Farm to Preschool: Training Manual
FARM TO PRESCHOOL: TRAINING MANUAL
Urban & Environmental Policy Institute, Occidental College
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First printing September 2009
Updated February 2013

Published by:
Farm to Preschool Program
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Program Overview

The award-winning Farm to Preschool Program at the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute (UEPI), Occidental College, is designed to influence early childhood eating habits, which is crucial to maintaining a healthy weight and preventing childhood obesity. The program offers an adaptable culturally- and age-appropriate nutrition education curriculum, technical assistance with purchasing farm-fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables as part of the preschool menu, on-site gardening, off-site activities such as field trips to farmers’ markets and healthy wellness policies.

This multi-layered program helps increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables at preschools and other child care settings, influence life-long eating patterns and improve the overall health and well-being of young children and families. The program also seeks to create greater awareness of, and increase access to, fresh fruits and vegetables within the home for the benefit of the entire family and the community. As a natural expansion of the national Farm to School model, this program supports local farmers and the economy through farm and market-based purchasing.

Food Purchasing and Preparation

The Farm to Preschool program works with participating preschool site administrators and food vendors to determine the best mode of purchasing locally sourced fruits and vegetables for meals, snacks, taste tests and educational activities. UEPI collaborates with contracted vendors to incorporate locally grown fruits and vegetables into meals and snacks and facilitates contact with local farmers and farmers’ markets to arrange direct purchases with schools. The program does not aim to eliminate existing food contracts, but to find the best means for improving child care nutrition with seasonal and fresh items most compatible with the site’s resources. For more information on models and best practices, read “Local Food Purchasing Options” on page 19.
Nutrition Education
To complement the introduction of more and varied fresh fruits and vegetables in the classroom, participating sites conduct nutrition education in their classes through a modified nutrition curriculum based on the Harvest of the Month model (a program originally designed for school-aged children by the California Department of Education), and through continual role-modeling and positive reinforcement in the classroom. The two years worth of curricula (based on a September-May program) have been aligned to national Head Start Framework Domains, California Preschool Learning Foundations and Desired Results Developmental Profile – Preschool© (DRDP-PS) standards by experts in the field. In-class activities involve reading books about fruits and vegetables, conducting art, science and garden-based activities, as well as holding monthly taste tests and interactive snack preparations. The curriculum has been adapted to Hawaiian culture and produce and is being piloted for family home care providers (adaptable to different child care settings) and for The Navajo Nation in Arizona (adaptable to different cultures). The Farm to Preschool program can provide technical assistance and additional curricula for sites interested in starting a garden or other complementary activities such as composting. The Farm to Preschool program recommends each classroom have its own copy of educational materials and that sites train teachers with the resources. The Farm to Preschool program can offer teacher training resources and technical assistance with the materials. Curriculum resources are currently available online, free of charge: http://www.uepi.oxy.edu/projects/food

Parent Workshops
To complement the activities at preschools and other child care sites, it is vital to address the needs of parents and other family members. In order for sustainable dietary changes to occur, caregivers need to be engaged and educated as well.

A series of workshops has been developed and implemented by UEPI with assistance from preschool sites. The content of parent workshops varies, and each pilot program site worked directly with Farm to Preschool staff to design workshops to specifically meet the needs of their parents. These workshops include cooking demonstrations, taste tests, tips on affordably accessing local farmers’ markets and market basket programs, organic gardening, topic-driven nutrition education and invited speakers such as promotoras (community-based health and nutrition educators). A parent workshop toolkit is available on topics such as reading nutrition labels, portion control, healthy snacking, healthy shopping on a budget, organic foods and home gardening. Most handouts are offered in both English and Spanish. Participating sites are encouraged to arrange field trips to local farmers’ markets with both parents and children.

National Website
The Farm to Preschool program has created and maintains the Farm to Preschool website, which can be accessed at www.FarmToPreschool.org
The website serves as a clearinghouse of preschool resources, materials and news provided by farm to preschool programs around the country. This website was launched publicly March 2012 and serves as a comprehensive resource for anyone interested in Farm to Preschool. Anyone can join the listserv to receive a monthly newsletter, Taking Root, a resource of the Farm to Preschool Subcommittee of the National Farm to School Network.

Preschool Wellness Policies

The Farm to Preschool program at UEPI, as well as other organizations, recognizes that healthy practices in preschools are difficult to implement without an existing wellness policy. Several California-based agencies have created preschool wellness policy templates including nutritional and physical activity guidelines. The Farm to Preschool program, in conjunction with the YMCA Childcare Resource Service of San Diego County and the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative has created a model that also includes guidelines for implementing and maintaining in-class nutrition education, preschool gardens and sourcing local food items in snacks and food menus.

Demonstration Sites and Workshop Trainings

In the spring of 2011, UEPI conducted two demonstration training workshops with the Magnolia Place Family Center in Los Angeles and with North County Community Services in Oceanside (San Diego County). These sites have served as program training hubs in their respective counties for other preschools, school districts and family child care providers interested in adopting the Farm to Preschool program. The YMCA Childcare Resource Service (http://www.crs.ymca.org) is currently conducting all Farm to Preschool trainings in San Diego County.

Evaluation

As an integral component to the program, pilot sites participated in an extensive two-year evaluation process to document the success and barriers of the program by measuring outcomes such as changes in consumption, knowledge, and preference for fresh fruits and vegetables among preschoolers and their families. It is through evaluation measures that this program is able to serve as a “best practices” model for others to utilize. Under the direction of an outside professional evaluator, the evaluation was administrated by UEPI, which included unique sticker-based pre-/post-tests with preschoolers, teacher observations and informal interviews, as well as surveys on nutrition and eating habits with parents. All forms were succinct and offered in Spanish for parents and children. UEPI collaborated with sites to improve project components as they were being implemented, as part of process evaluation measures.

Program Evaluation

List of Surveys

Teacher Checklists

Teaching staff were asked to complete a checklist once each week after each lesson to solicit their feedback and gauge the extent to which they were teaching the curriculum. This helped us improve our curriculum during the pilot phase of the program (process evaluation measures).
Student Surveys

Student Fruit and Vegetable Survey

Students were administered a survey (“pre-test”) at the beginning of each year’s program implementation to determine baseline fruit and vegetable knowledge and perceptions, including knowledge of healthy eating and food sourcing (baseline measures). Students were administered a survey two more times per year to determine any changes in knowledge or attitudes (“post-tests” were at 4 month follow-up and 9 month follow-up).

Control schools (schools that were given surveys but not the program) were given two surveys yearly, in order to better compare the results from participating schools. Control schools were given the materials for implementing the program (books, curriculum, and supplemental materials) at the end of the 2-year pilot study period.

I Like This/Don’t Like This Sheets

Each student was asked to record their response to monthly taste tests. Students applied a sticker to the appropriate column or wrote in their name under “I like this” or “I don’t like this yet.” These surveys helped determine if children were improving their attitudes and preferences for fresh produce. In a few cases, the record sheets were able to demonstrate to the preschool that the majority of children liked a particular item, which was then added to the menu (for example, cauliflower and spinach).

Parent Surveys

“My first reaction, I was a bit apprehensive, but after the training I was excited and felt ready to implement the Farm to Preschool program in the classroom.”

-Linda Pullara, Teacher
North County Community Services

Nutrition Survey

At the beginning of the program, parents were given a pre-test survey to determine their knowledge and attitudes on nutrition, healthy eating, food consumption and food sourcing, as well as to collect anonymous demographic information (offered in English and Spanish).

At the end of each year of the program, parents were given a post-test survey to determine if any of the above measures changed over time.

Workshop Survey

Both before and after each parent workshop (pre- and post-tests), parents were given a short survey assessing their knowledge of the workshop topics and on healthy food access in their community (offered in English and Spanish).
**Evaluation**

The Farm to Preschool pilot intervention was targeted to predominantly Hispanic and African American, low-income communities in Los Angeles and San Diego counties. Pre- and post-intervention data were collected at 3 control sites and 6 intervention sites. In addition, data from students’ parents were collected. Over a two year period, over 1,000 surveys from students and over 500 surveys from parents were collected during the 2009-2011 school years.

The program serves a population with several barriers to healthy eating:
- 85% of responding parents participated in WIC; 44% utilized food stamps
- 68% of responding parents reported an ESL (English as a Second Language) home environment
- 38% of responding parents reported having never completed high school or a GED

Before intervention, 1 in 5 students ate no vegetables on a typical day. Across the outcomes presented below, students part of the Farm to Preschool program out-performed their peers at demographically similar control sites. In fact, for some measures collected, students’ performance was found to decrease over time at control sites. After 9-months enrolled in the Farm to Preschool curriculum, students demonstrated:

### Student Outcomes

**Knowledge of Fruits & Vegetables**
- 55% increase in students’ ability to correctly identify fruits
- 74% decrease in mistakenly identifying non-fruit or vegetable distracters as fruits
- 130% increase in students’ ability to correctly identify vegetables
- 73% decrease in mistakenly identifying non-fruit or vegetable distracters as vegetables

**Preference for Fruits and Vegetables**
- 5% increase in liking fruits
- 16% increase in liking vegetables

As a reference point, at the same time students reported no significant change in their preferences for non-fruit or vegetable foods like cookies, cheese, or lollipops.

**Knowledge of Farm-Fresh Foods**
- 126% increase in correctly identifying farm produce as fresher than those on grocery store shelves

### Parent Outcomes

In addition to providing an in-class curriculum, the Farm to Preschool program has also offered a series of educational parent workshops resulting in improvements to parents’ understanding of farmers’ markets, healthy eating practices and nutritional labels, for example.
Partners

ABC Unified School District
The Almansor Center
Children’s Bureau of Southern California
Children’s Nature Institute
Compton Unified School District
Connections for Children Resource & Referral
Creative Minds Preschool
Crystal Stairs, Inc.
Cuyamaca Community College CDC
Garden School Foundation
Glendale Community College CDC
Hacienda/La Puente Unified School District
Kauai, Hawaii Head Start centers
L.A. Universal Preschool (LAUP)
Lennox Unified School District
Little Stars Preschool, Arizona
Los Angeles Valley Community College
Mexican American Opportunity Foundation
Neighborhood House Association
North County Community Services
P.A.C.E. Early Childhood Education
Pathways L.A.
Rainbow Preschool
San Diego Childhood Obesity Initiative
San Diego County Aging & Independence Services
San Diego County YMCA Childcare Resource Service
UC Cooperative Extension, Los Angeles
UCLA Healthcare Institute
USC School for Early Childhood Education

Training Opportunities
The Farm to Preschool program offers two highly interactive trainings (1) Farm to Preschool: Cultivating Healthy Students and (2) Seed to Table: Planting a School Garden. The first training is designed to educate providers about the essence of the Farm to Preschool program: the curriculum, student exploration and learning, parent engagement, teacher modeling, incorporation of local food and conducting taste tests and other culinary activities. The second training is designed to help participants hone their gardening skills. Each training lasts 1 hour with the curriculum preceding the garden training. Trainings can be modified or combined into a 2 hour training to fit teacher and site needs.

Farm to Preschool: Cultivating Healthy Students
Participants learn the fundamentals of the Farm to Preschool program starting with the purpose and history of the program, the link between Harvest of the Month and Farm to Preschool, the Farm to Preschool nutrition- and garden-based curriculum for preschoolers and best practices for optimal program implementation. Participants learn about the different components of the program, how to conduct an in-class taste test, model positive behaviors and learn ways to best encourage student interaction and exploration with the environment.

Seed to Table: Planting a School Garden
This fun and interactive training gives participants the tools and knowledge they need to successfully start and maintain a school garden year round. Participants greatly benefit from the various resources provided, gardening tips and practical hands-on activities. Strategies on engaging children in the garden are discussed along with safety in the garden.

Website
The Farm to Preschool program currently hosts two resource-based websites: the Farm to Preschool website and the Farm to Preschool program page on the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute website, at Occidental College. Both sites offer an abundance of resources for teachers, administrators, food service staff and parents.
FarmToPreschool.org is a clearinghouse of resources contributed by Farm to Preschool programs nationwide. The site has information on every aspect of the Farm to Preschool model: local food sourcing, curricula, seasonal foods and menus, school gardening, evaluation tools, grant information, publications and current news, as well as resources for families. This site serves the needs of virtually every form of early childhood education and child care models throughout the United States, including family home care, Head Start, centers and more.

http://www.uepi.oxy.edu/our-projects/farm-to-preschool/

The Farm to Preschool program at Occidental College is a program within the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute. The program’s webpage offers an array of resources for preschools and family child care professionals. Here, you will find downloadable materials available in English and Spanish and useful resources for providers in California, which can be modified to fit the needs of any child care setting in other states, cultures, and climate regions. UEPI’s Farm to Preschool model has been replicated in Hawaii, focusing on Hawaiian culture and produce and is currently in pilot phase with the Navajo Nation in Arizona.

Harvest of the Month Produce List

The Farm to Preschool program highlights a fruit or vegetable in season in California each month (September-May). Each year comprises a variety of both fruits and vegetables. An alternate calendar is also provided that is based on the seasonality of each fruit or vegetable in the state of California. This allows users to mix the order of the lessons to whatever is in season in their region or to best fit their needs. The program currently offers two years of curriculum and is in the process of developing a third year of curriculum, expected to be available by 2014.
Highlighted Produce: 1 Year Cycle

- September – Apples
- October – Carrots and Sweet Potatoes
- November – Spinach
- December – Peas and Green Beans
- January – Oranges
- February – Root Vegetables
- March – Cabbage Family (Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cabbage)
- April – Lettuce
- May – Avocado

Highlighted Produce: 2nd Year Cycle

- September – Tomatoes
- October – Peppers
- November – Pumpkins and Winter Squash
- December – Persimmons
- January – Kiwi
- February – Cabbage Family (Collards and Bok Choy)
- March – Grapefruit
- April – Asparagus
- May – Cucumbers
Seasonal Chart: Alternative Implementation Calendar

The recommended season to use the curriculum is written in the appropriate column but the curriculum may be used in any season that is highlighted in green. On the front page of the curriculum materials, the bolded season is the recommended season on this chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>WINTER</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>SUMMER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots &amp; Beets</td>
<td>Cabbage Family *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Beans &amp; Peas</td>
<td>Kiwi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zucchini &amp; Squash</td>
<td>Persimmons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root vegetables</td>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cabbage Family includes 'Part 1' (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage) and 'Part 2' (collards & bok choy) Part 2 is usually taught in February to celebrate Black History Month and the Chinese New Year.

Coming Soon...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>WINTER</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>SUMMER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td></td>
<td>Berries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grapes &amp; Raisins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Melons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pears</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stone fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer Squash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Implementing Farm to Preschool

Suggested List of Materials

The Farm to Preschool curriculum and technical assistance are provided to you free of charge. However, there are associated costs to a successful implementation of the Farm to Preschool program, such as books, science and gardening tools for hands-on learning and exploration, and local produce for taste tests and other food preparation. Costs will vary based on several factors, such as books and supplies a site may already have, shipping costs, etc. We suggest using www.amazon.com and www.neatsolutions.com for purchasing books and Lakeshore Learning (www.lakeshorelearning.com) for science tools. However, you may use any sources for these resources appropriate to your specific site.

Books

This is a list of all the books used throughout the curriculum along with an estimated cost and website where they can be purchased.

- **I Am An Apple** by Jean Marzollo
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($4.95)

- **The Seasons of Arnold’s Apple Tree** by Gail Gibbons
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($7.00)

- **Dr. Strong and Sweet Potatoes** by Yori Takeda
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($7.99)

- **The Carrot Seed** by Ruth Krauss
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($6.99)

- **From the Garden** by Michael Dahl
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($7.95)

- **I Eat Vegetables** by Hannah Tofts
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($10.36)

- **One Bean** by Anne Rockwell
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($6.95)

- **An Orange in January** by Dianna Hutts Aston
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($13.25)

- **Up, Down, and Around** by Katherine Ayres
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($6.99)

- **Gathering the Sun** by Alma Flor Ada
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($6.99)

- **Eating the Alphabet: Fruits & Vegetables From A to Z** by Lois Ehlert
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) ($6.95)

- **A Visit to the Farmers’ Market** by Peggy Sissel-Phelan
  - [www.neatsolutions.com](http://www.neatsolutions.com) ($7.99)
Handa’s Surprise
by Eileen Browne
www.amazon.com
($3.99)

Tomatoes grow on a vine
by Mari Schuh
www.amazon.com
($7.95)

Growing Vegetable Soup
by Lois Ehlert
www.amazon.com
($2.94)

Pumpkin Circle
by George Levenson
www.amazon.com
($7.99)

How Are You Peeling?
Foods With Moods
www.amazon.com
($6.99)

A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds
by Jean Richards
www.amazon.com
($6.95)

Two Mrs. Gibsons
by Toyomi Igus
www.amazon.com
($7.95)

Nate’s Big Hair and the Grapefruit in There
by Duke Chistoffersen
www.neatsolutions.com
($9.95)

We Eat Food That’s Fresh!
by Angela Russ-Ayon
www.neatsolutions.com
($11.99)

Vegetables Count
by Peggy Sissel-Phelan
www.neatsolutions.com
($6.99)

Victor Vito and Freddie Vasco
by Laura Berkner
www.amazon.com
($5.40)

Science Discovery Lab Tools
www.LakeshoreLearning.com

- Magnifying Glass (~$10 - $30)
- Tweezers (~$10)
- Plastic Trays (~$15)
- Scale/Balance (~$17 - $20)
- Magnifying Cup (not shown) (~$30)
- Big Screen Microscope (not shown) (~$60)
Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Photo Cards

Item: 001650
144 Cards, 8 7/8" x 9 1/2"
Price: $50.00
2008

This set of beautiful photo cards encourages students to eat more fruits and vegetables. The front of each card displays a fruit or vegetable with its name in English and in Spanish (when available). On the reverse is a bar graph displaying an analysis of nutrients, suggested serving size and other information.

1. Go to: http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/ap/pubcat.aspx
2. On the field labeled “Keywords” enter “Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Photo Cards” and click on the “Search” button. Another option is to enter “001650” on the field labeled “Item Number” and then click on the “Search” button. Both options will provide you with the same result.
3. After you’ve clicked on the “Search” button, your search result will show below.
4. Select the link named “Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Photo Cards,” highlighted in blue.

Teacher Tips

Being a Positive Role Model

- Be a positive role model and be adventurous about trying new things.
- Encourage the student to do the same. The goal is for all children to at least try one bite of the recipe.
- However, no child should be forced or criticized if they prefer not to try the recipe.
- If you like the recipe, share your enthusiasm and positive comments.
- If you do not like the recipe, please be discrete (do not openly criticize the food).
- Remember that it takes multiple tries of a new food to become accustomed to it.
- Give yourself and the food a chance.
- If the students participated in the food preparation, compliment the students on the recipe – they may have participated in making the snack. Thank them for their hard work and for making delicious food (if they did this).

- Always have a portion of the Taste Test or Food Experience recipe.
- Students will be more willing to try the recipe if you are eating with them and model how to try new foods.
- Offer a second helping once the student has finished the first portion.
Ask the children to explain how they made the food (ingredients, stirring, measuring, etc.). They will be eager to talk about their hard work and the recipe.

Keep the table conversation pleasant. Talk about positive things and discourage the children from talking about unpleasant topics or openly criticizing the food offerings.

Remind them to respect the feelings of their friends and teachers who prepared the food for them.

If you have any unhealthy meals, snacks or beverages for yourself, please do not eat them in front of the children, nor have them out in open view.

Adapted from Early Sprouts garden nutrition curriculum

## Conducting a Taste Test

### Introduce the fruit or vegetable

- Give its name in English, in Spanish (or other language appropriate to the class demographics), and ask the children if they know of the item name in other languages.
- Share any other general information you might have talked to the class about in the curriculum or from your educator’s Harvest of the Month newsletter (such as how and when it is grown, how and when it is harvested, etc.).
- Talk about the farm or farmer the fruit or vegetable came from, if you have that information.
- Ask: what color is it? Does this come in other colors too?

Talk about the color, the outside texture and the inside texture (if it’s something you can cut open and show to the class) and seeds (if any).

### Taste the produce (portions to students and teacher/s)

- Ask: How does this taste?
- Ask: What is the texture like when you eat it?
- Ask: Have you eaten this before?
- Ask: If you like this, raise your hand!

### Record the responses

Have students put a sticker or write their names on the appropriate side of the “I Like/I Don’t Like This Yet” sheet.

Encourage all students to keep trying new foods.

Remind students they may be eating this in some of their school meals or snacks (if this applies to your school).

Below is an example of a chart you can create with the help of the class. This is a great way to integrate math into the food experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Field Trip to the Farmers’ Market

Check local community resources for the location, Date and time of market closest to you.

**Learning Aims**

Children will have the opportunity to experience and explore the local farmers’ market.

Children will learn about farmers, farming and local food.

**Market Hazards**

Remind children to walk, don’t run.

Children should listen, look and follow directions.

Remind children not to stray from the group.
Farmer Questions

- How long have you been farming?
- What do you like about being a farmer?
- How big is your farm?
- Who helps you on your farm?
- Do you have any animals on your farm?
- What is the hardest thing about farming?
- Where is your farm? How far is it from here?
- Why is it important that I buy my food directly from you?
- Where else can I buy your food?
- Why is it important to sell your food at a certified farmers’ market?
- What else do you grow that is not here with you today?

Questions for Children

- What fruits do you see here?
- What vegetables do you see here?
- What are the different colors you see?
- What is new fruit or vegetable here that you would like to try for the first time?

Modified from UEPI’s LA Farm and Food Field Trips guide and All About Farmers’ Markets by P. Sissel-Phelan

Tutti Fruitti Instant Recess™

Developed by Dr. Yancy at the University of California, Los Angeles, Tutti Fruitti physical activity breaks get children’s bodies moving while reinforcing healthy eating concepts. These simple movements and stretches are great for group and transitional times.

Local Food Purchasing Options

Sourcing local food items for snacks and meal patterns at preschool and childcare sites is an integral part of the program. Local food is fresh and healthy and also helps sustain the local economy through purchases from small to mid-sized farms. Children are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables when they are fresh and the model helps them learn about food systems and how food is grown.

UEPI successfully works with participating sites to find sustainable and affordable means to purchase local produce for meals, snacks, taste tests and other educational and cooking-based activities. Working within existing systems of food procurement, we help find the best means to improve preschool food. Our best practice model includes starting ‘small’ with snack or taste test purchases until a sustainable purchasing mechanism is determined. Key components are budget, volume and seasonality of requested items.

Local Food Purchasing Options

1. Contract with produce distributors that work with local* farmers (for larger centers or those that utilize a contracted food or nutrition services vendor).
2. Collaborate with one or several farmers at your local farmers’ market.
3. Collaborate directly with a local farmer (farm-direct).
4. Collaborate with a grower’s collaborative that aggregates produce from several farms.
5. Subscribe to a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program that delivers fresh market basket produce. Schools, parents and even the surrounding community can participate in this type of programs. Some farms have affordable pricing for low income subscribers.
6. Participate in cooperative purchasing with other preschool sites and local farmers (higher volume usually results in low prices).
7. Utilize a scratch cooking model that promotes fresh and local food items.

*local is generally defined as within a 200 miles radius, although the definition is flexible with the location and its resources
Resources

Recommended Websites

Farm to Preschool Resources

Farm to Preschool Curriculum *(Harvest of the Month, modified by UEPI/Occidental College)*
http://www.uepi.oxy.edu/our-projects/farm-to-preschool/

Farm to Preschool/Farm to Childcare Website
http://www.farmtopreschool.org

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Photo Cards (curriculum supplement, CA Dept of Education)

Harvest of the Month
http://www.harvestofthemonth.com/
http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/nut/LACOLLAB_Files/documents/HOTM/HOTM%20Resources.htm

Los Angeles Fresh Food Access Guide (for L.A. County, developed by UEPI/Occidental College)
http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/publications/ffagspanish.pdf

Teacher-Provider Resources

California Healthy Kids Resource Center
http://www.californiahealthykids.org

Healthy & Active Preschoolers
http://www.healthypreschoolers.com/

Let’s Move! Child Care
http://www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org

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

USDA’s Nibbles for Health
http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/nibbles.html

We Can!

Parent Resources

Fruits & Veggies More Matters (CDC)
http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/

National Center for Health Education: Physical Activity Tips for Parents
School Garden Resources
California School Garden Network
http://www.csgn.org/

California Dept of Education – Safety in the Garden
http://www.cde.ca.gov/LS/nu/he/gardensafety.asp

Grants - National Gardening Association
http://www.kidsgardening.org
check Target and other home/garden stores for grants

School Garden Wizard (Keep It Growing guide)
http://www.schoolgardenwizard.org/

University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) – Los Angles

Community Resources for School Gardens
Free Gardening tools and supplies
Check your local plant nurseries, Lowes, Home Depot or OSH for donations

Free Seeds
Check your local 99 Cent stores (or similar) for inexpensive seeds
Local nurseries for expired seeds

Look for: free mulch at local city sites; subsidized compost bins and workshops through your county; and free technical assistance and other services through your county’s Cooperative Extension.