

NEBRASKA

2017 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SURVEY

Farm to School enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education sites.



Farm to Preschool
NEBRASKA

Early childhood is an ideal time to teach and influence lifelong eating habits and taste preferences for our littlest eaters.

FARM TO PRESCHOOL

- Connects early childcare settings to local food producers in order to serve locally grown foods in snacks and meals
- Emphasizes experiential learning opportunities in nutrition and agriculture
- Educational experiences are enhanced through hands-on learning in school gardens
- Fosters parent and community engagement

CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM to SCHOOL



THE 2017 NEBRASKA FARM TO PRESCHOOL SURVEY

309 early childcare providers, representing more than 54,000 children across the state, responded to the survey. The greatest representation was in the urban areas of Omaha and Lincoln, representing more than half of respondents (51%). Nearly three-quarters (73%) of all respondents were licensed family daycare home programs, with the rest mostly centers, and a small number (2%) of school district respondents.

FARM TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Almost all sites reported doing at least one of three farm to school (F2S) activities.



94%

served local food products.



51%

tended edible gardens.



20%

conducted F2S education activities.

Sites more than 10 attendees were more likely to do education activities than smaller sites (38% vs. 7%). One out of three sites who had more part-time attendees did F2S education activities, but only 14% of sites with mostly full time (75%+) attendees did them.

35% of sites had done farm to school activities for at least 3 years.

The most common **existing** activities were:

42% Educating children about locally grown food, how food grows and where it comes from

39% Worked with children in an edible garden

Intent to start in the next year was highest for:

33% Celebrating National Farm to School Month

32% Educating children about locally grown food, how food grows and where it comes from

ACCESS TO LOCAL FOOD

22% of sites did NOT purchase local foods

- 34% of Centers did NOT purchase local compared to 18% of Family Day Care Homes
- 28% of urban sites did NOT purchase local compared to 16% rural locations
- 35% of those without gardens did NOT buy local compared to 9% of those with gardens



46% purchased local food from farmers' markets, with smaller sites more likely than larger sites to purchase there.

43% received donated produce. This was more common in larger sites, rural locations, and those with gardens.



34% grew produce in their own gardens



52%

Vegetables were the most purchased local food items (45%), then fruit (33%), and meat (12%). The most common single item **apples**. Over half of respondents said apples were in their top 5 items spent on local purchases. Also common were cucumbers (49%) and tomatoes (43%).

Meat was the most common desired local item that was hard to get due to cost or supply. This was followed by fruit (16%) and milk (12%).



23%

SERVING LOCAL FOOD



54% served local vegetables at least weekly; Family Day Care Homes were more likely than Centers to serve local vegetables.

48% served local fruits on a weekly basis, with Family Day Care Homes serving local more often.



40% served local meat/poultry on a weekly basis. Family Day Care Homes, rural sites, and larger sites were more likely to serve local meats.

38% served local milk on a weekly basis, but nearly half (48%) said they never served local milk. Milk was the most common local food served daily.



EDUCATION

of sites used F2S curriculum – Centers **7%** were four times more likely to use curriculum than Family Day Care Homes. **67%** want curriculum resources to integrate farm to school activities into their programs.

Sites with gardens most often used it for growing food; use for taste testing and education was also high (58%) for this group. Centers (93%), larger sites (80%), those with older kids (70%), and in urban locations (68%) were more likely to use gardens for education.

RESOURCES

67% wanted grant/fundraising opportunities to help develop their program, with greater desire from Centers and larger sites.

42% wanted help connecting with local producers, especially larger sites.

33% were interested in electronic newsletters, with more desire from larger sites.

REASONS FOR FARM TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

How important were various reasons farm to school activities?

- 1 Improved health of children (89%)
- 2 Lower meal costs (83%)
- 3 Provide children with experiential learning (79%)
- 4 Teach children about where food comes from (78%)
- 5 Access to higher quality food (69%)



All differences significant at least the 0.05 level; Flaticon images from Freepik

