



Farm to School Routes

FarmToSchool.org Monthly Newsletter, November 2007

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Everything You Need to Know You Learned in Kindergarten

Kindergarten Initiative: A New Farm to School Model

THE FOOD TRUST: Mid-Atlantic Regional Lead Agency

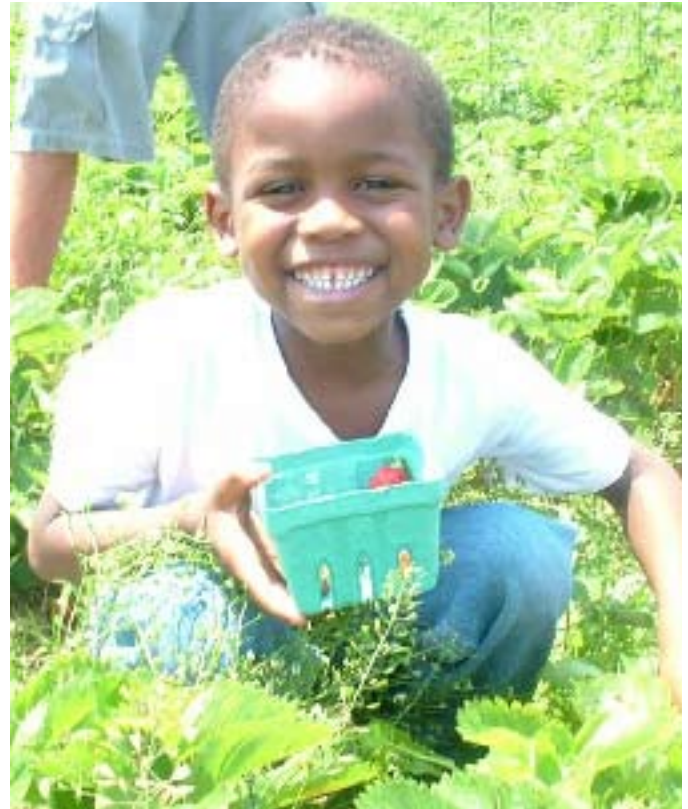
As the mid-Atlantic regional lead agency, The Food Trust is the hub for farm to school activities in the mid-Atlantic region, which encompasses Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. In this role, The Food Trust supports the National Network in areas of policy, information, media, and networking opportunities as well as training and technical assistance for individuals working on farm to school issues.

Tegan Hagy is the Mid-Atlantic Farm to School Coordinator. In this position, she is available for farm to school related media inquiries, initial consultations with schools and/or interested parties, and hosting training opportunities for farmers and food service personnel in the 2007-08 school year.

Previously, she coordinated the Kindergarten Initiative, a model Farm to School program profiled in this newsletter. Tegan is dedicated to advancing the concept of food sovereignty in marginalized communities including: facilitating procurement of fresh produce to Philadelphia area bodegas, apprenticing on an urban organic farm, developing school vegetable gardens, and advocating for the protection of community gardens.

The Food Trust, founded in 1992, is a non-profit organization working to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food. The Trust works to educate the public about good nutrition and to increase the availability of fresh food in neighborhoods throughout the region and the state. The Trust works with school districts, supermarket operators, corner store owners, public and private partners, and farmers to make fresh food and nutrition education available to everyone.

More information about The Food Trust is available at www.TheFoodTrust.org



A FARM TO SCHOOL MODEL PROGRAM:

As farm to school programs sprout across the country, the diversity of these programs grows as well. Farm to school programs have similar goals—connecting children with the source of their food, providing them with the skills and environment to make healthier food choices, and supporting local agriculture. The cafeteria can be a natural space in which to achieve these goals. Other programs have found that the classroom works better and is an ideal environment in which to cultivate healthy eating patterns.

One such program is the Kindergarten Initiative, an early intervention model that builds healthy eating patterns for children and their families, while supporting local farmers.

There are three main components to the program: integrated nutrition and agriculture education, locally grown

snacks served three times a week, and a parent outreach component.

All of the fruit and vegetable snacks are served in the classroom, where the students have a safe and exploratory environment in which to try new foods. Asparagus, apples, squash and pickled beets have all been gobbled down by the students. In the winter, locally produced cheese, yogurt, dried fruits, and healthy muffins baked with locally milled flour supplement the fresh produce. "Snack Time" is also a learning time, where age-appropriate nutritional messages are delivered with the snacks.

In addition, the teachers are trained and given tools to integrate nutrition and agriculture messages into everyday learning; the students hear these messages multiple times a day as nutrition and agriculture education become part of the classroom's culture. Seasonal trips to local farms (three times a year) provide a wonderful opportunity to engage parents in this food system education, and have been a very successful outreach component.

The Food Trust, based in Philadelphia, PA, developed the Kindergarten Initiative three years ago with the goal

of increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, as well as providing a new market for farmers. They ended up creating a model that teachers, parents, and administrators all value and want to share. The Pennsylvania State legislature responded, and in 2006 the Healthy Farms, Healthy Schools grant program was passed allowing schools across the state to implement comparable programming (see the policy section of enews).

Excitement about the initiative has been widespread, and The Food Trust is currently working with Kansas City, Missouri based groups to adapt the Kindergarten Initiative model, and implement a pilot program early next year.

To assist schools, teachers and parents in their efforts, The Food Trust recently developed a Kindergarten Initiative Toolkit, an interactive guide that outlines the key components of the program and provides numerous tools and resources that schools can use to get started (see the publication section of enews).

For a copy of the toolkit or for more information about technical assistance for schools please contact Laila Goldberg at lgoldberg@thefoodtrust.org.