

# Six Recipes For A Better World

*Brooklyn, NY*



*Decorah, IA*



*Kansas City, MO*



*Philadelphia, PA*



*Washington DC*



*Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN*







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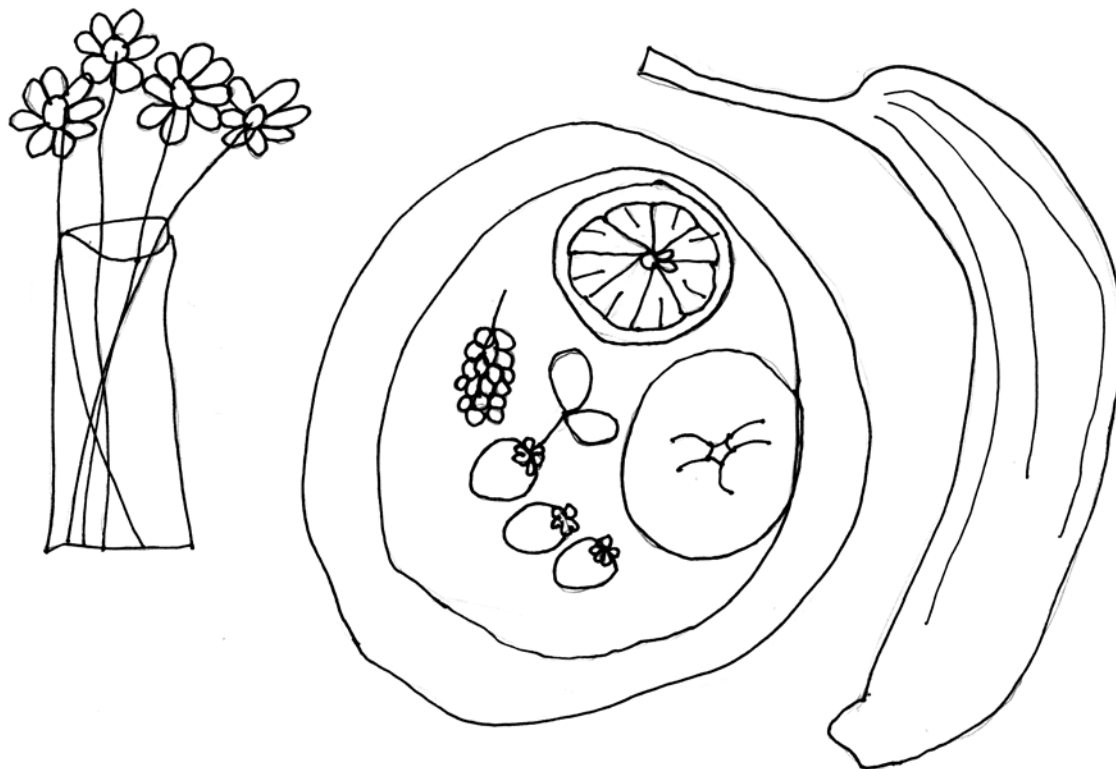
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# INTRODUCTION

What follows is a menu of six vignettes on farm to early childcare and education (ECE) experiences across the United States. Anyone interested in bringing farm fresh food to children's growing minds and bodies will find something to suit their tastes here. Even if you are just beginning to think about how to share with children the highest quality nutrition while their taste buds develop, let the learning stories that follow whet your appetite.

A single person can transform a community and culture. Beatriz “Bea” Zuluaga’s story at CentroNía in Washington, DC, is evidence of that. If you’re already part of a team within a regional farm to school program, but you’re hungry to expand impact to vulnerable young children and farmers, feast on the story of Northeast Iowa’s Food & Fitness Initiative. Perhaps you are already leading a growing local program but you’d like to add some refreshing and innovative flavors to your activities. If so, see how partners in Minneapolis/St. Paul engaged Hmong farmers to enliven the cultural and nutritional menu at Head Start centers. If you love local tastes and familiar ingredients, look at Bedford Stuyvesant and Norris Square’s stories of how homegrown leadership cooked up farm to ECE activities in close collaboration with neighborhood partners to nourish the resilience of their communities.

The common theme in all of these vignettes is partnership and relationship-building. You’ll find that this is the featured ingredient in each story: people from varying backgrounds, sectors, and levels of experience coming together around shared values to bring a scientific foundation of healthy child development—appropriate nutrition—into the habits and cultures of ECE centers. Along the way, you will learn how shared values catalyze growth for a host of other actors: farmers, companies in the food service industry, chefs, teachers, parents, and universities. Read about—and feed on—the rich learning provided in the stories that follow.

*This project was developed by the Good Food Great Kids Team: pfc Social Impact Advisors, the National Farm to School Network, and the BUILD Initiative. We would like to thank Mark Luinenburg and Rebecca Drobis for the photographs used throughout.*







# COMFORT FOOD FOR URBAN REVITALIZATION

*All-natural Community  
Collaboration Brings Farm Fresh  
Food to Brooklyn's Children*

## INGREDIENTS

Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation  
Bedford Stuyvesant Early Childhood Development Center  
Corbin Hill Food Project

## DIRECTIONS

### **BEDFORD STUYVESANT RESTORATION CORPORATION; BROOKLYN, NEW YORK**

In one of the world's most expensive zip codes, the high cost-of-living drives families out of Manhattan and into surrounding areas like Brooklyn, where long-term residents face being priced out of their own neighborhoods. Lower-income, many newly immigrated, these community residents face the challenge of remaining economically resilient while market forces compress the viability of staying rooted to the people and places they call home. In these same neighborhoods, other phenomena destabilize the long-term resilience of the community: its residents have higher diabetes and obesity rates than the rest of New York, there are far fewer grocery stores per resident, and there is a high rate of food insecurity for its children.

In this vignette we learn that, empowered by its mission to “attract investment, improve the business climate, foster the economic self-sufficiency of families, enhance family stability, and promote arts and culture,” Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (BSRC) is bringing a culture of healthy eating to early childhood education in Central Brooklyn by breaking down three powerful myths about farm to ECE. First, many assume that early childhood learning centers are not interested in healthy food options. In reality, ECE centers in Brooklyn were already engaging in ways to promote healthy eating, with or without the support of farm to ECE initiatives. In other words, the desire was already there, waiting for the right opportunities to expand.

*“The more we thought about it, the more we saw that farm to ECE was the way to go. We had relationships in the early care sector, and there is increasing interest borough- and city-wide in cradle to career strategies. We saw definite opportunities for alignment.”*

Tracey Capers, Executive  
Vice President, Programs/  
Organizational Development,  
Bedford Stuyvesant  
Restoration Corporation

Second, many assume that replacing unhealthy food with farm fresh food is cost-prohibitive. The reality is, after Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) reimbursements were factored in, delivering farm fresh food to ECE centers added no extra cost to budgets: there was no economic justification for serving processed or packaged food. Third, there is a belief that participating in farm to ECE is an isolating and laborious project to undertake. In fact, implementing farm to ECE has strengthened and reinforced existing community relationships in Brooklyn. No one can do this work alone.

Perhaps one of the strongest lessons from the BSRC experience is that the logistically complex initiative to deliver fresh food was very effectively







and sustainably implemented through local leadership, partnership, and commitment. BSRC had “eyes and ears” in the communities it served, and it was therefore able to apply farm to ECE sensitively across centers with diverse capacities, interests, and needs. For example, some centers might not have kitchens, so BSRC helped mobilize necessary connections to secure healthier food information and options. Other centers needed to provide support for home-based meals, while others needed BSRC’s networks to connect with food distributors like Corbin Hill Food Project, or simply gain information on where to buy healthier food in the neighborhood. Where there was interest, BSRC helped develop on-site gardens. Because of its intimate awareness of the community, BSRC was able to roll out farm to ECE at varying and diverse levels of capacity and need. A local leader like BSRC brings resilience, efficacy, and sustainability to an operationally complex program like farm to ECE.

*“I’ve seen first-hand students referring to fresh spinach samples as “yummy” and eagerly requesting miniature apples as a snack. I’ve seen countless examples of parents and grandparents recounting fresh food experiences from their youth and discussing how they have reintegrated fresh food practices into their current habits...”*

Afia Bediako, Community Health Advocate and Farm to Early Care Program Manager, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation

# HOMEGROWN IDEAS FOR HEALTHY KIDS

*Updated Classics:  
A Farm to School Program  
Adapted for Younger Palates*

## INGREDIENTS

Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative  
Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation  
Luther College

## DIRECTIONS

### **NORTHEAST IOWA FOOD & FITNESS INITIATIVE; DECORAH, IOWA**

An agricultural state, with many communities dependent on farming, Iowa is not usually associated with hunger. In the state's six Northeast counties, however, poverty and food insecurity affect more than a quarter of the population. According to a Community Health Needs Assessment, 32 percent of the region's residents live at or below 200 percent of the poverty line, and 40 percent of children live at or below 100 percent of the poverty line. Most adult residents do not consume the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables or partake in any form of exercise, and 31 percent are obese.

In response, 10 years ago community members, supported by the University of Iowa's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, launched the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative (NEIF&F) to create healthy and thriving places for children. It focused on three aims: 1) establish supportive school district policies, 2) ensure local, healthy food is available and affordable, and 3) encourage people to use the built environment for activity and active transportation. Eight years in, with positive impact documented, NEIF&F expanded its focus. Rather than target kids as they entered K-12 with already-established unhealthy habits, NEIF&F wanted to catch them before they arrived in the school system by targeting children zero to five years of age with farm to ECE programs. It wanted to tap into an already-existing network of





*“We live here. We want  
it to be better.”*

Haleisa Johnson,  
Early Childhood Coordinator,  
Northeast Iowa Food  
& Fitness Initiative

support for particularly vulnerable children by focusing on Head Start sites.

Unlike some of the other partnerships highlighted in this case study, NEIF&F already had institutions, infrastructure, and experience in launching and expanding farm to school programs. Rather than build out a new infrastructure to target Head Start populations, it focused on hiring



a single impassioned and experienced coordinator to leverage existing networks and build new relationships with the early childcare communities. Haleisa Johnson was that person, and she was instrumental in building those alliances across six counties and creating a culture of safety, experimentation, and learning for ECE centers that were unfamiliar with or resistant to adopting a new program. Lesson one of the Iowa experience, then, is that where a previous infrastructure and knowledge culture exists in K-12, partners can leverage information and networks to build out needed capacity for early childcare centers.

Similarly, instead of creating a whole new product for ECE, NEIF&F began by adapting the K-12 model to younger students. The curriculum was adjusted for earlier developmental stages, but the basic model of teaching one les-

son on food per week was retained. It was a simple strategy, and one that could be relatively easily rolled out. Parents were engaged in a deeper way with Early Head Start home visits to reinforce messages about the importance of wellness and health at the earliest stages of child development. NEIF&F also offered grocery store visits where parents—many who themselves were raised on convenience food—learned how to shop and budget for healthier home cooking.

Johnson also engaged the frontline of the program: teachers. Understanding that many had initial resistance to adding another responsibility to their already-burdened workloads, Johnson persisted with engagement and support. She realized that teachers had to become role models themselves, not only teaching the curriculum, but also demonstrating healthy personal choices. She listened carefully to their concerns and developed strategies to ease the introduction of farm to ECE learning into their classrooms.

The success of NEIF&F is based on skillful and steady relationship-building, combined with a sensible strategy of introducing small, thoughtful adjustments for new audiences and partners. It leveraged the proven outcomes of the local farm to school experience and innovated as necessary. NEIF&F is truly the story of an updated twist on a tried-and-true classic.



*“When my son  
plays ‘Walmart,’  
he always  
buys vegetables  
and fruit!”*

Northeast Iowa Food  
& Fitness Parent





## MOM'S BETTER WAY TO INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

*Kitchen Chronicles:  
Thoughtfulness, Sensitivity, and Engagement  
Served up in Every Dish*

### INGREDIENTS

CentroNía

City Blossoms

Local farmers and farmers markets

### DIRECTIONS

#### CENTRONÍA; WASHINGTON, DC

It may not be true in every home, but it is often the case that the kitchen is where people tend to gather and socialize. Life gets nourished in the kitchen. When Beatriz “BB” Otero, founder of CentroNía (Nía), a bilingual early childcare center in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, DC, moved Nía into a new building to meet local demand for affordable early childcare, she insisted on having an onsite kitchen. There, staff could prepare meals for children, weaning them off the menus of catering services that included flavored milk, pizza, hot dogs, and French fries. Not only were these food options nutritionally substandard, they disconnected the children from the rich cultural heritage of food that their immigrant families brought with them to the US.

Columbia Heights has 32,000 residents within a space of just over half a square mile, making it one of the most population dense areas in the DC metro region. Sixty-two percent of children up to the age of 18 live at or below 200 percent of the poverty line. There are over 1,200 violent crimes per every 10,000 residents. Nía has always been keenly sensitive to the economic realities of the parents they serve, so when it wanted to introduce fresh meals and snacks to the children, Nía focused its gaze on the world of parents. Beatriz “Bea” Zuluaga joined the Nía team in 2006 and enthusiastically led the health and wellness charge at the

*“When I first started,  
I saw all this food  
waste and I didn’t like  
it. But eventually I  
saw the kids eating the  
food. The beginning  
is painful, but  
it is paying off.”*

Billo Diawra,  
a teacher at Nía



childcare center. Zuluaga was thoughtful about the impact of food changes, and how those are connected to organizational culture as well as personal feelings and identity. She and her small team engaged in an observation project for a year, noting health practices, behaviors, and choices at Nía. Based on these observations, Zuluaga began making some simple changes, but with firm, consistently-applied rules. This approach

would be the hallmark of her style: observation, reflection, small changes, consistency, and engagement with students, teachers, kitchen staff, and families to create meaningful, attuned changes in behavior.

Nía would eventually develop an on-site garden led by one of Otero’s daughters and her friend, who formed the nonprofit City Blossoms. The urban garden, a success long before urban agriculture became a trend, incorporated a garden curriculum with classroom learning to teach children about where food comes from and healthy food choices. Nía developed an “I Want to Be Healthy!” curriculum with songs and dances that helped



young children learn the importance of healthy eating and food knowledge. Parents noticed changing behaviors and food preferences at home, with one mother saying of dinner time, “My children say something is missing if we don’t have veggies.” CentroNía was recognized for its efforts when First Lady Michelle Obama raised it as model at the launch of her Let’s Move! Campaign in 2011. Today it is beginning to deliver farm fresh food boxes to home care centers in order to further promote healthy choices while generating organizational income. What remains remarkable about Nía’s story is that every decision point in building a farm to ECE project was anchored in the reality of family’s lives. In that respect, it is an organic, local triumph.

*“Start small:  
Not everything has  
to change right away.  
Small modifications  
will help everyone  
get comfortable with  
the transition to a  
healthier approach  
to ECE settings.”*

Beatriz “Bea” Zuluaga,  
Director of Food and Wellness  
Department, CentroNía



# EASY TO MAKE HOTDISH OF IDEAS

*Cross-community Flavors,  
Slow-cooked for Success*

## INGREDIENTS

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Hmong American Farmers Association  
Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties

## DIRECTIONS

### **IATP AND HAFA; MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA**

In the first three vignettes we learned how local leaders leveraged pre-existing community relationships or sheer individual creativity to bring farm fresh foods to ECE. In our fourth case study, we see something a bit different - a brand new partnership between three change agents. One of the main ingredients in this story is the Hmong American community in Minnesota, a strong community of immigrants with farming forming a strong part of their identity. At about the same time that the Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA) sought new ways to stabilize the income of its farmers, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) was considering new strategies for reaching deeper into vulnerable communities to enhance the impact of its successful farm to ECE program. Before these potential allies could come together, however, they had to address HAFA's concern about working with an organization like IATP, which, like other large institutions, had been criticized in the past for not fully including people of color-led organizations in work by and about them. Once HAFA and IATP were able to talk, however, a window opened. What followed, with the inclusion of the Head Start program at Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties (CAPRW), was a model of authentic power-sharing that created a nutritional, educational, and cultural pipeline from Hmong



*“From the very beginning I think having clear roles, clear expectations was important.”*

Pakou Hang,  
Co-Founder and  
Executive Director,  
HAFA

American farmers to the plates of Head Start centers with large populations of children of color, including Hmong American children.

One of the key lessons of this story is that new experiences of conscious rapport-building through collaboration can be forged successfully when the power of a shared vision and values is mobilized. HAFA, initially cautious about engaging with IATP, was able to fully express its concerns to IATP from the outset. Leadership at IATP in turn acknowledged HAFA’s reservations, and through candid communication and commitment to the shared goal of bringing fresh food to ECE, the two commenced a partnership based on equality and cooperation.

A second key lesson is that, regardless of strong shared values, willingness, enthusiasm, and a sense of mission, the implementation of a complex





program is still, at the end of the day, a pragmatic challenge. Engineering logistical processes in compliance to regulatory policies to bring safe, fresh food to children throughout the year requires adequate capacity, planning, and execution. When caterers to the ECE sites could not fully manage the preparation and delivery of foods, a private wholesaler that had previously worked with HAFA was introduced to the partnership to bring the collaboration's vision to full



operational capacity. When the resilience of the new partnership was tested by operational setbacks, each partner was able to leverage existing experience and relationships to solve problems together.

In its third year, the partnership between IATP, HAFA, and CAPRW continues to refine and adapt its services. At the time this cookbook was written, it was focusing on building stronger engagement with parents and further fortifying connections between food, education, cultural heritage, and community. This vignette demonstrates how farm to ECE has the ability to forge opportunities for new relationships and experiences, meeting dynamic priorities and agendas under the shared goal of bring the highest quality nutrition to ECE.

*“IATP, HAFA, and Head Start had never really worked together, so coming together and just talking it through that first time was very good...”*

Pakou Hang,  
Co-Founder and  
Executive Director,  
HAFA

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## FRESH VEGETABLES SERVED BY A PARTNERSHIP

*Tastes Budding:  
Developing Early Food Preferences  
Sprouts into Action in Kansas City*

### INGREDIENTS

Good Natured Family Farms  
Treat America (Bistro Kids)  
Plaza del Niño  
Kansas City YMCA  
University of Kansas Medical Center

### DIRECTIONS

#### **GOOD NATURED FAMILY FARMS; KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI**

In this vignette, we see that desires born from the love of family and home can, in turn, create powerful social change. Diana Endicott returned to her Kansas roots in 1995 to open a farm that would sell naturally-raised beef and produce to local groceries. In 1995, this was a relatively novel idea. Diana and her husband started small, but within a short time, their productivity outpaced the market, and they found they had to create greater demand. They partnered with a local grocery chain to raise awareness about natural food, and launched Good Natured Family Farms, a cooperative of 150 family-run farms that sell all natural meats, fruits and vegetables, and dairy products in the Kansas-Missouri region.

Meanwhile, in Kansas City, mother and professional chef Kiersten Firquain eyed the lunches being served at her son's school and realized they were nothing more than junk food. She began packing his lunches. As a child, she and her classmates had benefitted from wholesome meals cooked from scratch at school. Firquain realized her son's generation was not only becoming habituated to junk food through school meals, it wasn't learning about healthy food and lifestyles. Her commitment to freshly cooked food, and her concern



*“It’s about looking  
at the landscape and  
what you want your  
community to  
look like twenty  
years from now.”*

Diana Endicott,  
Founder and Director,  
Good Natured Family Farms



for the health of her son and the other children in his school inspired Firquain to form Bistro Kids. Bistro Kids would offer farm to school-inspired meals, cooking classes for children, technical support in creating on-site gardens, and farmer visits.

When Firquain and Endicott met, they decided to combine their strengths. Motivated to introduce healthy food at an age where children are developing their taste preferences, and wondering if their shared interests could benefit more vulnerable children, Firquain and Endicott partnered with a Head Start site on the west side of Kansas City, Plaza del Niño, at the Guadalupe Center. Even before their small pilot program concluded, Firquain and Endicott’s work attracted like-minded actors across Kansas. By 2011, their humble beginnings grew into a partnership with the YMCA, Sysco KC, the University of Kansas Medical Center, and Treat America, a large family-owned food service company that acquired Bistro Kids when it was no longer single-handedly able to meet demand.

The first year of this expanded collaboration was focused on listening to communities, assessing needs, and using the enhanced capacity of Treat America to plan logistics and roll-out. The University of Kansas would track and evaluate the impact of the farm to ECE initiative. The activities of the program would take place at YMCA sites with Head Start centers and the activities would include introducing fresh foods through familiar recipes to children, on-site gardens, and Farm Tables placed in common spaces and displaying recipes, information, and free produce for families. Certified chef instructors were employed to conduct sensory and experiential cooking classes where children cooked with their peers. Eventually, parents started to request cooking classes, too.

A unique aspect of the collaboration was the rigorous evaluation conducted by University of Kansas Medical Center. The University measured the actual difference in micro- and macro-nutrient intake by children through a nutrient tracking system. Children's intake of overall fat, saturated fat, sodium, and sugars all decreased, and important vitamin and mineral intake increased.



*“Our mission is simple: we want to help kids establish healthy eating habits at an early age (three- to five-years-old), when their taste buds are just forming.”*

Chef Kiersten Firquain,  
Founder, Bistro Kids

# SO GOOD SMORGASBORD OF COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

*A Change on the Menu:  
Farm to ECE for the Nation's  
Second Hungriest District*

## INGREDIENTS

Norris Square Community Alliance  
Common Market  
Local hospitals and universities  
Peer community-based organizations

## DIRECTIONS

**NORRIS SQUARE COMMUNITY ALLIANCE; PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

The second hungriest Congressional district in the US (measured by levels of food assistance) is just three miles north of an icon of American Independence, the Liberty Bell. The Norris Square neighborhood of Philadelphia has experienced dramatic changes in its demographics, reflecting the diversity of an immigrant nation, as well as growing income disparity and its manifestation in terms of social determinants of health. Here, extreme health-related problems match the extremes of economic difficulty. Almost half of this district's residents (43 percent) live at or below the poverty line. This neighborhood's children might not live longer than their parents do.

In 1983, a group of local women formed the Norris Square Community Alliance (NSCA), putting the interests of the neighborhood at the center of its agenda. NSCA serves a community of approximately 136,000 people, providing services ranging from employment training, home ownership, and child and youth enrichment activities to urban revitalization, and acting as a connection point for social and economic well-being.

In 2016, NSCA is putting the health of its youngest members at the heart of its activities. Although it has introduced dietary changes over the past four years at ECE sites, partnership, funding, and interest have recently converged to roll out a program called "The Farm to Plate Healthy Initiative" which initially targets





*“If we don’t  
have good health,  
it compromises  
everything.”*

Norris Square  
staff member

700 children. Like all of the previous stories in this report, NSCA has forged cross-sector partnerships with those who share a similar conviction that all growing children deserve both high-quality nutrition and education. NSCA has engaged nearby Temple University to offer cooking and wellness classes to NSCA clients. Health Nutrition and Facilities Specialist Yoshiko Yamasaki works directly with kitchen staff at Head Start sites to implement and improve practices for preparing healthy, fresh foods for students. Yamasaki also works closely with parents and members of the community to develop attuned resources and opportunities for the community-wide health. NSCA recognizes that young children will model their parents’ behavior at home no matter how persistently healthy food is offered at school. So, the farm to plate initiative



has a strong parent engagement component that offers events, workshops, and training so parents can begin to model new habits at home.

Recently, NSCA selected a new food distributor—Philadelphia-based Common Market, a mission-driven company focused on connecting Mid-Atlantic farmers to schools, hospitals, workplaces, and nonprofits. With Common Market’s support, and contributions from other community partners, NSCA has developed three main activities that define the Initiative’s mission: 1) combine a culturally-relevant farm to plate curriculum with a focus on gardening, nutrition, and physical activity, 2) develop a robust parent engagement component, and 3) offer a full spectrum of health and wellness opportunities to the community. In the current year (2016) the program will continue to engage in planning and strategy, launching implementation in 2017.



*“We have a lot of passionate people here, so it makes it easier to implement the program. And that’s something that you can’t generate. To make the program work, if there aren’t the people that are passionate, it won’t work; it’ll fail.”*

NSCA staff member





## PANTRY ESSENTIALS: CROSS-SITE REFLECTIONS

**THERE IS NO ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH TO FARM TO ECE.** Yet each of these sites found that bringing together complex ingredients like good food and early childhood education present a new way forward to ensure a good start and stronger future for children in vulnerable neighborhoods. They have built farm to ECE initiatives by taking their own paths, but their experiences offer important guidance for others hoping to make nutritious food and high-quality early childcare and education a right, not a privilege, for all young children in the US. Some of the cross-cutting essential insights from these groups include:

**Context matters.** While the core components of farm to ECE must reach into curriculum—family engagement, experiential learning (including gardening), and purchasing from local and small-scale farmers—each of these must be rooted in the realities of the communities being served and how they connect to all of the stakeholders in the farm to ECE pipeline. For example, the economic and social barriers families contend with on a daily basis must be part of the family engagement plan; the values and culture of the community need to be included in the curriculum design, including hands-on learning pieces; and where the food comes from must be assessed not only from a financial point of view, but also through the lens of community revitalization and economic development.

**Partnership is essential.** Farm to ECE relies on many different partners to be successful, and this is how it should be. Ensuring health and opportunity for future generations is everyone's responsibility because it impacts entire communities. Across the six sites, no organization thought to undertake this work alone. Importantly, members of each sector (e.g., food policy, education, agriculture, and so on) have a skill set that is necessary for implementing farm to ECE, underscoring how this model sits at a critical intersection that can help advance health, well-being, quality education, and, eventually, community development. In particular, the role of administrators and teachers should be given high priority due to the time they spend with children and their ability to influence preferences and behaviors. As several of the stories point out, there may be resistance to change from teachers and administrators. This possibility needs to be understood beforehand and addressed as an opportunity, but one that takes careful planning and active listening to manage.

**Invest in community ownership.** The farm to ECE community is diverse and growing. Because farm to ECE involves changing attitudes and behaviors, ownership helps ease the transition from a mindset of resistance to one of acceptance and abundance. The six sites all invested in making sure that the different members



of their community felt involved in the farm to ECE project. It is significant that partners across the sites put great effort into creating activities, learning lessons, and recipes that reflected the social, cultural, and economic realities of the children and families at the Head Start sites.

**Be honest about challenges and failures.** In such a new space, practitioners need all the help they can get. The teams at the six sites all felt the need to share thoughts about what didn't work because there was a lot they wish they had known initially. While the learning-by-doing process was considered to be valuable, the teams still faced struggles that they hope others can avoid. Teams talked about resistance to change and how important it was to develop inclusive strategies for helping parents not only see the value of changing eating habits, but also that this was not as expensive nor difficult as it seemed initially. Likewise, with teachers there was a great deal of work needed to support the integration of the farm to ECE approach into classroom practice so that it was not seen as a burdensome task to add to their already heavy workloads.

**Think creatively about resources.** There is precious little money for expanding the farm to ECE movement. Competitive funding from the US Department of Agriculture and other government programs, reimbursement programs, and some grant funding exists, but experimentation and implementation funds (and those that pay coordination salaries) are not easy to come by. This is another reason partnership is so important. The sites all rely on different stakeholders to contribute skills and inputs like food, seeds, and materials to make programs hum. Sites are also finding ways to sell their skills and services; are diversifying strategies for building the local economy; and dedicating staff time to leverage partnerships that can provide important supports for families working to bring farm to ECE into the home.

**Plan for the future.** Changing hearts and minds about what we eat



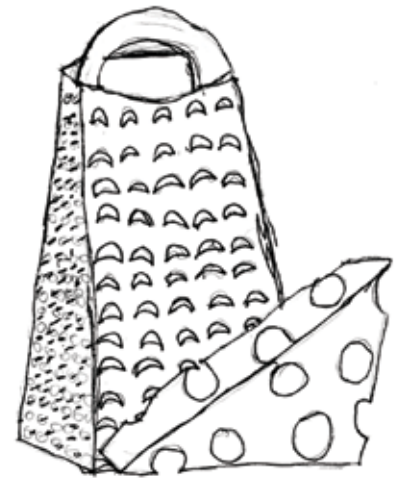


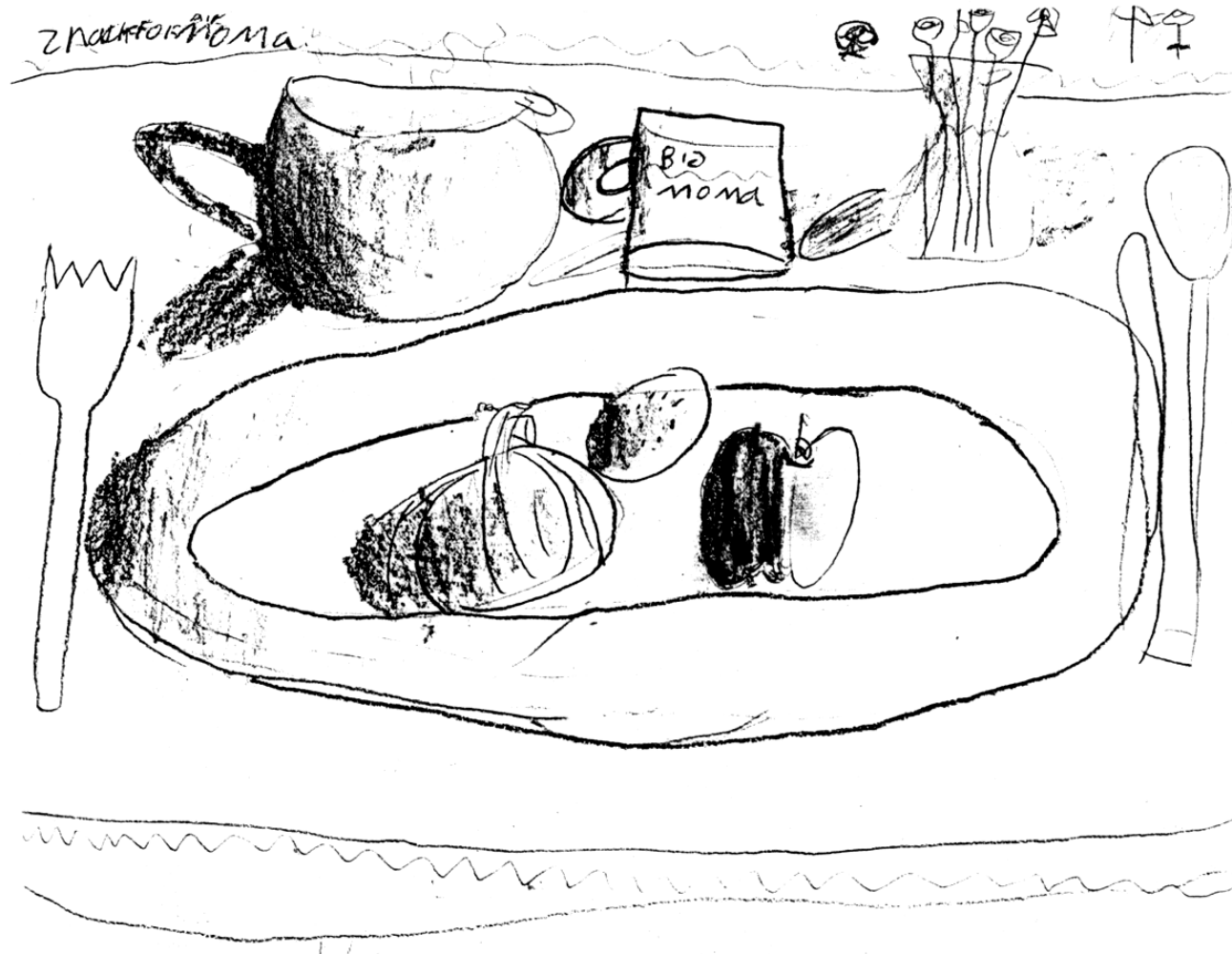


is a long-term endeavor. All parents want what is best for their children, but focusing on healthy food is not always the obvious or easy option. To support changes that are based in culture and preference, planning and feedback must be part of the process. All the sites experimented with their

projects, whether it took the form of a summer pilot or multiple, center-driven changes to meet different needs on the implementation side. Stakeholders need to design together, thinking about possible ‘what-ifs’ and developing strategies for identified challenges. Some sites had the benefit of participating in the national Food & Fitness Initiative, and some had worked on farm to school in the K-12 context. These settings helped provide some guidance for practitioners, but early childhood education is more complex because of the variation of practices across centers and sites. Yet ECE is also more flexible in terms of being able to implement changes. ECE also benefits from the progressive food guidelines set out by Head Start. With this blend of opportunities, potential practitioners can engage in thoughtful planning to set a stage for stronger uptake and expansion.

**Take an informed leap of faith.** As a newer part of the healthy food movement, farm to ECE is often considered risky. The anticipated hurdles are many: It is too expensive and too difficult. The food is unfamiliar. This is for privileged communities. Children don’t like healthy food. And so it goes. The six sites all placed a bet that they could create partnerships not only to get healthy food for children at an affordable price, but also to get children, families, and teachers/staff to like it. Though it has taken a few years, the sites are seeing that the bet is paying off. To sustain and build this momentum, the movement needs research to track evidence-based changes in health outcomes and educational attainment. The idea of farm to ECE is spreading, and more and more people are willing to take a chance and see what happens. There is little to lose and prosperous, healthy generations to gain.





## ABOUT THE GOOD FOOD GREAT KIDS PARTNERS

**pfc Social Impact Advisors** (pfc) is a nonprofit philanthropic advisory consultancy helping people and organizations with money, time, and vision do good. Our clients are foundations, individuals, impact investors, corporations, governments, and intermediaries at the leading edge of social change. The pfc team has worked with diverse partners to assess their impact and tell their stories of change for over 30 years. We have been practitioners both of philanthropy and of culture in community, evaluators for many of the field's most innovative foundations, and researchers and educators seeking to share lasting lessons with change agents around the world. We have substantial expertise in the creative dissemination of lessons learned, with an emphasis on giving voice to community. All of our case studies are designed to get off the shelf and inform the field through formal and informal channels, including print and online media and in classrooms around the world.

**National Farm to School Network** (NFSN) has over a decade of experience in building and networking farm to school programs and policies. The National Farm to School Network is an information, advocacy, and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing and food and agriculture education into school systems and preschools.

**BUILD Initiative** has 14 years of experience in early childhood programs and policies at the state and national level. The Initiative partners with state leaders working in early learning, family support and engagement, special needs and early intervention, and health, mental health, and nutrition. BUILD brings attention to racial disparities and assists state leaders in promoting equitable opportunities and child outcomes while providing guidance, leadership training, and capacity building. BUILD's focus is on supporting state leaders in their efforts to coordinate policies, programs, and services; create infrastructure; improve integration; and achieve scale in early learning, family support and parenting programs, and children's health, mental health, and nutrition.

**The W. K. Kellogg Foundation** (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life. WKKF is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the US are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, and New Orleans; and, internationally, in Mexico and Haiti. For more information, visit [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org).





social impact advisors

creative solutions  
for complex times

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