



Farm to School Overview:

Farm to School emerged in 2007 with several pilot schools in California and Florida, at present there are nearly 9,000 schools involved in 43 states. This nation-wide program connects K-12th graders with their local agricultural community. One of the main objectives of this program is to serve healthier school meals utilizing local foods, while also educating students about food systems.

This past fall the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI) adopted the Farm to School program, believing that its goals encompassed the FFI's vision for creating healthier communities. For the first year, six school districts in Northeast Iowa have been chosen as Farm to School pilots. The pilots are Decorah, Postville, Turkey Valley, Howard-Winneshiek, Oelwein, and Starmont. The focus of Northeast Iowa's Farm to School chapter involves three interdependent components-- education, food service, and school gardens. Funding and support is available for all areas of the project.

Farm to School Cross Age Teaching Training

High school students have been trained to teach Farm to School curriculum to second grade students. During the training students modeled lessons and gave/received feedback.

Farm to School Teacher Training

Second grade teachers had the opportunity to attend a workshop emphasizing how to effectively incorporate cross-disciplinary Farm to School and related curriculum into the classrooms while integrating the Iowa Core standards. Emily Neal, Luther College Environmental Outreach Coordinator, led the workshop on February 25 at Luther College. Field Days/Producer Visits will be an opportunity coordinated by Farm to School coordinator and GROWN Locally coordinator, Johnice Cross.

Food Service

Area food service personnel have participated in three Farm to School related opportunities since January 2009. These have been lead by Cindy Baumgartner ISU Nutrition & Health Program Specialist. A Food Service Director Planning Meeting included conversations about the use of local foods, bidding, procurement, product availability, and common barriers. The ServSafe Training addressed issues regarding food hazards and proper food handling practices in order to keep food safe in an establishment. Food service directors who participated received a 5-year ServSafe certification. The SafeFood Training extended the ServSafe topics to educate all food handlers on safety basics.

School Gardens

Cross and David Cavagnaro, a horticultural expert, have met with several pilot schools to identify a core school garden team, explore ideas, challenges, and potential garden sites. Additional planning will happen in the spring including beginning seeds donated by Seed Savers Exchange. Outdoor planting is set for May and/or early June.

