

Farm to School PSE Project Implementation

Summary of Key Findings

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR OBESITY PREVENTION STUDY

2016

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The Building Capacity for Obesity Prevention Project (BCOP) is a partnership between Case Western Reserve University, Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods; The Ohio State University, SNAP-Ed program; and the Ohio Department of Health, Creating Healthy Communities Program (CHC). The aim of this researcher-practitioner collaborative project is to develop diagnostic tools that can be used by SNAP-Ed and CHC practitioners as they implement and sustain four different nutrition-related policy, systems, and environment (PSE) interventions. The targeted interventions include: *Farmers' Markets*, *Healthy Food Retail*, *Farm to School*, and *healthy eating policies in childcare*.

This report focuses on analysis of qualitative data collected from 9 counties in Ohio (4 rural, 5 urban) in 2015. Data collection included 18 interviews conducted with 11 CHC and 9 SNAP-Ed practitioners as well as 23 focus groups conducted with community residents including 47 CHC Coalition members and 127 SNAP-Ed participants or SNAP eligible residents regarding farm to school PSE projects. The data that are the focus of this report provide rich information about factors perceived to influence successful implementation of farm to school PSE projects.

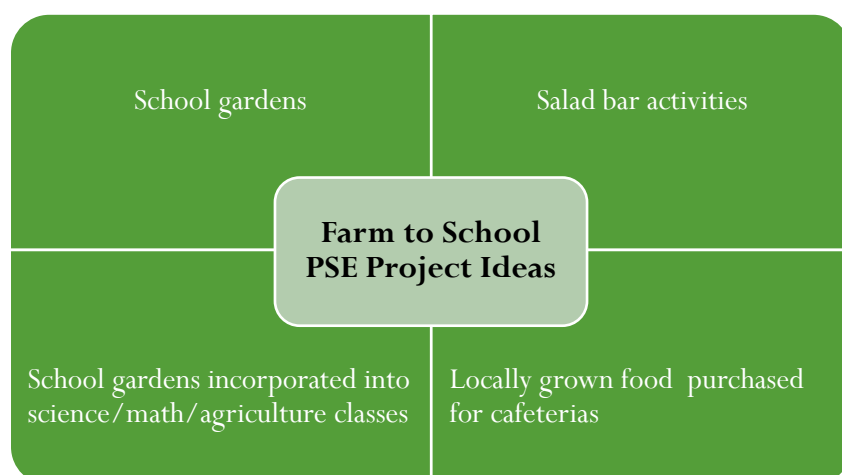


FIGURE 1. EXAMPLES OF FARM TO SCHOOL PSE PROJECTS

The qualitative data revealed that successful farm to school PSE projects are dependent on factors related to *community attitudes and perceptions*, *organizational capacity*, and *school capacity*. Each of these factors includes themes and sub-themes that are described in greater detail in the following pages.



Community Nutrition and Public Health Organizational and Practitioner Capacity

- Skills, resources, networks of relationships and capacity for organizations and practitioners to support implementation of farm to school PSE projects



Community Attitudes and Perceptions

- Community-wide beliefs that influence implementation of farm to school PSE projects



School Capacity

- School administrators' perceptions, school staff's attitudes and school staff's resources to support farm to school PSE projects

FIGURE 2. FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPLEMENTATION OF FARM TO SCHOOL PSE PROJECTS



Theme

Definition

Example Quote

1

Community
Nutrition and
Public Health
Organizational and
Practitioner
Capacity

Having the budgets, staff, resources, work plans, and community support systems to implement farm to school PSE projects.

“That [School garden] was in my work plan to introduce that to them [schools] and we had some funding that helped support that too.” (CHC Rural Interview)

“Interviewer: What about for like just having a garden...in the school? Do you think there are other barriers for that?”

The cost...the cost would be the biggest thing I think.” (SNAP-Ed Rural Focus Group)

2

Networks &
Relationships

The networks and relationships (i.e., social capital) from which practitioners and community members can draw on to implement and support farm to school PSE projects.

“...for the high school greenhouse, we’re partnering with [name of greenhouse/garden] who are providing the hydroponics and all those other things and educating the students how that works, and the whole process for it.” (CHC Rural Interview)

“There’s someone that is championing that effort and saying you know “This is where we need to move towards because it’s important,” so we have someone willing to do that and that is the motivation and that’s how they get other people on board.” (CHC Urban Focus Group)

3

School Capacity

The abilities and resources of schools to support implementation of farm to school PSE projects.

“Our local school district here is doing it [farm to school] because again they are getting incentives for being able to put that stuff on those menus that they’re using. They’re planning the menus with the garden, items already been bought they’re planning them, so the barriers are not really there because it’s happening.” (SNAP-Ed Urban Focus Group)

4

Community Attitudes & Perceptions

Community factors such as awareness, motivations, and perceptions that influence implementation of healthy farm to school PSE projects.

“The infrastructure is not there to support that [farm to school] and I think a lot of our community leaders don’t know what farm to school is.” (CHC Urban Focus Group)

“I feel like before growing the garden it would be really nice if they [students] do the garden and then they ate their own product that they grew, you know, that they planted. I think that would be really nice.” (SNAP-Ed Urban Focus Group)

Sample Indicators for Assessing Readiness and Capacity to Implement Farm to School PSE Projects

Once the most important themes for successful implementation of farm to school PSE projects were identified, the BCOP team worked to create indicators that can be included in the diagnostic tool to assess readiness and capacity to implement farm to school PSE projects. These indicators were reviewed by leaders from SNAP-Ed and CHC as well as by experts in farm to school programming. Below are two sample indicators for each theme. In winter 2016, these and related indicators will be incorporated into a tool for SNAP-Ed and CHC practitioners to use for planning and goal setting.

Community Nutrition and Public Health Organizational and Practitioner Capacity

To what extent does your organization apply for grants to support implementation of farm to school PSE projects?

To what extent do you spend time each month seeking out or connecting with community stakeholders such as agricultural coordinators, school cafeteria managers, or school wellness committees to increase support for implementation of farm to school PSE projects?

Networks and Relationships

To what extent is there a distribution and sourcing system available to schools in your service area to support access to locally produced food items?

To what extent are you connected to or partnered with key personnel (i.e., board of education, food bank, or school superintendent) who are supportive of implementing farm to school PSE projects?

Community Attitudes and Perceptions

To what extent are parents and students in your service area aware of farm to school PSE project opportunities such as school gardens and salad bars at school?

To what extent are farmers in your service area motivated to participate in farm to school PSE projects?

School Capacity

To what extent are farm to school PSE projects in your service area integrated into school curriculum and activities (e.g., greenhouse integrated with science class)?

To what extent are there supportive programs and resources available to maintain school garden during summer?

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