



## Purpose

Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative adopted Farm to School to help ensure that school district policies and practices support healthy living of children, families and community members.

The northeast Iowa Farm to School Chapter is a unique model in that they are spearheading efforts in school districts across Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek counties.

The Farm to School work is a joint project of the School Wellness Work Group coordinated by Luther College and the NE IA Food & Farm Coalition coordinated by ISU Extension and Outreach.

The Northeast Iowa Farm to School Work Group is responsible for providing technical and financial support for the teacher workshops, cross-age teaching, food service trainings and the school gardens.

This report covers Year 2 of the implementation phase of the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative Community Action Plan (November 1, 2010–October 31, 2011) although the activities featured occurred throughout the 2010-11 school year.

## Increased Capacity

### School Wellness Teams

The Northeast Iowa Farm to School Chapter was able to expand and deepen its work in the six counties of Northeast Iowa by developing a School Wellness Team Action Plan which was released to schools in October 2010. The plan offered schools a complete list of activities to implement in their schools.

The Action Plan was designed to help schools strengthen their wellness teams and give them ownership of wellness activities in their district. Building the capacity of the school to support this work, will make the Farm to School and Safe Routes to School activities more sustainable.

### School Resource Contacts

Resource contacts, consisting of three AmeriCorps and FFI staff members, were assigned to individual schools to guide them through the action plan process as well as build capacity with team members, youth teams, food service, and others. Furthermore, the AmeriCorps staff members specialized in a certain focus of the work: Farm to School, Safe Routes to School and youth development (4-H). Stephanie Conant was the farm to school intern.



A variety of Farm to School activities were available to schools and can be seen in Table 1. A brief description of each activity follows. More information about Best Practices of Farm to School components is available in the [2009-10 Farm to School Annual Report](#).

## Farm to School Activities

### Home Grown School Lunch Week

Home Grown School Lunch Week is modeled after a program in Delaware where school lunches featured local food throughout the week. Many schools conduct additional school-based activities to promote healthier eating. Food Service Directors in local school systems offer local items on the school lunch menu during the week. Nutrition education information is provided to students, and they will learn the benefits of using Iowa-grown foods. If schools purchased \$300 of food from local farmers, they were eligible to receive a \$300 piece of kitchen equipment for use in future local food lunches. This was the third year for the program. More: <http://www.iowafreshfood.com/site/news/138.html>



**Table 1. Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative - Year 2  
Farm to School Activities**

Community School District	FOOD SERVICE										SCHOOL GARDENS				CLASSROOM			
	Home Grown School Lunch Week	5th Season Workshop: Raterouille	5th Season Workshop: Stir-fry	Completed Food Service Survey	Completed Spec-Sheets	Food Service Networking Meeting	SeruSafe Training	School Food Webinar	School Garden	School Garden Logs	Use Food from School Garden	Saled Bar	Teacher Training	F2S Cross-Age Teaching	Team Nutrition School	Other*		
<b>Public Schools:</b>																		
Allamakee CSD				X	X							X				BASICS		
Central CSD	X			X	X										X			
Clayton Ridge CSD	X														X			
Decorah CSD	X		X	X	X	X						X	X	X	X			
E. Allamakee CSD																		
Howard-Winn. CSD	X			X		X						X	X	X	X	BASICS		
MFL-Mar-Mac CSD																		
N. Fayette CSD	X				X							X	X		X			
N. Winneshiek CSD	X			X		X						X	X					
New Hampton CSD	X											X						
Oelwein CSD	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	BASICS		
Postville CSD	X	X		X	X	X						X	X			BASICS; FOF; FFVP		
Piceville CSD	X				X													
S. Winneshiek CSD	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X	X	X			
Starbuck CSD	X													X	X			
Turkey Valley CSD	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X	X	X			
Valley of Plover CSD	X			X		X						X	X	X	X			
W. Central CSD					X	X												
<b>Parochial Schools:</b>																		
CFS Catholic Schools																		
DeSales School, Cresco															X			
St Patrick's, Waukon															X			
St. Joseph's, N. Hampton	X			X	X										X			
St. Mary's, Guttenberg																		
St. Ben's, Decorah																		
Trinity, Proctor															X			
<b>Total Schools = 26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>			

\*Other:

BASICS: Building and Strengthening Iowa Community Support for Nutrition and Physical Activity

FOF: Face of Farmer

FFVP: Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program

## Food Service: 5th Season Workshops

Some local school food service staff sharpened their cooking skills by attending 5th Season Workshops hosted by the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative Farm to School program.

A 5th Season Workshop is designed to teach food service staff how to prepare and store local foods from farmers or school gardens. As the name implies, the fifth season is when you utilize local foods that have been preserved by a variety of methods in meals. Two workshops were held (ratatouille, stir-fry). More: <http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/news/229.html>

## Food Service: Survey

As part of the FFI Farm to School Project, public and private K-12 schools in northeast Iowa were surveyed on their use of local food and the amount spent on local food.

More schools are purchasing local food. Sixteen schools reported local food purchases in the 2010-11 school year as shown on Table 2. The previous year, eleven schools reported \$13,477 in purchases.

Table 2. Local food purchases by public schools in the 2010-11 school year.

Allamakee CSD	\$ 846.40
Central CSD	\$ 1,000.00
Clayton Ridge CSD	\$ 395.00
Decorah CSD	\$ 4,341.00
Howard-Winneshiek CSD	\$ 800.00
Nashua-Plainfield	\$ 303.00
New Hampton CSD	\$ 300.00
North Winneshiek CSD	\$ 334.00
Oelwein CSD	\$ 1,064.00
Postville CSD	\$ 1,875.00
Riceville CSD	\$ 313.00
S. Winneshiek CSD	\$ 829.00
St. Josephs, New Hampton	\$ 300.00
Starmont CSD	\$ 330.00
Turkey Valley CSD	\$ 1,000.00
Valley CSD	\$ 588.00
Total	\$14,618.40

The amounts purchased by schools are still small (<2%) in comparison to the money they spend on food. However, more schools have school gardens and are reporting using more produce from the gardens (Table 1).

Many of the schools reporting purchases of local food are reporting the amount spent during Home Grown School Lunch week and not reporting any other purchases.

When visiting school food service last spring, several directors reported frustration with the time required to obtain quotes from farmers before making purchases.

Several of the northeast Iowa schools participate in the school buying consortium. The coop buying system was under investigation last year for allegedly limiting competition (more: [http://siouxcityjournal.com/news/state-and-regional/iowa/article\\_b5c27df0-286a-11df-a8ad-001cc4c03286.html](http://siouxcityjournal.com/news/state-and-regional/iowa/article_b5c27df0-286a-11df-a8ad-001cc4c03286.html)). This close examination of the whole procurement process has some food service directors unwilling to deviate from the system even though the USDA continues to release more details on applying geographic preference.

Finally, the total sales reported from the previous school year are lower than originally reported. Several schools were reporting numbers from a local farmer-distribution company. FFI staff learned this year that about 10% of those sales to schools can be considered locally grown in the tri-state area. The numbers from the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school year have been adjusted to reflect this new information.

## Food Service: Procurement Assistance

Most of the schools in our region can use informal purchasing of local produce because the SFA/USDA formal procurement threshold has not been met.

Informal purchasing just like formal purchasing must be procured with the opportunity for maximum fair and open competition. This means that more than one potential vendor is contacted and asked to submit a bid. More: [http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/uploads/PDF\\_File\\_18844679.pdf](http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/uploads/PDF_File_18844679.pdf)

Finding time to collect the quotes was identified as a barrier. In order to assist schools with the bidding process, FFI staff piloted a project to facilitate the collection of quotes for school food service. FFI staff visited school food services directors in the area to show them how to use spec sheets designed for 15 fruits and vegetables that can be grown in northeast Iowa (Table 3). The food service directors completed the sheets and mailed them back to FFI staff.

Copies were made and sent to farmers who indicated they were interested in selling to schools. The farmers completed information on price, size and availability of their crops and returned to the FFI staff. FFI staff compiled the sheets and returned them to food service staff for final review and to contact the farmer or an order.

Eight schools returned spec sheets. Unfortunately, only five producers returned the bid sheets. More than three bids were received for apples, bell peppers, winter squash, tomatoes.

Lack of time to complete, unwillingness to set prices and lack of understanding of the process were cited as reasons for the poor response rate.

We also observed an interesting conflict. In order to offer a consistent supply of product and to meet the volume requirements for schools, producers often need to aggregate their product together. Unfortunately, when three farmers work together to source to a school, the school is only able to obtain one bid instead of three bids. Working with a distributor may solve some of these issues, but only if the distributor lists several sources of a product.

## Food Service Networking

Schools have felt affects of budget cuts. This has meant fewer professional development opportunities for food service employees. Area food service employees have appreciated the opportunity to network. By educating food service employees and providing them with networking opportunities, they have been more willing to purchase and incorporate healthy, local foods into their meals.

A networking meeting was held at Luther College this year. School food service staff talked about their successes and challenges will using local food. ISU Extension staff talked about the Healthier US School Challenge and the new Iowa Gold Cycle menus. Food service staff swapped recipes and were treated to school recipes featuring local foods prepared by the Luther College food service staff. More: <http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/site/recipes.html>



Table 3. Foods that can be grown in northeast Iowa at a price similar to conventional school food sources. Local prices were based on in-season prices on produce grown in the field vs. high tunnel or greenhouse production.

1. Apples
2. Bell peppers
3. Broccoli
4. Cabbage
5. Carrots
6. Cauliflower
7. Cucumbers
8. Melon: muskmelon
9. Melon: honeydew
10. Melon: watermelon
11. Radishes
12. Summer squash
13. Tomatoes (slicing)
14. Tomatoes (cherry)
15. Winter squash

Source: NE IA Food Service survey, 2010.

## Food Safety Training

Having a basic understanding of proper handling of foods is foundational in any school kitchen. Food safety trainings equip food service employees with necessary skills to properly handle and use local foods. ServSafe, a nationally accredited course, was offered to northeast Iowa school food service staff. The 8-hour ServSafe® Training included 18 participants from five schools. At the end of ServSafe® training 94% of the participants passed a test to certify them for five years.

More: <http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/news/222.html>

## School Food Webinars

ISU Extension staff created three webinars for food service workers focusing on how to use local foods in school cafeteria recipes: apples, cucumbers, and broccoli. The webinars were based off information from the Nation Farm to School and University of Minnesota Farm to School websites.

More: <http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/news/150.html>

[www.iowafoodandfitness.org/news/150.html](http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/news/150.html)

## School Gardens & Logs

School gardens provide schools and communities with fresh produce, while also serving as an outdoor natural laboratory for students. Students gain an appreciation for their food and nature, which encourages environmental stewardship.

Sixteen schools had school gardens. Each garden took unique form based upon community input and existing resources. Seven schools report using garden produce for school lunch or on their salad bars.

An experienced horticulturist was hired to advise and oversee planning and planting the school gardens. Each school took a slightly different approach, but all involved students in the process.

Two school are collecting data on the pounds of produce harvest from their gardens and greenhouses. These Garden Harvest Logs will be used to determine



the value of the food produced at those schools. The data from the logs was not available at the time of this report.

### Classroom: Cross-Age Teaching

The cross-age teaching model engages area high school youth as Farm to School educators. High school students become “cross-age teachers” after attending a training offered by ISU Extension where they learned about stages of youth development and benefits of local foods. The training equipped them with the skills necessary to deliver monthly lessons about a local food to elementary school students.

Five schools participated in cross-age teaching this year. Nine local foods were featured in Year 2: apples, cauliflower, winter squash, potatoes, yogurt, chicken, oats, cucumbers and asparagus.

### Classroom: Teacher Workshop

Luther College hosted a three-part workshop for teachers to expose them to ways of integrating health education across disciplines. A facilitator with the Area Education Agency School discussed how nutrition education aligns with the Iowa CORE curriculum standards.

A dozen teacher participated from across the region. The workshop qualified for graduate credit.

More: <http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/news/173.html>

### Face of the Farmer



FFI launched the “Face of the Farmer” project in the Postville school district to introduce the students and staff to local farmers. Students prepare for the farmer’s visit by watching a brief video and reading a story about their farm. On the day of the visit, school food service prepare a food or samples of food from that farmer. When kids taste the food, they can get a trading card from the farmer.

### Other Activities

The following activities also occurred in some schools in the region. Because of the nature of the programs and the potential enhancement of Farm to School activities, their occurrence is worth record.

### BASICS Nutrition Education

Four school districts participated in a nutrition education program designed to teach students how to choose healthy snacks and be more physically active. The program is called BASICS (Building and Strengthening Iowa Community Support for Nutrition and Physical Activity) and uses Pick a better snack™ and Act lessons and materials from the Iowa Nutrition Network and Iowa Department of Public Health. Iowa State University Extension holds the contract for the program.

Over 1100 children received four hours of direct nutrition education during the school year and had the opportunity to taste a variety of fruits, vegetables and low-fat milk products. Participating schools included: West, Waterville, and Postville Elementary (Allamakee Co.); Little Husky, Wings Park and Parkside Elementary, Oelwein (Fayette Co.); Elma and Lime Springs Elementary (Howard Co.). The program in northeast Iowa incorporates locally grown foods when possible.

### Team Nutrition

Team Nutrition is an initiative of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service to support the Child Nutrition Programs through training and technical assistance for food service, nutrition education for children and their caregivers, and school and community support for healthy eating and physical activity. Participating in Team Nutrition brings additional resources and opportunities to a school. For example, Lime Springs Elementary put in a school garden with a Team Nutrition mini-grant.

### Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP)

The Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) at the national level. Within participating States, FFVP is primarily administered through State Departments of Education.

In this program, a fresh fruit or vegetable snack is provided to elementary students. Schools determine the frequency of snacks in a week. Highest priority is given to schools with the highest percentages of low-income students.

### Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative [www.iowafoodandfitness.org](http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org)

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