
- The afterschool or summer program does not have the capacity to administer the snack or meal service itself.

**The Summer Food Service Program**

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is available to schools, local government agencies, and private nonprofit organizations to feed children during the summer vacation or extended year-round school breaks. Sites qualify in the same way that they qualify for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)—those in low-income areas or serving low-income children can provide up to two meals a day; those serving primarily migrant children can provide up to three meals a day; and summer camps can provide up to three meals a day to children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

**When does SFSP work best?**

- The program is operated by a local government or nonprofit.
- A school operates the program and is concerned about reimbursement rates. The SFSP reimbursement is higher than the NSLP reimbursement, which is the reason why some schools operate SFSP during the summer instead of NSLP.

If the afterschool or summer program is school-sponsored and wants to participate in one of the nutrition programs, it should contact the school nutrition director for more information. To enroll in CACFP or SFSP without the school nutrition department running the nutrition programs, afterschool and summer programs should contact the state child nutrition agency.

Additional information on all of the nutrition programs, including a complete list of state contacts, is available on FRAC’s Afterschool Resource Center at [http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/afterschool-programs/](http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/afterschool-programs/).
Incorporate Farm to School

There are more than 2,500 Farm to School programs across the United States. Through the Farm to School program, schools buy and feature farm fresh foods such as fruits, vegetables, eggs, honey, meat and beans; incorporate nutrition and agriculture-based curricula; and provide students experiential learning opportunities through farm visits, gardening and recycling programs. Afterschool and summer programs can incorporate this model, creating a local source of fresh food for healthy snacks and meals that can be paid for by the federal child nutrition programs.

Benefits of Farm to School Programs

Farm to School programs offer children the opportunity to experience great tasting, farm-fresh produce. They benefit from a closer connection between their food and local agriculture. The more a child is involved with healthy food—either through eating fresh fruit, gardening, cooking or other "real life" food experiences—the more he or she will adopt healthy eating behaviors as a lifelong practice. Purchasing local food affords afterschool and summer programs a tremendous opportunity to generate and reinforce these kinds of learning experiences.

Local farmers benefit from increased sales opportunities. Farmers are always looking for more nearby, higher value markets. By selling their products locally, farmers have lower transportation costs, which are further reduced when they sell directly to the customer. Local schools give farmers a chance to diversify their markets, with a reliable and steady demand that is known to them in advance. Farm to School also allows farmers to interact in their community. Local purchasing often translates into farmers visiting the classroom, field trips to farms, or other kinds of educational experiences. Farm to School builds broader support in the community for the school district and for the child nutrition programs.

Communities benefit from more locally-based agricultural marketing. When farm sales stay within a community or a region of limited size, the local economy can benefit from the recycling of those expenditures. Healthy farms provide jobs, pay taxes, and keep working agricultural land open.
Connect with Local Farmers

One of the first steps in serving local produce is to connect with farmers in the area. There are organizations and businesses that can connect schools with farmers. Talk to the market manager at your local farmers’ market or the staff at roadside stands and U-Pick operations, 4-H Groups, feed supply stores, and the state Farm Bureau. Nonprofit organizations, including sustainable agricultural organizations, local food cooperatives, and Ag in the Classroom, also may have connections with farmers.

There are several government agencies that can connect afterschool and summer programs with nearby farms. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, found at www.nasda.org and listed in local phone books, or County Extension Offices at http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/index.html, are great places to start. Also, the state’s Agricultural Commodity or Marketing Boards are helpful resources and are found through the state Department of Agriculture.

Agriculture in the Classroom is a grassroots program coordinated by USDA. Its goal is to help students gain a greater awareness of the role of agriculture in the economy and society, so that they may become citizens who support wise agricultural policies. For more information visit www.agclassroom.org.

Model: Hartford Public School District Sources Local Producers to Offer Healthy Summer & Afterschool Meals

About the Program
- The Hartford Public School District has 20,000 students enrolled in 50 schools.
- The school district serves approximately 5,000 children for SFSP and serves afterschool snacks to 4,000 children.

Successful Practices
- The Hartford Public School District works with local farmer and with FreshPoint, a foodservice distributor of fresh and local produce, to provide healthy food to children.
- Hartford gets produce such as apples, cabbage and peppers direct from local farmers.
- FreshPoint distributes locally grown lettuce, spinach, corn, zucchini, yellow squash, cucumbers, butternut squash, apples cider, nectarines, peaches, pears, strawberries, blueberries and plums.
- Hartford partners with End Hunger Connecticut, and community based organizations to do outreach for the SFSP and the Afterschool Meal and Snack Program. They also send electronic phone messages to the district and work with school principles.
- The school district will start offering the Afterschool Meal Program in May.

For more information, contact Lonnie Burt, Foods and Nutrition Service Director at Hartford Public Schools burty001@hartfordschools.org.
Create a System for Local Purchasing

The beginning stages of development, farm to school programs require time and effort to create the structures and systems needed for the purchasing of local products. The four major areas of organization include:

1. Research local products to incorporate into menu planning.
2. Find and develop relationships with farmers.
3. Determine a distribution and delivery system.
4. Incorporating educational and experiential aspects of farm to school programs. There are several approaches one can take to accomplish these tasks, which include: finding an organization already using local produce; partnering with the school food service director; and/or operating independently. If a food service director is involved with the program, it is important to include him/her in the project, as the director is the most knowledgeable person in ordering and preparing food.

Option One: Collaborate with Another Organization

First, learn what local produce initiatives already exist in the community. The Farm to School Network has state leads in all 50 states. A full list of these contacts can be found at www.farmtoschool.org. Some afterschool and summer sponsors may already incorporate local produce into the snacks and meals they serve through the child nutrition programs. Therefore, it may be possible for new programs simply to become sites underneath their sponsorship. This is the easiest option for most afterschool and summer providers, and in many ways, the most effective.

If afterschool and summer programs are unaware of groups that use local produce, there may be local organizations that can connect them with such groups or directly to farmers. Many organizations want to develop farm to school programs and provide technical assistance, including health-minded groups, parent-teacher associations, sustainable agriculture organizations, anti-hunger groups, and community food security advocates.

Partnering with another group, or several groups, allows people to divide the workload and be more strategic and effective in organizing. For example, one group can work with the farmers' market organization that has information on what is produced locally, and contact local farmers. Working with one or more groups allows everyone to pool their time and resources and makes it easier to provide healthy, fresh snacks and meals to children.

When does this work best?

- The afterschool and summer programs do not want to operate the nutrition program and find local produce themselves.
- There are partner organizations in the community focused on increasing children's access to local foods. They can work with afterschool and summer programs to provide them with snacks and meals.
**Option Two: Partner with the School Food Service Director**

There are hundreds of examples around the country of school food service staff that have organized local purchasing for their meal programs. This is particularly the case in rural areas where farmers are relatively easy to find and it is therefore less time-consuming to organize a program. In larger, urban areas, finding farmers can require a little more effort.

If the food service director already uses local food for the school breakfast and lunch program, afterschool and summer providers may only need to ask the school partner to incorporate the local food into the snacks and meals as well. If the schools do not use local produce, afterschool and summer program providers can encourage them to do so and help them set up the initiative.

The advantage of working directly with food service staff is that they are the best judges of what products to incorporate into a snack or meal program. Early communications with the grower can develop a good working relationship and lead to effective implementation of the program. Farmers and food service need to find an arrangement that is mutually beneficial in terms of the products bought, the price paid for them, the number of deliveries, the form of the product, and the time frame for payment.

**When does this work best?**

- The snacks and meals are already being prepared by the school food service department.
- The afterschool and summer programs can receive snacks and meals through the school food service department.

**Option Three: Operate Independently**

The last possibility is to set-up the farm to school system independently for each afterschool and summer program. This is more labor intensive than the other options but in some cases may be the best choice. The afterschool and summer program must find out what is in season and connect with local farmers. It also must enroll in the child nutrition programs and plan the menus.

**When does this work best?**

- There is not a school or other organization through which to receive local produce.
- The afterschool or summer program wants to take on the meal service and find local produce for itself.
The Logistics of Operating Independently

If an afterschool or summer program decides to access local produce independently, it must consider the following options.

Processing

When purchasing produce from farmers, a key issue to consider is the form of the product when it arrives at the afterschool or summer program. For example, a nearby farm may have carrots, but not the health-approved facility to cut them into baby carrots for snacks. Once the products arrive at the afterschool or summer program they may need to be washed again when they arrive or put in appropriate serving sizes.

Some farmers, particularly those involved in a cooperative, may have the ability to provide product that is cut up, diced, shredded, frozen, dried, or processed into a form other than the whole fruit or vegetable. Other products, such as small-sized apples, won’t require processing. When working with farmers who process products, it is a good idea to request a copy of the license for the processing facility to have on record. In cases where the farmers do not have this ability, the afterschool and summer programs would be responsible for the processing. This would require a health-approved kitchen, which can be found in most schools, many churches and some community centers.

Purchasing and Transporting

It can be a challenge to purchase and transport produce in a manner that is efficient for both the service provider and the farmer. While the afterschool and summer provider may need the product every day, and not have access to adequate storage, the farmer may not be close enough to afford multi-weekly deliveries. However, there are at least four purchasing options that can work for both parties.

Option One: Purchase Directly from Farmers

Buying direct from farmers has a number of benefits. The provider can request specific products, become familiar with what the farmer grows, and when there is a good relationship, can request that farmers plant specific items. Another option for a farmer is to combine deliveries. For example, farmers could drop off product at a feeding site when traveling to town to participate in the farmers’ market. By making deliveries to more than one destination, farmers can save on labor, time, and transportation costs.

When does this work best?

- This option works particularly well in rural areas where farms are close to the feeding program site, and growers can deliver the product directly to the program.
- This option also works well in large urban areas where farmers come into the city for farmers’ markets and restaurant deliveries.
Option Two: Work with a Farmer’s Cooperative or Informal Network

When farmers pool their resources they can develop a group distribution strategy. Buying through a farmer’s cooperative has the advantage of ordering from one entity while having a wider variety of product availability on a consistent basis. Some cooperatives have cold storage and/or processing facilities and can deliver the product. The state Department of Agriculture, state Farm Bureau or county Agricultural Commissioner will have lists of farmer cooperatives. As in Option One, the cooperative may combine deliveries to be more efficient.

When does this work best?

- There are other afterschool and summer programs, organizations, or schools receiving deliveries from farmers.

Option Three: Purchase Products at a Farmers’ Market

This strategy relies on farmers' markets for purchasing locally grown products. Orders are placed with farmers one or two days in advance of the farmers' market, via fax or phone, and the farmer then brings the order to the market, where it is picked up by the service provider. However, this involves more labor for the afterschool and summer program as it will need to transport the product or hire someone to deliver it. Farmers can load the product at the market, but labor is needed at the afterschool and summer programs for unloading purposes.

When does this work best?

- There are farmers markets near the afterschool and summer program providers.
- It is the summer when there is a good variety of fruits and vegetables available, or in a warm climate where markets are open year-round.
- There is a wide range of products and prices available at the farmers’ market.

Option Four: Purchase Products through a Traditional Wholesaler

The provider in this situation works with a local broker or wholesaler to order to obtain local products. In some cases, the broker may not be aware of local farmers, and the provider may need to make the connection. The benefit of the arrangement is that it allows the maintenance of an existing relationship with a broker as well as the ability to purchase other items that farmers are not able to provide. This method also allows for centralized billing, delivery and payment but creates a more distant relationship between the provider and the farmer and may increase the price of the product.

When does this work best?

- A local broker or wholesaler who is familiar with local farms is available.
- It is easier for the afterschool or summer program to work through a third party instead of dealing directly with farmers.
Planning Menus

It is advantageous to plan menus on a monthly basis. This ensures that there is variety throughout the menu cycle and allows afterschool and summer programs more time to communicate their needs to the grower.

Afterschool and summer programs only have to plan their own menus if they decide to operate the snack and meal programs independently.

Meeting the Nutrition Guidelines

There are nutritional guidelines for the afterschool and summer nutrition programs based upon four components: milk, fruits and vegetables, grains, and protein. A snack must include two of the four components and can be as simple as milk and an apple. A supper must include all four components plus a second serving of fruits and vegetables. The nutritional guidelines ensure that children eat more nutritious meals and snacks than they would if they did not participate in the nutrition programs, but there is still room to improve food quality. Include locally produced foods on the menus to make the meals and snacks more appealing and nutritious.

Pricing

The price of the product depends on a number of factors. Generally, the greater the volume purchased, the lower the price per item. Prices tend to be lower at the height of the season, when there are large quantities of product on the market. Transportation costs, distance traveled, and the method of delivery all influence the price.

Product Availability

During the summer months, there is a wide variety of farm fresh fruits and vegetables in most areas. Some more commonly available products include: berries, melons, peaches, plums, nectarines, carrots, apples, and tomatoes. When working with a farmer, address how the product will be delivered, and in what form. While the climates in northern areas may present a challenge during the winter, seasonality is not necessarily a barrier to year-round farm to school efforts. Other local products may include dairy, eggs, grains, beans, meats, honey, and maple syrup. Individual farmers or farmer cooperatives may have the ability to store crops through the winter or minimally process

USDA Snack and Meal Patterns

To ensure that children receive healthy snacks and meals through the federal child nutrition programs, the following meal patterns are required for non-school providers.

**Snacks** must include **two** of the following components:
- 1 serving of low-fat milk
- 1 serving of fruit or vegetables
- 1 serving of grains
- 1 serving of meat or meat alternate

**Meals** must include **all** of the following components:
- 1 serving of low-fat milk
- 2 servings of fruits or vegetables
- 1 serving of grains
- 1 serving of meat or meat alternate
their products and do basic food preservation, such as bagging and freezing their products.

Another option is to highlight a fruit or vegetable of the month in terms of menus and for educational or promotional purposes. Some products that can be served through the winter, with the proper storage and handling, include apples, carrots, potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash, onions, beets and other root crops. Delivery can be in a box or bag, depending on the product and the amount ordered.

### Harvest of the Month

is a program that helps teachers and afterschool providers highlight seasonal and local produce by providing information and resources. The materials make it simple to provide nutrition education and link lessons with food. To learn more, visit [www.harvestofthemonth.org](http://www.harvestofthemonth.org).

## Sample Menus

The sample menus below highlight how easy it is to incorporate a variety of local foods into snacks and meals. The bolded items on the menus are local products.

### Four Week Afterschool Snack Sample Menu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mixed Berries</strong></td>
<td><strong>Watermelon</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sliced peaches</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plums</strong> and low-fat yogurt</td>
<td><strong>Sweet potato muffins</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>and cottage cheese</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweet red peppers and cucumber tray</strong></td>
<td>Cantaloupe</td>
<td>Cherry and grape tomatoes</td>
<td>Small pears</td>
<td>Corn salad or roasted herb corn on the cob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with low-fat dip</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>Cheese sticks</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local celery, raisins and cream cheese</strong></td>
<td>Peach crunchy oat bar</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Pickled beets</td>
<td>Carrot salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>and celery sticks</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Berry muffins</strong></td>
<td>Local cheese cubes</td>
<td>Fresh salsa</td>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td>Apple slices or natural no-sugar added apple sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>and whole wheat crackers</td>
<td>with baked chips</td>
<td>and cheese</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Sample menu courtesy of The Food Trust. [www.thefoodtrust.org](http://www.thefoodtrust.org)
## Four Week Summer Food Sample Menu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spaghetti w/ marinara sauce</td>
<td>Baked chicken</td>
<td>Turkey sandwich wrap</td>
<td>Vegetable pizza</td>
<td>Bean and cheese burrito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat balls</td>
<td>Whole wheat roll</td>
<td>Fresh green beans</td>
<td></td>
<td>Corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden salad</td>
<td>Cucumber sticks</td>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>Watermelon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Sliced peaches</td>
<td>Apples</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuna salad in pita pocket</td>
<td>Deli turkey sandwich on whole wheat bread</td>
<td>Vegetable lasagna</td>
<td>Macaroni and cheese</td>
<td>Italian dunkers with meat dipping sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snow peas</td>
<td>Snow peas</td>
<td>Green beans</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pineapple chunks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melon chunks</td>
<td>Sliced fresh tomatoes and lettuce</td>
<td>Apple slices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Garden salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken fajita w/ salsa</td>
<td>Rotini w/ spaghetti meat sauce</td>
<td>Chicken noodle soup w/ grilled cheese sandwich</td>
<td>Peanut butter sandwich on whole wheat bread</td>
<td>Ham and cheese on whole wheat bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green beans</td>
<td>Diced pears</td>
<td>Grapes</td>
<td>Blueberries</td>
<td>Sweet potato sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantaloupe</td>
<td>Baby carrots</td>
<td>Carrot sticks</td>
<td>Celery sticks</td>
<td>Orange slices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey pot pie</td>
<td>Teriyaki beef strips</td>
<td>Chile con carne with beans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole wheat roll</td>
<td>Rice pilaf</td>
<td>Cornbread</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tomato soup with quesadilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raspberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Apples</td>
<td></td>
<td>Green beans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geen beans</td>
<td>Mixed vegetables</td>
<td>Cucumber slices</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sliced pears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low-fat Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Contributions to sample menu made by Ray Denniston, Food Service Director for Johnson City Schools, NY*</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
**Combine Food Service with Educational Programs**

Include an educational component along with a healthy snack or meal to teach students about proper nutrition as well as local agriculture.

**Pairing Snacks and Meals with Nutrition Education**

As the interest in Farm to School has increased, it has broadened beyond the original definition of using locally grown foods in school meals to include school gardens, visits to farms or farmers' markets, farmer visits to the classroom, and other types of experiential education. Another factor driving these programs is that parents and school staff are beginning to call for nutrition education that links what children are taught to the snacks and meals provided in their afterschool and summer programs.

For Farm to School programs to be most effective, it is helpful to tie farm fresh products in meals with experiential education components. When programs tout the advantages of eating more fresh fruits and vegetables and offer appealing fresh produce in snacks and meals, children receive hands-on experiences that support that message.

**Starting a Garden**

Working in a garden is one of the best hands-on learning experiences about nutrition and agriculture. There are multiple benefits to growing a garden.

The garden provides a context for understanding seasonality and life cycles and it is an opportunity for students to work cooperatively on real tasks. Students learn where food really comes from and gain an appreciation for nutrition and healthy foods. Gardens promote trying new foods, physical activity and making new friends. The garden can even provide opportunities for community involvement by creating links with neighbors, volunteers, parents and community businesses.

Since many schools are searching for help during the summer months to tend their year-round garden, the summer programs may be able to work in a school garden without creating one from the ground up. The afterschool snack programs also offer the opportunity to combine an activity with the snack and work in the garden.

For more information on starting a garden, visit:
www.edibleschoolyard.org
www.kidsgardening.com
**Meet the Farmers**
An effective way for children to learn about the origin of their food is to introduce children to a farmer – either on the farm or at the afterschool or summer program. If a farm visit is impractical, consider a trip to a farmers’ market or community garden.

Nonprofit organizations may be able to arrange a visit – the Farm Bureau and Ag-in-the-Classroom have locations in every state, and can often find farmers in the area to talk with students and conduct educational activities.

Finally, promote local food initiatives to parents, teachers, community members and school administrators. The purchase of farm products can be promoted through local media to build awareness and support, including policy support at the state, local or district level for ongoing farm to school programming.

For more information about incorporating agricultural lessons into your program, visit [www.agclassroom.org](http://www.agclassroom.org)

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**Model: Child Nutrition Program focuses on Healthy Meals and Nutrition Education**

**About the Program**
- Foodlink, the Feeding America regional food bank serving Central and Western New York, annually rescues and redistributes 11 million pounds of food to 450 member agencies in Central and Western New York.
- Foodlink serves healthy meals to over 2,000 children weekly.
- It also offers nutrition education for the summer and afterschool meal sites that they serve.

**Successful Practices**
- Foodlink works with Freshwise Farms and other local purveyors to provide fresh local pesticide-free produce straight from the farm.
- Foodlink includes locally raised grass-fed beef from Seven Bridges Farm on some of its menus. They also get beans from Allen’s Hill Farm and Eggs from Nelson Farm.
- The daily menus include variety and meals made from scratch in the Foodlink kitchen.
- Foodlink partners with Share our Strength to offer Cooking Matters, a nutrition education program. The staff visits several sites to offer classes to children.
- The Cooking Matters program consists of curriculum for a six-class series that integrates nutrition topics with hands-on cooking experience. The curriculum covers food safety, proper food handling, exposure to new fruits and vegetables, and the importance of staying active. Volunteers with culinary experience teach tangible cooking skills that are useful to future employment.
- Foodlink makes all meals from scratch which reduces its food costs.

**Positive Outcomes**
As a result of Foodlink’s emphasis on nutrition education - 2,000 children eat healthy meals after school and during the summer they learn about the benefits of good nutrition, and acquire skills on how to safely handle food and make their own recipes.
Model: School District Purchases Local Produce for Summer Food Program

District Demographics
- The Litchfield Elementary School District has 10,000 students enrolled in 17 area schools.
- Forty percent of the students in the school district qualify for free or reduced price meals.
- The district is located in a rapidly growing area west of Phoenix that is both rural and urban.

Meal Program
- The school district serves a combination of breakfast, lunch and supper at its various sites to students during the summer months through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).
- The main Summer Food site operates at the elementary school with the highest free and reduced price rate in the school district.
- A large number of meals are transported to other sites around the community.
- The school district serves an average of 15,000 children per day, with 50,000 breakfasts and 85,000 lunches throughout the summer.
- To advertise the summer meals program, the district hands out flyers to all Litchfield Elementary School District students plus students of surrounding school districts, and puts notices in local newspapers, food banks, churches and local city recreation departments.

Purchasing
- The district purchases a variety of local produce from local farmers, such as watermelon, honeydew, peaches, cucumbers, tomatoes, cantaloupes, squash, citrus and onions, and incorporates it into the summer meals.
- Farmers notify the district about what produce they have available and the school district is flexible with its menus so it can incorporate produce that is in season.
- The Community Food Connection, a local non-profit Food Security organization, works with the school district to tell it what local products are available throughout the year.
- The district staff feels that the local produce is much fresher and of a higher quality than the produce they received from non-local vendors.

Delivery
- The majority of the produce comes from four area farmers that are all located within a 10 mile radius of the district, and more than 50 percent of the produce served during the summer is grown in Arizona.
- Many of the farmers deliver the produce right to the school; although, some require school district staff to drive out to the farm to pick it up.

Menus
- Fresh produce is incorporated into both the breakfasts and lunches during the summer.
The main site offers two salad bars, which makes it easy to incorporate different fruits and vegetables when they become available.

Funding and Costs
- The district is able to serve fresh produce in all of its meals while staying well within the federal meal reimbursement.
- The school saves money on food costs by serving local produce because local fruits and vegetables tend to be cheaper than non-local produce.

Outreach
- The school district uses electronic billboards along the highway to advertise SFSP
- The Department of Economic Security serves as one of the school districts feeding sites and it also distributes outreach materials about SFSP

Creative Practices
- The school district receives donated produce (not necessarily local) from the area food bank, which is distributed to parents and children who participate in SFSP.
- The extra produce helps create enthusiasm and support for the summer meal program, increases participation rates and helps parents stretch their food dollars during the summer months.
- This also has created a passion in the younger children to consume more fresh fruits and vegetables. This passion is carried over to the regular school year, and produce consumption by students continues to increase each year.

Challenges and Solutions
- The local fruits and vegetables typically require more processing once delivered than does produce from other vendors.
- The school district trained the food service staff to include extra processing in their preparation process before the produce is cooked or served.
- According to the school food service director, the quality, freshness and variety of local product outweigh the extra preparation time.

Response to Program
- The children love the fresh fruits and vegetables that are incorporated into the meals and district staff believe the fresh produce and high quality meals help them keep summer participation rates high.

For more information, contact David Schwake, RD, Litchfield Elementary School District, at schwake.d@lesd.k12.az.us or 623-535-6056.