



# Good Food, Great Kids: Making Practice and Policy Work for Farm to Early Childcare & Education

## Chapter 1: New Insights from Farm to Early Childcare & Education: Lessons from Six Sites

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Gayle Peterson

Co-founder and Senior Managing Partner, pfc Social Impact Advisors





## Preface

Imagine you are a parent selecting a day care center for your three-year old. It's a decision that most working parents have to make, and one that makes you a bit nervous: leaving your young child in the care of strangers. But you've identified a childcare center that meets all of your criteria: it's close to home, it has a safe and vibrant environment, the educators and staff are well-trained, and the center employs an enriching curriculum. The hours of care line up with your work schedule, too.

But then you hear of another childcare center that meets all your criteria, plus has something a little different: it's working with local farms to serve fresh meals and snacks to all the children throughout the day. In addition to receiving healthier meals, your child will learn about where her food comes from, who farms it, how food grows, and, along with the other children, she'll learn how to prepare it into delicious snacks. There's an on-site garden where the children learn to eat what they sow. Parent cooking classes are also offered.

The assumption you make is that the second center's emphasis on local, farm fresh food will be reflected in the price-tag. But what if it weren't? What if it cost exactly the same as the center which serves hot dogs and pizza? What if children and parents all across the US had equal access to the best educational opportunities, including those that foster good health, regardless of their economic situation or location?

Though no childcare setting is perfect, there is much that we know to look for based on research about the key components of quality early childcare. The elements of these criteria are increasingly more available to providers and parents, especially with new and ongoing improvements to state and federal agency standards. But there is a real challenge in how centers can practically and cost-effectively both meet the needs of their young learners and also fulfill requirements. This is particularly the case if we seek to provide the highest quality childcare that genuinely connects top-rated educational curricula with fresh and nutritious food.

Why is it important to make and enrich the food-education nexus in early childcare settings?

According to Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, "The science of child development now helps us to see healthy development as a causal chain—policies and programs across the public and private sectors affect the capacities of caregivers and communities to strengthen three foundations of healthy development: stable, responsive relationships; safe, supportive environments; and appropriate nutrition." These foundations impact physiological mechanisms that have lifelong impacts on cognitive development, physical growth, and behavioral outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

*This report uses the definition of farm to ECE developed by the National Farm to School Network: “...food-based strategies and activities that support healthy development and learning goals in all types of early care and education (ECE) settings (e.g., preschools, childcare centers, family childcare homes, Head Start/Early Head Start and programs in K-12 school districts).”*

From research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) we know that over 60 percent of US children under the age of six spend time in some sort of childcare setting (outside of their own home) on a weekly basis.<sup>3</sup> These children, depending on the care setting, typically receive 70 percent of their daily nutrients at these sites. While our licensing and regulations for care centers are designed to ensure the safety of the food young children consume, there is little consistency in terms of the quality of the food.

Research on the specific links between farm fresh food early in life and educational outcomes is only just getting started, leveraging what we’ve learned from the positive contributions of the farm to school (F2S) movement that targets kindergarten through 12th grade.<sup>4</sup> But we do have many pieces of the farm to early childcare and education (farm to ECE) puzzle that we can begin to fit together for testing impact and scale:<sup>5</sup>

- More than one in five children ages two to five years are overweight or obese.<sup>6</sup>
- Thirteen million children in the US suffer from food insecurity, meaning they live in a household with limited or uncertain access to food.<sup>7</sup> Households with children vary in their levels of food insecurity depending on race and gender: Among those households that are food insecure, 30 percent are headed by single women, 22 percent by single men; 22 percent are Black (non-Latino) households, and 19 percent are Latino households.<sup>8</sup>
- Early life experiences for children, such as lack of breast-feeding, too little sleep, and too much television can increase the risk of obesity later in life.<sup>9</sup>
- Children’s food preferences and willingness to try new foods are influenced by the people around them.<sup>10</sup>
- Early childcare providers have a unique opportunity to create a healthy environment for children to eat, play, and learn, while also educating parents about the benefits of healthy food practice.<sup>11</sup>
- Federally supported early education programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start provide strong guidelines for nutritious meals and healthy activities that promote a positive environment for children and engagement of families. Similarly, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides support and financial reimbursement to childcare settings (and others not discussed here) to promote the incorporation of healthy food and wellness practices within developmental and educational programs.<sup>12</sup>

This mixture of realities and opportunities means that early childcare and education centers are ripe for learning more about farm to ECE and scaling up these experiences.<sup>13</sup>

From the farm to school and farm to ECE sectors themselves, we know:



- Increasing numbers of developmental research studies point to the critical role of good nutrition on brain development in early life, on educational outcomes, and on long term health. (See “The Benefits of Farm to School” for more examples and research.<sup>14</sup>)
- Early childcare providers increasingly are incorporating (54 percent) or plan to incorporate (28 percent) healthy and farm fresh food, gardening, or food-based education activities into their programs, recognizing the learning and health values of doing so.<sup>15</sup>
- Lessons between farm to school and farm to ECE are increasingly available for new practitioners. In particular, the lessons from more than two decades of farm to school activities can be leveraged and adopted to the farm to ECE approach, especially from organizations and partnership that have worked on this expansion in their communities.
- Measures for encouraging childcare providers to incorporate healthier food into their meal offerings exist through federal funding and competitive grants, foundation funding, and supportive elements of health and economic security programs, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP); and Training and Technical Assistance Funds for Head Start, just to name a few.
- There is a gap between the farm to ECE resources available (especially culturally relevant and inclusively designed materials) and the capacity of childcare providers to access and fully utilize them.
- Programs are needed to link parents, care providers, farmers, and food providers meaningfully in comprehensive quality education planning and implementation.
- There are model programs and policies that are available for stakeholders to learn from.

Researchers—including Nobel Laureate in Economics James Heckman of the University of Chicago—have provided unequivocal evidence on the economic and social returns of investing in quality early childhood education.<sup>16</sup> Much of the data from landmark, long-term studies of programs, such as the Abecedarian Project and the Perry Preschool Project, clearly show that quality early educational interventions create positive outcomes in almost every aspect of a child’s life and on into adulthood: academic success, better mental and physical health, low crime rates, stronger marriages, and higher salaries.<sup>17</sup>

The recent *Road to High-Quality Early Learning Lessons from the States* report by the Learning Policy Institute provides further examples from four states that are building strong and effective early childhood programs. How do we make sure that early



childhood education continues to evolve with the best evidence and practice available? The Learning Policy Institute’s report teases out five key lessons that can be applied to the farm to ECE movement:

1. Prioritize quality and continuous improvement, including monitoring and evaluation.
2. Invest in training and coaching of teachers.
3. Coordinate the administration of birth-through-grade-three programs, limiting isolation between early childcare and elementary school systems and beyond.
4. Combine multiple funding sources to increase access and improve quality.
5. Create broad-based coalitions and support.<sup>18</sup>

What these lessons essentially tell us is that those involved in farm to school and farm to ECE need to keep observing, learning, and sharing practices and knowledge that help our children thrive in early childhood. It is with this spirit in mind then that we will explore the emerging link between high quality nutrition in early childcare settings and healthy, engaged children and parents through six case studies. The following case studies, developed in partnership with the National Farm to School Network and the BUILD Initiative, were designed to begin to draw lessons from on-the-ground practitioners knitting together farm to early care and education strategies, and also to examine US policy levers and opportunities for bringing farm to early care and education to more vulnerable children nationwide.

The Good Food, Great Kids\* case studies are part of a series developed by pfc Social Impact Advisors for public use and dissemination via the book *Good, Evil, Wicked: The Art, Science, and Business of Giving* (Stanford University Press 2017), among other publicly accessible media. Information presented was gathered through desk research and 53 interviews with practitioners, policy and issue-area experts, funders, and other local and national stakeholders in the farm to early childcare and education and farm to school sectors.

\*This report borrows the phrase good food from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which defines good food as food that is “healthy, sustainable, fair, and affordable.”

New Insights from Farm to  
Early Childcare & Education:  
Lessons from Six Sites





## Introduction

In 2015, the average yearly cost of full-time childcare for one child was more than US\$10,000, with services in some regions averaging more than US\$16,000.<sup>19</sup> This is an impossible expenditure for families living at or below the federal poverty line, which is calculated to be US\$24,250 for a family of four as of January 2016.<sup>20</sup> Low-income families frequently rely on a parent/guardian or other family member to take care of their children, but over 43 percent of these children experience some sort of non-family, out of home care.<sup>21</sup>

## Focus on Head Start

One ECE option low-income families have relied upon for years is the Head Start program. Launched in 1965 as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs, Head Start aims to promote school readiness for low-income children under the age of five and their families through “educational, nutritional, health, social, and other services.”<sup>22</sup> There are over 1,700 Head Start programs in the US offered by a variety of public and private organizations that are non- or for-profit. The program serves nearly one million low-income children (and pregnant mothers), with an emphasis on three-to-four year-olds. The more recent Early Head Start Program, launched in 1995, provides services to pregnant woman, infants, and toddlers.<sup>23</sup> In general, families must have an income that is 100 percent below the poverty level to qualify for Head Start programs. For eligible families, Head Start programs are free.<sup>24</sup>

Head Start promotes a philosophy of whole child education, supporting child readiness from the perspective of all the experiences that influence a child. Core components of this approach include:

- Early learning
- Screenings and follow-up for health, development, and behavior
- Health and safety
- Social and emotional development
- Nutrition
- Family goal-setting
- Social services
- Services for children with disabilities<sup>25</sup>

Head Start (including Early Head Start) centers offer a promising setting for testing and scaling improved approaches to enhancing quality early childcare and education. These positive possibilities are due to the Head Start model’s combination of increasingly rigorous educational and family engagement requirements, along with a strong commitment to advancing comprehensive practices that support a child and

his/her environment. Head Start programs acknowledge that preparing children for later education and success depends on all of the different contextual factors that impact children’s lives on a daily basis (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Healthy Child Development Context<sup>26</sup>**



**Physical and Mental Health**

- Support and encouragement to achieve developmental milestones
- Timely and appropriate access to health services (inc. mental health and therapeutic services)
- A positive, predictable, and caring environment
- A safe environment

**Family and Relationships**

- Secure attachments to family and/or significant others
- Stability in relationships
- Positive parenting

**Safety and Security**

- A living environment free from violence and abuse
- Sense of stability
- Establishment of a positive family and peer group
- Strong social connections

**Culture, Spirituality, and Community**

- Community engagement and participation
- Behavior consistent with established family norms, values, and morals
- Establishment of strong cultural identity and cultural pride
- Links to family, country, land, and spirituality
- Feeling included and welcomed

**Identity**

- Sense of self confidence
- Ability to express oneself
- Sense of belonging
- Positive thoughts/self worth
- Participation in community/culture
- Successful transitions to adolescence and adulthood

**Learning, Participation, and Achieving**

- Support and encouragement to achieve literacy and numeracy benchmarks
- Consistent attendance at school/training/vocational training/alternative education
- Development of problem solving capacity
- Development of life skills
- Development of social skills
- Establishment of an effective coping style
- Sense of belonging
- Participation in community activities and employment
- Development of self-care skills



Head Start also encourages innovation, modifying approaches tied to evidence-based research, and, importantly, has a mission of leveling the playing field for children and families who cannot afford to pay for programs that offer comparable services. Low-income and other under-served children who participate in Head Start are the ones who (over time) benefit the most from high quality early care and education.<sup>27</sup>

A solid evidence base exists to help us understand how and why low-income children are those likely to suffer from food insecurity, and how poor nutrition or malnutrition negatively impact children's development of diverse skills and abilities. There is also mounting research on the need to not only provide calories to those with limited access to food, but also to provide opportunities to enjoy affordable, high-quality fruits, vegetables, and other healthy food items.<sup>28</sup> But the movement to link better quality, farm fresh food to childcare and education settings like Head Start is just beginning to find its footing, with requirements and resources continuously evolving. There are, however, many resources such as the Head Start Early Learning Framework (among others) that are available to help provide guidance and support for understanding and meeting quality health and educational goals.<sup>29</sup>

While farm to school has taken off across the US (with over 42,000 schools participating<sup>30</sup>), the diversity of approaches and settings has made farm to ECE more challenging. Since children form their taste preferences and experience the most important cognitive and social development between the ages of zero and three,<sup>31</sup> early education is an excellent opportunity to help them learn to love fruits, vegetables, and other elements of a healthy lifestyle—and bring their parents/guardians and whole families into this conversation. In many ways, moving to a community-based farm to ECE approach is a vital step in supporting stronger child health and educational outcomes, and in building healthy communities to sustain these successes.

Launching a farm to ECE approach is, of course, easier said than done. The following six vignettes allow for a look inside Head Start programs that have been testing out farm to ECE as an approach to supporting health, wellness, high-quality education, and community change. The vignettes highlight organizations working across the US, in different types of communities, serving diverse families, and using approaches that are attuned to and reflective of the places where they operate. One size does not fit all in childcare, particularly when including food, not only as required nutrition, but also as an educational opportunity, celebration of cultural heritage, and family engagement method. All of the groups featured have learned some difficult lessons along the way, but they wanted to share their stories so that farm fresh food becomes an increasingly accessed and affordable component of quality early education experiences.

## Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation



*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

### **Understanding Food Security in Central Brooklyn**

For many, the Central Brooklyn neighborhoods of Bedford Stuyvesant, Bushwick, East New York, and Brownsville represent areas prime for (or already in the midst of) urban renewal as the high cost of living continues to send people out of Manhattan and nearby areas further into the surrounding boroughs.<sup>32</sup> But the benefits of community revitalization, when practiced from the outside, frequently have negative consequences for long-term residents. This is especially true for those who are low-income or fixed-income and for recent immigrants getting their foothold into the local community.

Though some of the perks of community renewal include better access to shops, restaurants, and arts offerings, as well as more diverse and higher quality social services, residents of Central Brooklyn have been working to elevate prosperity in



their own communities to protect themselves against cost-of-living increases and other pitfalls of gentrification. One of the groups involved in this effort is the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, the first community development corporation (CDC) established in the US.

Created in 1967 as one result of the national Economic Opportunity Act (1964), the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (BSRC) seeks to “attract investment, improve the business climate, foster the economic self-sufficiency of families, enhance family stability, and promote arts and culture” for the residents of and visitors to under-served areas of Brooklyn.

BSRC serves all of Brooklyn but has focused a good deal of its healthy eating and active living projects on Central Brooklyn, which has nearly 545,000 residents in the four BSRC service neighborhoods. Though there are pockets of prosperity and gentrification-driven development, the area has some of the highest concentrations of poor and minority residents in New York City. Poverty impacts roughly 30 percent of residents, some 94 percent of whom are people of color.<sup>33</sup> Roughly 45 percent of families access some form of financial support, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income, and Medicaid.<sup>34</sup>

In terms of health and nutrition outcomes, BSRC’s Central Brooklyn service area residents are disproportionately less healthy than average city residents. Three in 10 residents are considered obese, 12 percent of adults are diabetic, and roughly 47 percent of adults do not engage in any form of formal exercise.<sup>35</sup> In a study conducted by the New York City Departments of Health and City Planning and the New York City Economic Development Corporation, Brooklyn fell below the city average for an adequate ratio of population to grocery access points in 15 of the 18 studied communities.<sup>36</sup> Central Brooklyn was one of the five areas noted for lowest consumption of fruits and vegetables in all the boroughs.<sup>37</sup> Brooklyn in general also has the highest number of children experiencing food insecurity across all of the boroughs,<sup>38</sup> and the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood ranks sixth nationally for food hardship, with eight in 10 food stores being bodegas (small convenience stores) with limited healthy options.<sup>39</sup>

## **Using Healthy Food as Community Development**

BSRC serves this community through a spectrum of services and asset-building programs, ranging from housing development to arts and culture, and including a focus on addressing health disparities and accessing healthy, affordable food. Though health and nutrition are not always part of a community revitalization agenda, they are increasingly linked to community prosperity in terms of having a physically safe and active neighborhood and in reducing economic burdens typically associated with gentrification.<sup>40</sup>

BSRC has been working on improving community access to healthy and affordable food for many years, notably working to attract the first full-service supermarket and



first sit-down restaurant to the community and supporting the creation of the area's first farmers market.

BSRC began looking specifically at the food offered in early childcare settings in 2013. Recalls Tracey Capers, executive vice president of programs/organizational development,

*We looked around the communities and despite changes we still had too much unhealthy food in the bodegas and scores of fast food restaurants. So our challenge was how to change the food system when there is so much to do. We decided on early care for this reason, where we would have the opportunity for the greatest impact across generations. The hope was that children would be the teachers showing the way to their families.*

BSRC's efforts began at one Head Start partner site, helping the staff remove canned fruits and vegetables and replacing them with fresh items. Farm fresh food soon followed, as did a garden designed and developed by community parents and youth. After this experience, the number of healthy food program sites slowly expanded to other Head Start sites.

Though this effort to reach "little scholars" with healthy food is new to BSRC, the motivation is not. Quite simply, BSRC saw that children in the area were not having their nutritional needs met and that local childcare settings could help meet that need. According to Dara Cooper, former director of the NYC Food and Fitness Partnership at BSRC,

*...[Because] children receive an estimated 50-70 percent of their nutrients in early care facilities—including day care and Head Start facilities—we should...be paying significant attention to the programs where children receive the majority of their meals. We should be advocating for strong nourishment inside all early care facilities and ensuring adequate support in addition to advocacy around proper nourishment at home.<sup>41</sup>*

Soon enough, using its pilot funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, BSRC began providing fresh food to children in up to 10 Head Start partner sites, growing to serve approximately 800 children in those first locations. Through this experience, program coordinators hoped to:

1. Help students, families, and Head Start staff access healthy meals of fresh produce and whole grains at each food offering required by Head Start;
2. Cultivate the capacity of early learning centers to empower parents/guardians and staff to be fully engaged in healthy decisions in a way that respects the link between food and culture; and
3. Build resources for the creation of healthy food outlets in the neighborhoods served, including but not limited to cooperative buying structures, more farmers markets, and Community Supported Agriculture farm shares (CSAs).

BSRC's approach to farm to ECE is particular to the history of the area it serves and targeted to meet multiple needs on the community resilience spectrum. Importantly,



Farm to ECE is part of BSRC's strategy for tackling systemic barriers to a strong local economy. As noted in materials provided by BSRC, "Our farm to early care work is one way to strengthen community demand for local, sustainable food; creating and building substantial weekly markets for local producers; and offering a model for other institutional purchasers as well. By increasing demand in this way, we can prime the pump for a local food hub that would better meet Central Brooklyn's need for equitable, affordable, culturally appropriate, nutritious food."<sup>42</sup>

## Getting Started

The interest in and acknowledged value of farm to ECE is growing to such a point that there are several online resources available to help new practitioners get started. Websites for organizations such as National Farm to School Network, the Center for Regional Food Systems at Michigan State University, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) are just a few places to find resources. Increasingly, state departments of agriculture, education, and health across the country are providing state specific guidance on how to initiate farm to school and farm to ECE activities.

As BSRC educated itself using these and other resources, it began exploring partnerships with potential early childcare sites. BSRC staff reached out to the Bedford Stuyvesant Early Childhood Development Center (BSEDC), an educational and social service provider for three-to-five-year-old children and their families. BSEDC was not only an established and trusted community partner; it also managed 13 Head Start centers reaching over 800 children.<sup>43</sup> BSEDC became the first implementation partner of the farm to ECE pilot in a few of its sites, working with BSRC and partners like food provider Corbin Hill and other members of the NYC Food and Fitness Partnership,<sup>44</sup> to access healthy food options, develop ways to include healthy food into the standard curriculum, and craft opportunities for meaningful parent/guardian engagement.

One key ingredient in forming this relationship was the fact that BSEDC leadership understood the value of getting healthier food into the centers and were eager to partner. In fact, once work with BSRC got going, the then-executive director of BSEDC helped develop and evolve the farm to ECE work herself, coming up with new and better ideas over time.

Of course, there was some resistance from BSEDC staff, much of it based on the many misperceptions and myths that are connected to farm to school and farm to ECE projects in general.

**Myth 1: Early childhood centers lack interest in farm fresh food.** One of the first myths BSEDC and BSRC were able to disprove was that early childhood centers lack interest in farm fresh food. Leadership at BSEDC was already in the middle of getting rid of processed foods, so it welcomed the opportunity to do more to get children eating healthy foods. Additionally, BSEDC staff saw first-hand that children do like



healthy food, once they are exposed to it. This takes time and multiple introductions to new foods, but children are adaptable and quickly learn to appreciate and demand healthier food options. “Teachers used to throw vegetables away because the children weren’t eating them,” says Stephanie Edwards of BSEDC. As a result of BSEDC’s innovative food-based educational approach, which included activities such as teaching colors with fruits and vegetables, Edwards notes that, “Now the scholars ask for it.”<sup>45</sup>

**Myth 2: Farm fresh food is too expensive.** Another misconception about farm to ECE is the high cost of sourcing local food for childcare settings. Contrary to popular belief, the director of BSEDC found that sourcing the healthy food did not add to the budget once CACFP reimbursements were applied. Other administrators like Delores Mims of Edwards L. Cleaveland Children’s Center found cost was not a barrier, once she and her staff found the right mixture of farm fresh food and foods from other providers to meet the nutritional needs of her center.

**Myth 3: Farm to ECE is difficult to do, with few support mechanisms.** While farm to ECE is not easy by any means, BSRC found that its years in the community and its involvement with several other area nonprofits and agencies meant it had more than enough partners to help learn about and put into practice the beginnings of the farm to ECE pilot. As Afia Bediako, BSRC’s community health advocate and farm to early care program manager, points out, “We are a partnership, not just BSRC, so we can work with over 100 organizations to support us on a number of things and benefit from their expertise.” It is important to keep in mind, however, that each center is unique and there may not always be sufficient staff to fully launch and manage farm to ECE activities. Huguette Lareche from Brevoort Children’s Center says she had help from an assistant, noting “It’s not something you can do by yourself as a director of a preschool.”

As might be expected, there were some barriers, many of a logistical nature. When the partnership began with BSEDC, the Corbin Hill Food Project, a food hub that sources farm fresh produce from local and regional farmers and sells where it is most needed in New York, was delivering food to upper Manhattan but not to Brooklyn. Routing had to be figured out, and refrigerated transportation was necessary to ensure food quality for delivery into Brooklyn. A great deal of time for planning and coordination had to be invested to understand the logistics, work on cost efficiency, and align the interest with the realities of supply and demand. As Corbin Hill founder and president Dennis Derryck points out, “People want to do this, but the logistics is the hard part... These are not the kinds of things you resolve overnight, and people don’t know that collaboration requires so many resources.”

Early on, BSEDC’s finance manager was also in charge of the farm to ECE project, and she needed to be convinced of the viability of the project from logistical and financial perspectives. Once she saw the project up and running and realized that the model was no more expensive than traditional food sourcing and that new partners were willing to make changes to serve the community’s children, internal resistance at BSEDC fell away.

*“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 cook from scratch.”*

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

## **Expanding through Flexibility**

Strong partnerships allowed BSRC and BSECDC to include farm fresh food as an organizational priority. With the support of new partner Corbin Hill, updated seasonal menus were created. BSRC’s approach to partnership has also been important in gathering broader community support for the project.

### **Understanding Priorities for Community Engagement**

BSRC knows all early care sites (there are now 25 in their Farm to Early Care Program) are different, have diverse priorities, and need help in varied ways. BSRC does not directly provide a formal curriculum for healthy food in the classroom; rather it facilitates resources and support for classrooms to meet their own needs. All of the partner sites have some aspect of the good food approach in their classrooms, but what they focus on depends on their



capacity and resources at a given time. For example, they all have food or garden education in their curriculum, but there is no one, uniform curriculum BSRC asks partners to use. BSRC sees its role as providing access and support to help the sites reach their goals, though it does want partner sites to commit to securing fresh and local foods, provide educational support to students and parents, and extend that support to entire families.

Likewise, BSRC prefers to work with sites that have kitchens, but they don’t want this to limit involvement in the work. Some sites may want to switch to farm to ECE, but may be in contract with a caterer, be home-based, or be going through an organizational service transition. BSRC keeps the door open so that interested sites can be a part of the project in different ways regardless of their current kitchen capacity.

## Anticipating Changes

Some strains to partnership, however, have come about because of high staff turnover in the partner sites. Changes in teacher and administration staffing tend to impact the ability to continue carrying out the project in a seamless manner, though, so far, all new staff have continued the commitment to farm to ECE. A changing census in the neighborhoods is also a factor, shifting the priorities and demographics of who is served at the sites. If enrollment changes due to demographics, this can change the interest and ability to engage students and parents in farm to ECE. BSRC must invest a lot of time and energy into keeping in touch with partners, knowing about these changes, and keeping a certain consistency to the programming despite any shifts.



In all, BSRC wants to help partners make changes and transitions that support children and families in a holistic way, and allow sites to leverage their capacity and resources in a reasonable manner. Bediako and Capers know that site directors and staff, as well as parents, have competing priorities and many demands placed upon them, so they seek to ensure that families and partners in farm to ECE can, as First Lady Michelle Obama often reminds us, “make the healthy choice the easy choice.”

## Connecting with Families and the Community

Knowing that families needed to be at the core of the healthy food activities, the BSRC team developed educational information, spread the word about the on-site gardens, and made sure there were lots of events and demonstrations to lure families to come see what was going on at the sites. As staff spoke with families and conducted educational activities, the family members themselves began to volunteer and even offer their own knowledge about the school gardens. They also became involved in

*“Anything I can do  
for my community,  
I’ll try.”*

Alexis Glasgow, Farm Share  
Coordinator and former Head  
Start Parent



farm share programs and experimented with cooperative purchasing to get more farm fresh food into the communities, using the Head Start centers as an access point.

The farm share is especially important since in low-income and communities of color, sharing the cost burden through alternative economic tools is a traditional approach to problem solving, especially those caused by “market failures, discrimination, and underdevelopment,” as documented by Jessica Gordon Nembhard, a professor of Community Justice and Social Economic Development at John Jay College.<sup>46</sup> Such tools are being revived more broadly to tackle local issues without undue cost to any one person, and to ensure there is balance between community members benefiting from new services while also giving back to the community.<sup>47</sup>

## **Early Lessons**

During these first years of implementation, BSRC’s farm to ECE model has blossomed to most recently serve nearly 1,500 children in 25 early care sites across eight communities, though they are all at different levels of engagement and implementation. The centers include multiple neighborhoods and serve children and families of African, Caribbean, Latin American, and Chinese descent. Sites that conducted institutional procurement<sup>48</sup> all worked with Corbin Hill and were offered a variety of farm fresh fruits and vegetables. Other sites may receive food from different sources (such as donated food) that is not farm fresh, but all commit to as much farm fresh goods as possible given their situation.

## **Children Embrace Change**

The projects on-site are varied, due to their need to serve communities as appropriate and depending on where the childcare center is on its particular farm to ECE journey. Some schools routinely offer locally sourced fresh foods; others offer fresh food and educational events; while others are even engaging in collective purchasing. But changes are already seen in consumption and preference. Teachers report better attitudes towards healthy eating and improvements in food waste numbers, with some sites even seeing up to 45 percent less food being thrown away by children during one year.<sup>49</sup> In fact, there has been increased demand by children for healthy foods as they learn more about them. BSRC has heard from parents/guardians that children go home and ask for food similar to what they get at school. One parent even remarked that, while on vacation, her child wanted to know why Disney World had blueberry preserves instead of fresh blueberries for the pancakes!

Parents/guardians who have been part of events and cooking demonstrations have also stated that they are learning new things about healthy food and cooking (93 percent of the 217 respondents in a participant survey about the project), and that they will use new recipes at home (96 percent).<sup>50</sup>



## Anticipate Logistical Barriers

Some challenges to the program have been seen in the realities of living in a region like Central Brooklyn, where there remain difficulties in, for example, making food transport and delivery to the centers a more seamless process. Food hubs, like Corbin Hill, have less capacity to meet specific demand (they have order minimums) and need more lead time and coordination to make deliveries in a timely manner. There are also gaps between the dates of the school year and when certain fruits and vegetables are available from New York farms; problems with managing bulk processing for the specific ways in which food for ECE must be prepared; extra work to ensure food is properly stored (or that there is sufficient storage capacity on-site); and attention to garden plots so they comply with health and safety regulations; just to list a few of the more common challenges.

One unanticipated difficulty with purchasing that BSRC has learned about is that Head Start operates in many of the Brooklyn communities that already have outlets for free meals for children in the summers. This means children are often getting fed in other places, limiting a Head Start center's ability to purchase in greater volume during the summer months, and impacting the ability to get CACFP reimbursements for children in summer Head Start programs.<sup>51</sup> However, BSRC acknowledges (and supports the idea) that values matter in farm to ECE and that the program must manage the conflicting priorities of site staff and families. Staff learn to work with the free meals that impact purchasing, as well as other situations like sites receiving donated food, which also complicates implementation of farm to ECE activities.

BSRC also knows that sites have multiple program requirements which, along with frequent staff turn-over, impact not only how farm to ECE is managed, but even what can be done within the other needs the sites must meet. In response to all of these realities, BSRC staff and partners work to make the implementation process as simple as possible, with sites getting support to do what they can within their rules, requirements, and capacity.

A few other lessons from the BSRC experience include:

- **Align definitions of health.** Not everyone has the same definition or threshold, especially in low-income communities. Dialogue and the patience and skill to find commonality are all a part of bringing communities together around farm to ECE.
- **Be creative about the food and its connection to culture.** While farm fresh is the preference, BSRC knows that many New York-grown foods are new for children and families, especially if they are originally from countries with very different climates. Teachers and kitchen staff need to be clever in their approach to blending local food with styles and seasonings that are more familiar to the communities being served. Asking for or collaborating on recipes or food ideas is one way to learn from and engage children and their



families. As Mims points out about the kitchen staff's work, "This [preparing food] is an art, and people love their art."

- **Recognize implications and connections around values.** Farm to ECE and access to healthy food are as much about nutrition as they are about food sovereignty and cultural legacies of food. It is important to acknowledge values of respect, justice, and prosperity in the farm to ECE conversation.
- **Evaluating impact is difficult.** The field is young, and early adopters need time to document success and challenges to be able to provide a needed evidence base for scale. There also needs to be more funding for long-term and comprehensive evaluation.
- **Use partnership to make ends meet.** BSRC has a staff of three working on farm to ECE with 25 sites and multiple stakeholders. Though resources are limited, BSRC staff know they can do a great deal by working with partners to expand reach, offer more and better services, and keep an eye on the vision while keeping the work going. As Bediako says, "That's the beauty of a community coalition."
- **Be flexible, but with a desired goal in mind.** There are many benefits to working without a precise trajectory, particularly in learning and development. BSRC and partners are still learning and changing, and Bediako thinks this is important for the process and for engagement. She encourages new practitioners to "be open to not knowing everything."



## Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative

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

—Haleisa Johnson, Early Childhood Program Coordinator,  
Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness

### Health Challenges in Iowa

According to data from the Community Health Needs Assessment for the six counties of Northeast Iowa, almost 20 percent of residents live in communities with limited access to grocery stores.<sup>52</sup> While it is tempting to think that in this region, where farming is so important to the economy, food must be available in abundance, the data paints a different picture.

Along with limited access to grocery stores are high rates of poverty, with 32 percent of residents living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line (including more than 40 percent of all children).<sup>53</sup> 20 percent of children are considered to live in conditions of food insecurity.<sup>54</sup> The region also suffers from limited engagement in healthy activities, with 25 percent of adults reporting no physical activity in their leisure time, and 85 percent noting they do not consume daily recommended



amounts of fruits and vegetables.<sup>55</sup> Thirty-one percent of adults in the area are considered obese.<sup>56</sup>

Community stakeholders began coming together around these issues about 10 years ago, spurred by a study conducted by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University that outlined opportunities for improving the local food system and local health.<sup>57</sup> This work became part of a pilot site for the Leopold Center's Regional Food System Working Group and soon expanded to be part of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Food & Fitness Initiative (FFI) network, a group of collaborative partnerships located across the US which works to "bring community organizations and residents together to create healthy places where all children thrive."<sup>58</sup> A WKKF grant and technical support helped the Iowa collaborative develop strategic plans and policies for more purposefully improving health and active living in the area, with an emphasis on equity. The collection of health, college and university, school district, government agency, and other partners working on food and wellness issues in and around local schools in the region soon renamed itself the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative (NEIF&F).

Over the years, NEIF&F has worked on a set of core strategies to ensure the region is a place where everyone can experience and celebrate healthy food, activity, and play. Strategies include: 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.

## **Building on Experience**

After roughly eight years of successful progress seeing residents become more active and achieving changes in the schools that eventually led to recognition by (among others) the Healthier US Schools Challenge,<sup>59</sup> the partners began to consider including early childhood as a focal area. They saw the outcomes that were being attained in K-12 school settings, and recognized that they should also be setting the stage for healthy children entering the K-12 school system, rather than trying to address the behaviors and health concerns that young children would already bring with them into a school setting. Partners also saw an opportunity to reach out more to vulnerable groups, including engaging moms who were part of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

In 2012, NEIF&F began integrating farm to ECE strategies into its program. The approach was one of supporting care givers and parents of younger children (zero to five years) in their efforts to "provide health-promoting food and active play."<sup>60</sup> Specific start-up activities consisted of getting a pilot group of Head Start centers to include healthy food and activity into their routines, securing Head Start centers to participate in the farm to ECE activities, and having a small group of wellness teams conduct outreach and education with parents/guardians.



By the end of the program’s second implementation year (2015), more than 250 young children were being reached in all of the 15 Head Start classrooms located in Northeast Iowa. Not only has the amount of children’s physical activity increased; parents are consistently being reached through celebrations and other activities; specific farm to ECE activities and local foods are being incorporated into the classrooms; and teachers and other staff who signed up for a wellness challenge are making modest improvements in their eating, activity, and screen-time habits.<sup>61</sup>

What were some of the keys to NEIF&F’s quick success in the farm to ECE space? Surely their previous work building partnerships across six counties helped provide a strong base for integrating new programs and activities. But farm to ECE had a distinct group of stakeholders which did not always overlap with the farm to school effort, greater parent presence, a new group of teachers, and special curriculum needs that all had to be addressed.

### **Expanding Focus**

In truth, the idea for moving into farm to ECE began with a lot of support and passion, but less extensive planning. Still, for NEIF&F, the need to expand farm to school activities into ECE settings seemed urgent and the partners wanted to be able to continue increasing the reach of their program. As John Jensen from partner Luther College remembers, “From my perspective, there’s an imperative. We need to do something about this [farm to ECE], and we need to do it to be able to support other aspects of our work, but most importantly we need to do it because it’s a key part of our community and the larger objective that we’re after, which is to be able to do more for our community.”



Soon after the internal decision was made to expand into ECE, Ann Mansfield, NEIF&F project coordinator, went in search of someone to lead the farm to ECE effort. She



had worked with Haleisa Johnson since 2006/2007, when Johnson joined the NEIF&F Steering Committee. Johnson was the educational coordinator and foundation director for a local hospital. There, she also addressed healthy eating and active living issues for the community, the importance of which was underscored once the hospital had seen results of a study in which 14 percent of local high school students had indicators of pre-diabetes. The local schools in Johnson’s county had also been involved in the FFI activities. She had a strong local network, experience, and a passion for children’s health.

In 2012, Mansfield reached out to see if Johnson would be interested in making the move to serve as NEIF&F’s early childhood coordinator. With funding for only a few months of work, Johnson “took a leap of faith,” as she puts it, and began with outreach and relationship building to integrate farm to ECE into Head Start and Early Head Start settings. Traveling hours across the six counties of the region, Johnson built up and enhanced the existing NEIF&F network to include new government agency and academic stakeholders willing to take on the challenge of moving F2S into spaces with the youngest learners.

One important relationship in the farm to ECE project has been with the Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation (NEICAC), which administers local Head Start programs. Staff from NEICAC recall that they were excited to embark on the farm to ECE side of the work because they had been engaged with NEIF&F’s community health activities. And they saw what farm to school could achieve and were eager to see how it could be applied in the early childhood setting. Importantly, they appreciated that Johnson and other NEIF&F team members were there to help guide the process and to let them know that they did not need to have all the answers before they started. It was okay to experiment and learn as they went.

### **Engaging Teachers and Parents/Guardians in Practical Ways**

The approach in the Head Start classrooms was to make farm to ECE part of the model, asking teachers to impart a farm to ECE lesson (such as learning about the farm, or learning about a specific fruit or vegetable within the framework of art, math, or another subject) at least once a week. At first, NEICAC classrooms used the broader F2S framework that was used in the K-12 system, modified for a younger audience but using the same produce on the same timeline. It was a simple approach, to get the children familiar with the foods and the concepts. Then, after the pilot season, the program was formally integrated into the NEICAC classrooms with a kick-off training for teachers and staff. Johnson was one of the trainers.

For the NEICAC coordinators, Head Start was a natural place for children to begin to understand good food and develop a healthy taste preference. With Head Start nutrition requirements and its I Am Moving, I Am Learning series of health and wellness resources available to sites,<sup>62</sup> the NEICAC Head Start centers had support and materials to move into offering farm to ECE activities.



However, getting all of the teachers and teaching assistants on board was not easy. For some, the transition was difficult, and they expressed concern over having to add more to their already heavy workload. Johnson remarks that, for her, finding ways to engage teachers more fully into the project was her biggest challenge. It's a difficult path to find the balance between letting stakeholders find their own place in the farm to ECE approach and making sure that they don't hold back the process with their biases.

But, even those teachers who were at first hesitant are slowly coming to see the value of farm to ECE, and NEIF&F has been thoughtful in helping teachers take advantage of resources and bring their own touch to the program so it does not seem like 'one more thing to do' on top of day-to-day tasks and reporting requirements for various funders. Lately, Johnson notes that most teachers have been excited to include farm to ECE approaches in the classroom.

NEICAC coordinators have also seen the farm to ECE strategies as a way to engage parents more deeply in classroom lessons. Some of the more popular engagement activities have included grocery store tours (sponsored by the National Head Start Association and Share Our Strength) which guide parents through local grocery stores to talk about nutrition and point out different ways to bring the farm to ECE experience home within a certain budget.

Many parents of participating children garden as a hobby, and several have been excited by contributing to the farm to ECE project either by bringing in produce that can be used in demonstrations, donating seeds for the gardens, or even leading cooking demonstrations.



In other cases, NEICAC staff and Johnson have encountered parents who have grown up primarily with convenience food and are unfamiliar with how to purchase and prepare fresh foods. There have been parents who have never purchased fresh meat, or eaten fresh spinach. The experiences with the farm to ECE activities have been eye-opening for parents, providing new learning opportunities

that build skills and knowledge throughout family generations.

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

NE Iowa Food & Fitness Parent

## **Adjusting to Realities**

The one area the NEIF&F group admits has been lagging behind is the on-site/accessible gardening. Right now, NEICAC coordinators note that, whether or not a classroom garden becomes part of the routine depends on the level of teacher interest. Additionally, not all schools are able to have a garden yet. Another factor is seasonal timing, given that the peak garden season in Northeast Iowa would primarily end up benefiting students in summer programs. These are challenges the group is trying to work through with more intentional planning of fresh food purchases.

On the other hand, the region now benefits from the Iowa Food Hub which links local, small scale farmers to new access points including farm to ECE and farm to school. Though each Head Start site contracts through its affiliated school, most sites are committed to local food and typically procure it for each day. All 15 sites that work with NEIF&F use the same menu. Right now it is difficult for NEIF&F to track where food is sourced across the sites, but it is developing a pilot that focuses on more school disclosure of its food sources and greater inclusion of the Food Hub as a provider. Snacks are the test point, and the group will use lessons from this experience to monitor food sourcing better and help the Food Hub meet the needs of Head Start centers.

## **A Few Early Outcomes**

In recent surveys from the sites, three out of four (75 percent) Head Start parents strongly agreed that their child is more likely to choose or try healthy foods since participating in farm to ECE activities. Additionally, two out of three respondents strongly agreed that their family has made healthier food or wellness choices since starting Head Start. Teachers have also felt supported by NEIF&F, but because this percentage of teachers was only 45 percent, the NEIF&F team has developed new approaches to ensure staff feel empowered to implement and model farm to ECE.

NEIF&F has also been tracking home visits that are part of the Early Head Start program, reporting that information on farm to ECE and the foods highlighted in the on-site curriculum was shared in 34 percent of these visits and activities featuring those foods were conducted in 46 percent of visits. NEIF&F is improving training for home visit staff and making the process easier to engage in as home visitors review their standard material with parents.



## Lessons

Johnson and Mansfield, the two who are devoting most of their time to this effort, are excited about continuing to expand and deepen the impact of the farm to ECE work, which now reaches approximately 1,000 children in all regional Head Start centers plus other non-Head Start sites. They consider that reflection and evaluation have been important parts of helping to not just get the program up and running, but also keeping it going with the support of so many community members. Their reflections, along with those of other core partners, have led to the following lessons:

- **Invest in someone to drive the farm to ECE process.** One of the unique aspects of the NEIF&F model is that there is no 501(c)(3) organization that serves as the home base. To make this a truly community owned project, the core partners decided not to have a ‘backbone’ organization, but rather to empower partners to take on those aspects of NEIF&F’s work that best reflected their expertise. When the NEIF&F partners chose to do farm to ECE, they knew they needed someone to help knit together all the pieces of the existing network that would need to come together. They hired Johnson, who has focused on partnership and support building for providers and other stakeholders. No one in the NEIF&F network had previous experience with farm to ECE activities, but with someone to bring together all the knowledge and also share best practices from the farm to ECE field, the group could move forward with a pilot. Importantly, the partners were all willing to learn along the way.



- **Build partnerships that can stand up to tough questions.** One of NEIF&F's greatest strengths is their ability to build and sustain genuine partnership. In many ways this comes from being part of a small community which, though spread out geographically, has a culture of strong ties across families and generations. But NEIF&F's governance structure also means that stakeholders with very different goals all have equal weight in conversations and debates. Johnson and Mansfield's approach to leadership also factors into this equation because they both believe in being learners more than knowers and want to have conversations that lead to improvements. This combination of trust, questioning, and ownership means that stakeholders can question and push ideas and decisions. It also means that thinking remains dynamic so that the work is always driving towards mission. As Jensen states, one of the things that people sometimes don't realize within strong relationships is that "you have the ability to ask hard questions and adapt your work based on the answers to those questions." NEIF&F has built a culture that enables this, but this culture may also become cumbersome as the project scales. NEIF&F will need to ask these questions as it plans for growth.
- **Parent/guardian needs and realities must to be considered in planning and implementation.** NEIF&F stakeholders were very cognizant of the need to place children and families at the center of their process. As enthusiastic as stakeholders were to get started, they did need to take into account what worked best for everyone before launching.
- **Look for outsiders when forming a community for farm to ECE.** Jensen says, "Sometimes organizations that don't seem like an obvious fit can still be a part of the equation." He sees the role of Luther College in this context, noting that organizations should look for ways to both contribute to and benefit from farm to ECE partnerships. He continues, "I think part of the Food & Fitness model is taking existing organizations and finding their niche, and finding the connections and communication."
- **Respect and support the position of teachers.** As one of the core modelers of behavior and decision-makers for many activities, teachers are an integral part of farm to ECE success. Their engagement points need to be found and teased out, while still linking the benefits of farm to ECE to the core curriculum.



## CentroNía

*We wanted to change the way kids eat. We had a caterer before—and it was very unattractive, processed food. Now, everything is from scratch.*

—Beatriz Zuluaga, Director, Food and Wellness Department,  
CentroNía

## Meeting Neighborhood Needs

In 1996, CentroNía (Nía) was a small childcare center serving about 15 children in the basement of a church in the Columbia Heights Neighborhood of Washington, DC. Beatriz “BB” Otero had started the center in 1986 (then known as Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center) to support the mostly immigrant, dual-language families living in the area who needed an affordable childcare option. As the population of the neighborhood grew, so too did the demand for the services Nía could provide for parents and their children.

Nía began to expand quickly, and Otero soon realized that it not only needed more and better space, but also expanded food services for the children. Most childcare centers in the area used catering services, and those services complied with Head Start, USDA, and other regulations (notably CACFP). However, these catering services



could offer juice as a fruit option, flavored milk as the milk option, and foods like pizza, chicken nuggets, and French fries and still be in compliance.

Otero and her team saw that not only was this unhealthy, but it also disconnected the children from their cultural heritage. As plans to move and expand the center got rolling, the ability to have a facility with a kitchen to prepare more nutritious food for the children became a priority.

Such a decision did not come easily or cheaply, as few facilities in an urban area (or built for childcare in general) have kitchen capacity—unless they are physically connected to a K-12 school system. As Myrna Peralta, current Nía president and CEO, recalls, “Yes it was hard, and, yes, it was expensive. But it was also very intentional on our part that we would have the opportunity to influence a child’s eating habits, since we took care of children as young as three months of age. And so that was simply a very intentional and strategic decision on our part.”

Importantly, the board was behind the decision to build out a kitchen facility and cook all the food for the children’s meals (breakfast and lunch, plus a snack for full-time children) on-site. Like the Nía staff, the board understood the realities of working parents in this neighborhood. Peralta explains, “The bigger overarching reality of our families is poverty, and, inherent in a family that is on the margins economically, are the challenges that they face about food choices and also the fact that many of our families are working two jobs. Hence, the frequent decisions to do a quick stop at a McDonald’s, or for a bag of chips, or for pre-prepared meals.”

She goes on, “We wanted to introduce our children to what good eating was and at the same time involve the parents in that. This overarching reality of poverty was a driving force behind having our own kitchen on-site so that what they ate with us was as healthy as it could be.”

### **Understanding Community**

CentroNía staff continually reflect on the economic situation of their families because they know how deeply this impacts the services they must offer and the ways in which they must be offered. Columbia Heights<sup>63</sup> has roughly 32,000 residents within a space just over half a square mile, making it one of the most population-dense areas in the

DC metropolitan region. The racial and ethnic make-up is extremely diverse, with



residents identifying as Black (36 percent), White (22 percent), and Latino (37 percent).<sup>64</sup> Just over 7 percent of residents are children under four, and nearly 62 percent of all children under 18 live at or below 200 percent of the poverty line.<sup>65</sup> Close to 100 (99.2) percent of children are eligible for free or reduced lunch in school, yet only about 2 percent of all residents are considered food insecure.<sup>66</sup>

Even though all these statistics were known within Nía, the idea for an on-site kitchen dedicated to farm fresh and healthy food had to stay on the backburner while money was raised to secure a new building. Bell Atlantic eventually donated a building, and Nía secured the US\$5.6 million in renovation funds through donations, a Community Development Block Grant, and a bank loan. Today, the 73,000 square foot center on Columbia Road has a daycare center, dance studio, technology lab, rooftop playground, nonprofit tenants—and, of course, a kitchen.

Nía moved into its new building, but the full benefits of the on-site kitchen were not felt until Beatriz “Bea” Zuluaga joined the team in 2006. Hired to be the admissions administrator, Zuluaga soon saw that her real task was in bringing healthy food to the CentroNía community. Under Zuluaga’s guidance and using her 25 years of experience as a cook, Nía made a more intentional connection between food and the educational curriculum in 2006 with the creation of the Food and Wellness program. Zuluaga jumped into making the move to farm fresh food for the children’s meals.

### **Putting Ideas into Practice**

Zuluaga was thoughtful about the impact of food changes and how those are connected, not only to organizational culture, but also to personal feelings and identity. She and her small team engaged in an observation project for about a year, noting practices, behaviors, choices, and the general educational processes at Nía. After about a year, Zuluaga began making some simple changes, but with firm rules. She began working with the kitchen staff, discussing necessary modifications and how they could happen without making too much more work for the team. Importantly, she spoke with the kitchen staff about how the food changes would make a difference for the children, some of whom were children of the kitchen staff themselves.



*“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**



## The Role of Kitchen Staff

Catalina Cruz, one of the kitchen staff, admits that there were difficulties at first. “Before, the food was very bad, all fried. So this has been a great improvement. But it was hard for me to accept it at first. It was hard and it resulted in more work. But I realized why this is so important, especially for my own kids. With experience, I’ve learned to love it.”

Anecdotally, she’s noticed changes in child behavior. She observed that, before the shift to local foods and food-based educational activities, children frequently went to the nurse’s office, but this doesn’t appear to happen as often now. There seem to be fewer stomach aches reported. She has also noticed better general health and behavior in her own children, who (all but the youngest) attend Nía.

Cruz’s own choices have changed, in part influenced by Nía’s policies to have the staff eat what the children eat, banning outside meals considered junk food, and getting rid of unhealthy food choices inside the center, such as soda and snack machines. She comments, “At home, now we use more vegetables. For dinner, we have vegetables and salad. My children say something is missing if we don’t have vegetables on the plates. I always gave them protein or grains, but I didn’t think about vegetables before. Now, I feel better about my decisions. I believe this approach makes a difference.”

But with inflation and the rising cost-of-living in the DC area,<sup>67</sup> Cruz worries about affordability. She also notes that there is no farmers market near her home, so more thought and effort have to go into her shopping choices if she wants to continue to model behavior for her children and those at Nía. Nonetheless, Cruz wishes more childcare spaces would embrace farm to ECE, saying, “This is about giving a lifestyle to our kids.”

## Supporting Teachers

For the teachers, the transition seems to have been similar. At first there was a learning curve, and certainly there was resistance—especially when teachers were asked to eat the same food as the children.

According to Rosa Moraes, CentroNía’s director of the QIN-HUB Early Head Start standards and compliance,<sup>68</sup> whose work includes helping other childcare centers learn from the CentroNía model while meeting compliance standards, teachers had a hard time understanding why there is no salt in the food, or why they had to switch completely to brown rice. In essence, they didn’t understand why they needed to make such absolute changes to their eating routine. Moraes recalls that when Zuluaga and her team saw the food didn’t work for the teachers at first, the staff came together to find a solution. They opted to make small changes, gradually and over time, so that eventually the food became enjoyable. Moraes says, “You need to have these conversations. If there is no input from teachers, then the changes may be on paper but it really isn’t working.”



Over time, Nía developed the I Want To Be Healthy curriculum, which helps teachers talk about diet, exercise, and healthy behaviors using song and dance. The curriculum covers topics such as water, fruits and vegetables, proteins, grains, calcium, physical activity, and the farm, as well as at-home components to further family engagement.<sup>69</sup>

For Zuluaga and her team, continued exposure to new foods and a focus on the needs of the children were key to shifting behaviors successfully. But to make this happen requires the total commitment of teachers and others who



spend the better part of the day interacting with the children. In one example Zuluaga wrote about in the *Huffington Post*, she told the story of how two classrooms experienced the same meal. In one classroom, the teacher was already familiar with the food being offered (couscous) and enjoyed the meal with her students. In another, the teacher had never tried the food before, and very obviously did not enjoy it. Most of the children in this room saw the teacher's reaction and threw the food into the trash.<sup>70</sup>

When challenges such as this arise, Nía can now address them quickly because they have established feedback mechanisms and ways to make changes. Again, the team does this with an eye towards modeling behavior for students, showing them how to work together and reach compromises.

According to research by Leann Birch, Jennifer S. Savage, and Alison Ventura, this pattern of behavior is to be expected. Adults have their formed preferences, and there is a learning and adaptation process needed to build new taste interests. For children, taste preferences are just being established in the early childcare setting, but they look to the adults around them for guidance. This all takes time, and there will invariably be food waste.<sup>71</sup> Zuluaga notes that in her experience it can take up to six different exposures to a new food for children to adopt it into their preferences.<sup>72</sup>

Billo Diawara, a teacher at Nía, had a hard time with continually presenting the same food to children because of all the food that was thrown away in the beginning. Now she sees how the process must unfold. "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."



Zuluaga and Nía go to great effort to support staff in this work because, Zuluaga notes, this time in a child’s life is precious. “If the teachers aren’t enthusiastic, the challenge is greater. They are the ones that make the difference with parents, too. The first few years of a child’s life are so important, not just in terms of development, but also because this is when (during ages two through five) we tend to spend more time with our children. We are more careful.”

## **Engaging Parents**

After the healthy food program got going and started to see traction, how did Nía make sure that the behaviors children were learning at the center were reinforced at home and in other settings? Zuluaga and her team learned from the work with teachers and kitchen staff that resistance to change among adults was a greater challenge than among the children. Parents, in some ways, represented a fantastic challenge and a key opportunity.

At first, Zuluaga’s work addressing challenges centered on fighting misperceptions about her goals. For example, ideas abounded that she was a vegetarian and wanted all the children to become vegetarians. But Zuluaga’s main concern and approach has been consistency. She has sought consistency in offering the best possible food for the children, in making the source of that food affordable and accessible, in providing choices for children and families, and in helping families be consistent with their choices at home.

## **Getting Culture Right**

This last point is important, as most of the families Nía serves (75 percent) are immigrant families from Latin America. In many cases, the parents eat traditional foods like rice, beans, and tortillas—which are generally healthy—but purchase pre-packaged or processed food for their children. For many Latin Americans who move to the US, this transition from eating food they produced to eating purchased food is a sign of social and economic mobility, proof that they are providing a better life for their children.<sup>73</sup> Zuluaga and the team seek to make not only healthy connections to wholesome food, but also cultural connections to the natural foods parents know and grew up eating.

To ensure this is done in a healthy manner, Nía has an open door policy with all parents, encouraging them to drop in as they need to and inviting them to eat breakfast with their children if they have time during morning drop-off. There are also cooking classes for the parents, educational materials, and educational trips to the farmers market with vouchers to encourage the purchase of farm fresh foods.

As Rosalba Bonilla-Acosta, Nía’s Maryland director, explains, “Certainly families have challenges in terms of being engaged. To address this, the first thing we do when a child enrolls is to have a meeting to understand their goals and identify their strengths. And they tell us what they need from us. We provide them many ways to be involved, including classes on financial literacy, self-esteem, stress management,

and transitional workshops as their children move across learning phases. We also have a health fair once a year to ensure families are receiving routine tests and assessments.”

Nía does indeed provide a wide array of social services for its families, conducting needs assessments that go above and beyond what Head Start and other programs mandate. In this manner, staff get to know individual family needs and refer them to housing, job, financial, educational, and other resources that support and reinforce the gains made through the early education program and exposure to healthy food.

Bonilla-Acosta goes on to explain that the educational process with teachers and with parents/guardians is similar. They discuss the long-term health of children and families and encourage them (be they teachers or parents) to take ownership of how long-term health goals will be achieved within the power and choices they have. The education, however, is ongoing because the ideas and skills must constantly be reinforced, and new approaches must be tested to keep the children engaged. Feedback is very important to collect, from children on up to the teachers.



## **Gardening with City Blossoms**

Another component of the program that benefits the whole Nía community is the on-site and community gardens. The original garden at the Columbia Road facility was an idea that never fully came to fruition, created by an organization that never completed nor tended to the garden after it was set up. But Rebecca Lemos-Otero, daughter of Otero, and her aptly named friend Lola Bloom, decided to take the project on. Both had essentially grown up at CentroNía and felt a strong connection and commitment to it. Neither had ever gardened before, but decided they wanted to see what might come of the project.

They worked on the garden in the small front courtyard at Nía, mostly using a trial and error methodology, and saw the impact the work had on the community and on the children. They were motivated and kept the project going.

Lemos-Otero and Bloom were both still in high school at the time, so the gardens were not as well tended while they were gone. After college, they decided to return to the project and created the nonprofit City Blossoms. Nía incubated the project and became its first client. Combining their skills in visual arts and communication (Lemos-Otero) and education (Bloom), City Blossoms worked with Nía staff to develop a formal garden education curriculum to be integrated into the classroom. The garden at Columbia Road then became a space that also integrated community development, arts, urban agriculture, and the environment with the early childhood and food access efforts. When City Blossoms incorporated as a formal nonprofit organization in 2009, there was little of this kind of work in DC, but as the urban garden and community space movements have taken off in recent years across the US, Lemos-Otero has sought to keep their focus on local resource access. She describes their approach this way: “We wanted them [the gardens] to be like outdoor



gallery spaces, with artwork. Also, these spaces are a constant, but also constantly changing, so that there's always space for people's input. And that's the beauty of a garden, right? [Throughout the] seasons, the kids can come and keep changing and keep on working in them. We found that works really well."

While parents are not always very involved with the gardens, they are invited to participate in events at the gardens and see the outcomes of their children's involvement, adding to the experience of connecting food to education to experimentation and preference.

## **Integrating with Curriculum**

The final component of Nía's work in making Farm to ECE a reality has been the integration of good food elements into the educational curriculum. Nía uses the Creative Curriculum model, which focuses on the whole child concept and uses project-based learning as a way to increase skills and abilities across a set of standard interest areas.<sup>74</sup> Zuluaga has worked with staff to develop a farm to ECE curriculum that blends into the Creative Curriculum, introducing a series of foods to the children along with instruction on food production (where does food come from?), the science of food, language, and wellness. As Peralta notes, the approach to curriculum integration has been to include food and health knowledge into everything the center does. "It can't just be a stand-alone. It has to be a part of your DNA."

Because the age group of Nía's students is between zero and five, a strong emphasis has been placed on training teachers to build taste preference. Importantly, Nía's approach stresses variety because of the great diversity of backgrounds of the children and their families. Though there must be educational fundamentals, the method for including and discussing the content needs to be based on culture and experience as lived by the families. Since so many students are Latino, many foods in the curriculum are items the children and their families are likely familiar with already. Foods are used in multiple class settings so that the lessons are reinforced.

Nía has been keen on building staff capacity in a respectful way. Bonilla-Acosta thinks about teacher training in this manner: "I look at myself first. I ask myself: What do I know about the other person? Before I tell them what they are doing wrong or well, I think about this. It's about how can I support others."





## CentroNía Today and Tomorrow

CentroNía's example eventually came to national prominence when First Lady Michelle Obama announced the launch of the Let's Move! Campaign at the Columbia Road location in June of 2011. She called Nía a role model for organizations seeking to impart healthier eating and lifestyle habits in young children.<sup>75</sup> Though Nía has completely revamped its approach to food and health, Zuluaga takes nothing for granted. She still finds children bringing in unhealthy food from home, as well as the occasional but tell-tale brown bag from a nearby McDonald's, likely brought in by a staff member.

Consistency is difficult but necessary. Zuluaga and the rest of Nía see children come and go, and worry about what habits might change once the children move into another school system. And the conversations with parents are ongoing, though always respectful. Zuluaga is tough and wants parents and teachers to get serious about the health of their children. But she knows that there are work pressures, and social and economic considerations they must confront. In general, Zuluaga sees progress on all fronts of the farm to ECE movement, even if it is slow and inconsistent. She is particularly excited about the Healthy Tots Act in DC, which was passed in 2014 and extends many of the benefits of the DC Healthy Schools Act to child development centers and family daycare homes. The Act will require those sites that serve 50 percent or more low-income children to participate in CACFP, and it provides additional funding for greater healthy foods access.<sup>76</sup> For Nía, the provisions will mean greater financial reimbursement for its higher nutritional standards and use of local foods, financial support to offer a third meal for full-time students (not just an afternoon snack), and the opportunity to access grants for physical activity, gardens, and greater nutrition education.<sup>77</sup> Importantly, Nía will soon launch a catering service with CSA-box style deliveries to support the farm to ECE education and food service efforts of childcare providers that work out of their own homes. Nía will not only expand the reach of farm to ECE, but also bolster its own financial sustainability.

As she thinks about their progress and what it has taken to get this far to serve nearly 400 children across sites, Zuluaga offers some final words of advice:

- **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.
- **Focus on modeling behavior.** Zuluaga understands that children will change their food tastes over time if such changes are modeled. Teachers and parents are key in this, and teachers need to feel included and empowered to be good role models for their students. Parents need to know very clearly what changes are happening and why, as well as how to be agents of change in the home.
- **Consider context and culture.** Zuluaga and her team know the financial situation of DC, as well as the food temptations in their own neighborhoods.



By using cultural connections to healthy food, Nía helps minimize the distractions of fast food.

- **Shop around.** CentroNía staff developed multiple strategies to help families shop for healthier food in a way that doesn't dramatically impact their budget. Not only does Zuluaga take families to farmers markets and stores and talk about how to use supplements like WIC and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), she also ensures that Nía gets its money's worth by networking with farmers to leverage their interest in connecting with schools. Nía also has a partnership with the nonprofit DC Central Kitchen,<sup>78</sup> using its purchasing power to secure better bulk prices throughout the year.
- **Consider the whole family.** By talking with parents and offering health and personal (social and financial) security assessments, Nía is able to understand and confront the big picture of what its students and their families navigate in terms of challenges to well-being. Nía knows it cannot meet all those needs, but can help families find support and services that reinforce the changes experienced by their children through the learning and healthy eating process.



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

*From the very beginning I think having clear roles and clear expectations was important.*

—Pakou Hang, Executive Director and Co-Founder, Hmong American Farmers Association

**Coming Together**

In the Minneapolis/St. Paul (MSP) region, the farm to ECE movement began to gain traction with an experiment spearheaded by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and the New Horizon Academy. New Horizon, a for-profit childcare service with locations across Minnesota, partnered with IATP in 2012 to test out the farm to ECE model in 14 sites within the MSP region. The model was successful in



terms of adoption within the sites and improvement in child eating habits, so the program was expanded to over 60 sites across the state.

Building on this work, IATP Farm to Institution project director Erin McKee and her team sought to evolve the model beyond New Horizon, seeking greater impact on both low-income families with children in Head Start programs and for diverse local farmers. McKee mulled over the idea of working more closely with small-scale farmers from in and around the MSP region. The New Horizon model had worked with 'local' farmers, but some were still hours away from the region and not all of them were small-scale producers.

McKee also looked at the potential of working with Head Start programs, knowing that they served some of the most vulnerable children in the area and that their performance standards allowed for opportunities to bring farm fresh food into activities while fulfilling operational requirements. Working with local Head Start programs could not only help reach low-income children during the key time when taste preference is developed and when they were particularly receptive to learning life-long habits, but could also support the economic sustainability of local farms and, ideally, create stronger connections between the cultures of the students and the farmers.<sup>79</sup>

Ramsey County, in which St. Paul (but not Minneapolis) is located and where the following takes place, has approximately 520,000 residents. Roughly 70 percent of residents are White, 13 percent are Asian, and 11 percent are Black. Almost 6 percent live in English-language-limited households, twice the rate for the state as a whole.<sup>80</sup>

Among children, more than 18 percent are considered food insecure, and 58 percent are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch at school. Almost 25 percent of Ramsey County children live below 100 percent of the poverty line. This includes the majority of Black children (50.5 percent), followed by Native American/Alaskan Native children (40.8 percent), and Asian children (39.4 percent).<sup>81</sup>

## **Balancing Power**

During roughly the same time that McKee was working on a plan for connecting farmers to Head Start students, the Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA) was reflecting on its work and goals, and looking for ways to expand its market connections into venues like Head Start. HAFA, which launched in 2011, is a member-based nonprofit organization created to advance the social and cultural prosperity of Hmong American farmers and families in the MSP area through education, research, advocacy, and economic development. It has approximately 128 farming families as members, and works to provide them with training, technical assistance, and other support needed to expand their market access through sustainable and culturally respectful means.<sup>82</sup>

HAFAs executive director and co-founder, Pakou Hang, is a self-described “Head Start kid” and so are other staff. As HAFAs thought about how to expand its reach beyond local farmers markets to more consistent income sources, the staff wanted to make sure that these new partnerships were not only economically beneficial, but also supportive of HAFAs values and place in the community. This desire for a proper place in the landscape is important for several reasons.



Hmong immigrants from Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand began to settle in MSP in the 1970s as refugees of the Vietnam War. Many relied on their history in farming to make the economic transition to the US. Over the years, the Hmong community has grown to be a strong force in the local foods movement, and more than 50 percent of all the farmers in MSP farmers markets are Hmong or of Hmong decent.<sup>83</sup> Yet, until 2011, Hmong farmers were only making an average of US\$5,000 in gross sales per acre, compared to US\$8,000 made by non-Hmong farmers in similar settings.<sup>84</sup>

Additionally, though HAFAs was aware of IATPs work to build a local food culture in the region and thought it could be an important partner, staff had heard that IATP did not always give proper credit when working with minority communities. Given a national history of ‘learning’ in which academics and researchers sought to learn *about* rather than *with* minority communities across the US, Hang was interested in the idea of working with IATP, but wary of what that might mean.

McKee and Hang had spoken before about possibly working together, but hadn’t discussed any details. When McKee called Hang to talk about a new approach to their Farm to Head Start model, Hang was honest in terms of what HAFAs wanted out of the project and the need for a genuine partnership. Hang recalls that she brought up the issue of partnership and due credit. In response, McKee suggested they specifically discuss the concerns to determine if working together would be an appropriate option.



Hang recalls:

*From the very beginning I think having clear roles and expectations was important. I think having an understanding that this type of collaboration takes funds and resources, and being clear that all of us are fully funded, was also important. IATP, HAFA, and Head Start had never really worked together, so coming together and just talking it through that first time was very good, as opposed to, let's say, if IATP and Head Start had worked together and then we had come in. I think the power dynamics would have been a little bit different. And I think having the personalities—myself, Erin, and Angie [Prokop]—was good because we are people who are really committed to making this work no matter what.*

### **Building a Comprehensive Partnership**

For Angela Prokop, nutrition coordinator for Head Start at the Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties (CAPRW), there had been interest in the farm to school movement, but she couldn't really see how to implement it in the Head Start setting. "I thought it was great, but didn't know the steps that were needed to make it happen." Again, McKee was the one who reached out, contacting the Minnesota Head Start Association to propose the idea. They connected her to CAPRW, which administers Head Start and Early Head Start programs in more than a dozen centers in the area. Through conversations with McKee and Hang, the idea of how to develop a more community-focused farm to ECE program in CAPRW Head Start sites came together.



The group agreed to focus on a few Head Start centers that had primarily ethnic Hmong children, enabling a strong cultural component to the programming. This agreement underscores how important shared values were to the group. In the first

formal meeting of the partners, in fact, the main focus was on establishing shared values, which they all agreed had to form the basis of approach for moving forward. They all believed that providing a high quality experience for the children was a top priority, and this included making the program culturally relevant and inclusive of the parents and families. It also included making sure the teachers felt ownership of the curriculum and the changes that would be made to their work. Hang, Prokop, and McKee agreed to be equal partners, each knowing their roles and responsibilities and respecting the experience of the others.\*

## **Moving from Values to Menus**

Having a strong partnership approach does not guarantee that implementation will go smoothly. Once HAFA was set as produce provider, IATP as curriculum provider, and Head Start as program implementer, the group had to talk with CAPRW's caterer, CKC Good Food. CAPRW had recently switched to catering because of some of the cost barriers of scratch cooking on site at their locations. CKC was excited by the prospect of making greater connections with and between local farmers and the children in the Head Start program, but in a very pragmatic way everyone knew that, if CKC could not make this approach work, the project would not work. Food at Head Start sites must meet very specific preparation and serving regulations, in addition to state and local licensing requirements that apply to childcare facilities. So, if CKC could not provide the HAFA food in a specific way, the project would need to go back to the drawing board.

Luckily, CKC was very willing to make the project work. As a family owned enterprise, CKC saw the value of making connections with local farmers, and of making sure children had the best and healthiest choices available. This was part of the family legacy, since the father of CKC CEO Nancy Close had owned a restaurant in the Twin Cities that was one of the first in the country to offer a heart healthy menu. CKC, in fact, was launched when Close's brother (and CKC director of operations) David Kayoum had asked Close to help create meals for his wife's daycare business. CKC also had experience designing multi-cultural menus for schools that reflected the heritage of the children, while adhering to USDA National School Lunch Program standards.

Another partner, though, was needed to complete the circle. CKC as a caterer could not manage the food processing for the menu CAPRW and IATP envisioned. HAFA had worked with Russ Davis Wholesale in its provision of produce to Minneapolis Public Schools, so Russ Davis was brought in to help prepare the items that would then go on to CKC for cooking. Once HAFA and CAPRW prepared the menus and assigned them to the school year calendar, they communicated with CKC and Russ Davis so that they could coordinate what produce would be provided throughout the school year, in what quantities, and how it needed to be prepared for CKC's purposes.

*"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**



## **Testing the Waters**

With the pieces and players lined up, CAPRW decided to begin implementation with its 2014 summer program. Prokop had made sure to seek out the feedback of teachers before launching the program, and then included the IATP curriculum as part of the training conducted with all teachers prior to the first day of school. The lessons began soon enough, as the first vegetable to be introduced in the classroom was the radish. The radishes, unfortunately, were not ready for harvest when school began. So the classrooms learned about the farm and where food came from, ready to try the radishes the next week.

In retrospect, Prokop thinks radishes were not the best choice. They proved very unpopular with the children. The team began to see how the menu planning would need to shift towards highlighting the produce as one part of farm to ECE lessons, rather than singularly focusing on it. When the curriculum shifted into produce that was more familiar to the students, the process began to hum along.

The farm to ECE project then moved into the full-time, year-round classroom setting. During training days, teachers were invited to provide feedback on the curriculum and were trained in how to use it. Recipes from teachers were also included. As the project went through both a school year and a seasonal year, the team learned about the impact of the Minnesota winter, which at one point delayed harvests by up to two weeks. So the team regrouped, finding alternatives and working through the curriculum while skipping certain planned fruits or vegetables that were not available.

## **Learning by Doing**

Classroom activities were augmented by school gardening, which is available at some of the CAPRW locations. The hope is to expand availability of farming opportunities as the farm to ECE project grows, but the current gardens do benefit from teachers who themselves garden and develop new projects with the students. Volunteers also enhance gardening activities. The children are typically allowed to weed and water as part of the learning process, eventually seeing and tasting the outcome of their work and the tangible side of their classroom lessons.

The children also see this process on the farm since many of the Head Start students get to visit the HAFA farm. HAFA puts together a half-day of lessons and activities so that students can see, smell, touch, hear, and taste the world of the farm. Students and teachers speak with the farmers, do some hands-on activities, observe Hmong cultural celebrations, and learn what it takes for their food to go from seed to plate. According to the team, this is considered by many stakeholders to be one of the most cherished activities of the project.

## **Rethinking Parent Involvement**

In the first project year, which the partners consider to be the learning year, CAPRW focused on informing Head Start parents/guardians by sharing information via



newsletters and other communications tools. There were also family cooking events where the farm to ECE approach was further explained and discussed. But Prokop admits that the family engagement aspect of the program could have been better that first year, especially because CAPRW teachers do not get to interact with family members every day. Unlike many childcare centers, the children in CAPRW's participating farm to ECE centers were mostly transported there and not dropped off by family members. There were limited opportunities to connect with families directly on this topic.

But, working with McKee to develop new ideas, CAPRW expanded family events into a routine series and began to meet with the policy council—the parent board of the Head Start program (and a Head Start requirement). Where CAPRW did see parents every month, the team saw the benefit of discussing family meal practices, how to incorporate the farm to ECE ideas with traditions, and how to use the foods the children were currently learning about.

Now that the project is established and the work flow, communication, and logistics have been settled, McKee is less involved, moving on to expand farm to ECE initiatives to additional Head Start programs. HAFA and CAPRW continue to deepen their work together and find new and more engaging ways to connect children and families with their food while supporting the local economy.

## Refinements

The project is now wrapping up feedback from serving more than 1,100 children in its second full year, and planning for year three. Some of the key lessons and advice the partners gained from this experience so far include:

- **Plan for the long-term.** Making the transition to farm to ECE requires buy-in, testing, refinement, and a learn-as-we-go approach. When putting the children first, it is not very easy to test something new and then change it quickly. It has to be part of an approved curriculum and something that will support learning and taste preference development over time. There are no quick wins.
- **Learn from others.** Prokop noted that she had not been aware of the details of the New Horizon model when she began this project. She advises others to do their research and talk with others engaged in farm to ECE so that they can avoid some of the logistical pitfalls.
- **Build from shared values.** The core partners knew of each other, but did not know each other well and had not worked together prior to this experience. But Hang, McKee, and Prokop agree that by beginning their work through a process of defining their values and moral commitments, they found a strong baseline upon which to build their partnership. This allowed them to amicably and honestly set up ground rules, roles, and responsibilities. It also allowed them to build a base of trust that helped facilitate conversations

when they confronted challenges on the farm, in the classroom, or with parent engagement. Luckily, this also extended to CKC and Russ Davis, both of which were committed to getting healthy food on the plates of vulnerable children in the Twin Cities.

- **Understand community.** A unique aspect of this partnership was the intentional connection made between the food provider and the students. McKee, after the pilot with New Horizon, saw an opportunity to connect farmers looking for new markets with Head Start programs that could model how to connect healthy food with educational quality. The approach was thoughtful and inclusive, making sure that Hang and HAFA were true partners who could both contribute to a project and reap personal and financial benefits. CAPRW also made sure to bring these connections to staff and students in a way that was realistic and respectful of learning goals and lived experiences.

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## Good Natured Family Farms

*It's about looking at the landscape and what you want your community to look like  
20 years from now.*

—Diana Endicott, Founder and Director, Good Natured Family Farms

### Meeting New Needs

In 1995, Diana Endicott and her husband Gary made a transition that would spark a good food movement in southeast Kansas and into neighboring Missouri. Moving back to their native Kansas, the Endicotts decided to buy a farm and produce naturally-raised beef and vegetables. They sold locally, but then faced a crop in 1997 whose yield was so great it forced them to go to new potential buyers or risk seeing the food go to waste.

This is how their partnership with Balls Food Stores, a family owned grocery chain, began. Selling in the Balls' Hen House Markets, the Endicotts' Rainbow Organic Farm (ROF) began to stimulate demand for local products, which eventually led to the creation of the Good Natured Family Farms (GNFF) collective of over 150 local farms producing natural meats, fruits and vegetables, and dairy products for sale in the region. The collective met demand for healthier local products while supporting the economic sustainability of local, small-scale farming operations.



## Reaching Out to Vulnerable Children

As ROF and GNFF continued to find ways to offer healthy food to local residents, a Kansas City chef was also beginning to think about healthy food and how more people could access it, especially children. When chef Kiersten Firquain's son entered kindergarten, she noticed that the food offered at his school was basically junk food, and she began packing his food for him. But the food in elementary school was no better. Having studied under chef Alice Waters—the noted activist and founder of the Edible Schoolyard and School Lunch Initiative—Firquain knew that healthy food in schools was possible. She was joined by her sister, Merrill Gobetz, and together they served fresh and healthy meals to an increasing number of local schools. In 2006 they created Bistro Kids, a program designed to bring healthy, farm fresh, and nutrient-rich meals to school children in Kansas City. Bistro Kids didn't just offer fresh foods, though; it also included farmer visits, cooking lessons, and school gardens.

A few years later, Endicott and Firquain were introduced by a local vendor and they decided to partner to bring the farm to school experience to younger children in low-income settings, the ones who really needed and would benefit the most from this approach to education and nutrition. They started small, initiating a pilot at the Plaza del Niño (PDN) Head Start program at the Guadalupe Center, which provides a variety of social services to a primarily immigrant community on the west side of Kansas City. According to Firquain, "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."<sup>85</sup>

At Guadalupe, the program served almost 100 children, mostly Latinos. Staff learned to implement the healthy food curriculum, *Food is Elementary*,<sup>86</sup> within the standard curriculum. The new foods were introduced slowly, and approximately 40 percent of the food in the healthy meals was locally sourced. Not all meals in the PDN program were locally sourced or farm fresh, but the farm to ECE approach soon became very popular among children and their families. Early survey results indicated that the children routinely enjoyed learning and trying new foods, and came home asking for produce that was new to the family. The farm to ECE approach, however, required an investment of time and financial resources to adapt to the realities of the site, the children, and their parents. The partners had to organize training of kitchen staff and the purchase of adequate food preparation tools, instruction with the teachers, and translation of materials into Spanish.

For staff and teachers, there was some occasional difficulty in getting children to try new foods, but overall they saw that the children really did enjoy the meals that were already familiar to them but now included healthier ingredients. Moreover, teachers and staff saw the value of having the children more involved in the various components of farm to ECE, and sought out more opportunities to have the kids see or participate in planting, harvesting, and food prep activities in the future. Some important advice for others came out of that survey: be consistent with farm to ECE lessons, introduce foods slowly, and provide a calendar of events to parents so that

they can be more engaged. Importantly, staff and teachers learned to encourage families and each other to really think about and communicate the value of a healthy approach to ECE and nutrition, and what it could mean for children in vulnerable situations to have these experiences.<sup>87</sup>

## **Changing and Expanding**

As the PDN pilot was running, Endicott and Firquain were also planning for expansion. Working with the Family Conservancy, which manages Head Start programs in the region, the partners began to develop a program with the YMCA that would allow their model to operate in a total of 10 Head Start classrooms. This expansion would bring the model to nearly 700 children and their families, adding components such as Farmer's Table activities (where tables are set up with farm-sourced foods, recipes, meal samples, and other items for families to test) and free produce with recipes for parents to take home and experiment with as a family.



In 2011/2012, the partners began working in nine YMCA Head Start Centers in addition to PDN. One key change that supported this expansion and broader plans for the future was the acquisition of Bistro Kids by Treat America, a family owned food services company based in Kansas City. The popularity of Bistro Kids, which served children all across the city from ECE to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, meant that greater capacity was needed. Treat America offered to bring Bistro Kids under its umbrella of services, allowing the potential (and capacity) for even greater reach without changing the model or quality of food. Continuity of quality and service continues to be ensured by Gobetz and Firquain.

## **Partnering Creatively**

The partnership also grew to include Sysco KC (a food delivery service company) and The University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC). The first implementation year



*“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**

under this new model (2011) focused on planning and assessment of needs, abilities, and identifying how the model could become financially sustainable on its own. The assessment process uncovered the need to undertake changes in infrastructure at the YMCA Head Start sites. The central production kitchens were brought up to code for Health Department inspections, training was conducted with kitchen staff, and menus were developed that met with CACFP nutritional requirements. New models for economic viability were developed by Treat America, and Bistro Kids educated participants in the various aspects of and curriculum for farm to ECE. When the expanded model launched, it reached almost 1,000 children.

With thorough planning and greater ability to meet the needs of more students, the partnership was able to incorporate multiple levels of evaluation, led by the University of Kansas. One track included surveys and interviews with staff and teachers. Over the first few implementation years, the partnership saw both positive impacts and areas for improvement. On the positive side, teachers reported a growing willingness on the part of children to try fruits and vegetables, increasing their exposure to and knowledge of new foods. The children also enjoyed interactions with the site chefs, and both children and families appreciated the Farmer’s Tables that were placed in a common space and allowed families to take home information, recipes, and produce. Cooking classes for the parents were requested to help nurture that interest and enthusiasm.

For staff and teachers, implementation itself became easier with time and practice, though the sites continue to increase curriculum and food prep education to ensure consistency. In particular, the sites are working on more and better ways to model healthy behaviors for the children. The sites are also addressing ongoing certification needed when adding new foods not on the CACFP food list, as well as increasing staffing to be able to implement the program adequately in terms of capacity and skill levels. Finally, sites are using the Farmer’s Tables to offer more materials and support to all stakeholders so they can know where to find local food, how to use supplemental nutrition supports to pay for healthy foods, and how to include healthy foods in more home activities.

### **Is Farm to ECE Making a Difference?**

With University of Kansas, the GNFF team has been looking at specific improvements in food quality for the project. In one study, evaluators assessed nutritional intake to see if students in the project were seeing actual improvements in health indicators. The study found that, in general, students in the project were receiving better nutrition than those who were not, as noted by the following:

- Their fat intake decreased from eight grams to five grams in breakfast and lunch combined.
- Percent of calories from fat decreased in lunch (from 30 percent to 25 percent) and breakfast (18 percent to 15 percent).



- Consumption of saturated fats decreased, particularly during lunch (3.99 grams to 2.99 grams).
- Sodium and sugar consumption decreased.<sup>88</sup>

Using evidence gained from this nutrient tracking method, the team has made changes to the macro- and micro-nutrient content of meals, reducing sodium and saturated fat, for example, and increasing calcium. With this information, the team knows that the children in the project are getting healthier food and that the meals meet CACFP guidelines. The results also led to greater support from the YMCA, which has started to engage in advocacy in support of expanding the farm to ECE model to other Head Start programs in the area.<sup>89</sup>

Anecdotally, focus groups have informed the team that the children are “eating different foods than are served at home, are more willing to eat fruits and vegetables, and that the program helps grow their interest in different types of food and gives them good exposure to foods they do not typically eat.”<sup>90</sup>

For staff, the Farmer’s Tables have proved very popular, providing an opportunity to engage more deeply with families and ensure cultural sensitivity in terms of recipes and practice. Staff have learned that these practices are beginning to impact food choices at home.<sup>91</sup>

Another element that has brought education and enjoyment to the process is farmer visits. A local beekeeper, a farmer known as the Buffalo Man (because he wears a buffalo hat), and others have been a hit with children. They not only share new food and nutrition information, they also provide treats and samples to pique the interest of the children.

### **Addressing Sustainability**

A driver for the GNFF model has been ensuring sustainability on-site. The project has benefitted from support of national and local funders and partners but, increasingly, the goal has been to make sure sites can afford to keep farm to ECE activities going on their own. For this reason, the project has worked diligently to get the costs of food provision and preparation within site budgets and in line with CACFP reimbursements. At this point, the efforts are paying off. Sites are able to stay within their budgets by using their own resources and the support of CACFP and other eligibility-based funding programs.

### **Lessons**

With diligent consultation and formal evaluation, the Kansas City partners have been able to provide healthy food and education to nearly 1,000 children, as well as collect various lessons during this short period of experimentation. Among the lessons learned that Endicott and her partners would like to share:



- **The cost of conventional vs ‘good food’ is equal, but overall cost transparency is needed.** The only cost difference the partners found in the pilots is expense of more preparation needed for cooking and some automated equipment (i.e., a RoboProcessor). But, it is important to remember that reaching the point of equal costs takes time. Endicott and her partners began with grants and other funding, which, in part, were used to cover the costs of making sure sites had the tools they needed to move from heating food to cooking food. These were unanticipated costs. Additionally, the team found that budgets at sites may not include staffing required or include teachers who need to model healthy eating. These situations make it difficult to know the true cost of a farm to ECE meal. Both planning and advocacy will be hampered until these questions can be answered in a transparent manner.
- **Consider partnerships with different kinds of food providers.** Working with a mixture of local farmers, food hubs, and large-scale food providers is important for systemic change in the food system. As more and more varied providers see the value of farm to ECE, they will begin to change practices as a business decision, not charity, and push change at both local levels and at scale.
- **Think about the whole farm to ECE system.** Farm to ECE is a process that relies on many stakeholders. The ability to aggregate farmers and ensure safe transportation and delivery are just a few of the details that are critical to actually getting food to early learning centers. The ability to make these processes both affordable and part of a livable wage food system are issues that will need to be addressed in order to continue to scale farm to ECE and take it to sustainability.
- **Connect with community.** Quite unintentionally, the partners have discovered that their approach to partnership has been based on the Human Centered Design model.<sup>92</sup> They prioritize immersion in community in order to learn and build commitment and buy-in.



## Norris Square Community Alliance

*If we don't have good health, it compromises everything.*

—Norris Square Community Alliance Staff Member

### Social Context of Norris Square

Just three miles north of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, the Norris Square neighborhood is a mixture of history and future. Originally settled by German immigrants in the 1920s, Norris Square is now home to a largely Latino (64 percent) population. Roughly 10 percent of the neighborhood is composed of children under the age of four.<sup>93</sup> This reflects the changing face of the city, in which the White population has been declining since the 1980s.

The neighborhood has seen slow and steady improvements in educational attainment, yet the income gap between Norris Square residents and the rest of the city has increased. An average of 43 percent of residents live at or below the federal poverty line.<sup>94</sup> For children under the age of five, poverty is a reality for 53 to 91 percent.<sup>95</sup>



Norris Square children are also highly likely to be obese, while suffering from high rates of food insecurity. A 2010 Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) report indicated that Philadelphia's 1st Congressional District, in which Norris Square is located, was one of the hungriest districts in the nation.<sup>96</sup>

The Norris Square Community Alliance (NSCA) was launched in 1983 by a group of local women who wanted to improve neighborhood conditions for their children and families. Registered as a community development corporation, NSCA seeks to build local capacity for self-reliance and create a community that benefits from a rich and vibrant physical, economic, social, cultural, and educational landscape.

NSCA provides a variety of services to the community of almost 136,000 residents in and around the Norris Square neighborhood, including affordable housing and homeownership support, community organizing, employment training, early childhood education, youth after-school and summer enrichment programs, and comprehensive case management services.<sup>97</sup>

## **Making the Switch to Farm to ECE**

Seeing the lack of improvement in health outcomes for the children it served through its existing programs and receiving report data that indicated this generation of children might have a shorter life expectancy than their parents due to health-related problems, NSCA decided to change how it approached meal service for its Head Start and Early Head Start programs, as well as its after school programming.

In an average year, NSCA serves 1,000 children, the majority of whom consume roughly 80 percent of their daily caloric intake at an NSCA center. This offered NSCA an excellent opportunity to help children develop better eating habits, and also reach parents through supportive family wellness efforts.

Little by little, over the past four years, NSCA began to make changes in its food offerings. The staff eliminated fried foods, then switched to whole grains, and started moving away from juice to water. Chefs were brought in to teach the kitchen staff about healthy food preparation and management, and NSCA began using the American Heart Association's Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit.<sup>98</sup> In 2013, NSCA began a partnership with nearby Temple University to look at ways to lower obesity rates in the neighborhood. This included offering cooking and wellness classes to the families served by NSCA.

Using this platform of experience, in 2015, health nutrition and facilities specialist Yoshiko "Yoshi" Yamasaki began working with kitchen staff and Head Start teachers to improve health policies and practices for the organization. Menus were modified to be more reflective of the foods and spices commonly used by families, and healthier by serving meals and snacks rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and unprocessed certified organic poultry. NSCA also changed its food procurement practices and forged a partnership with Philadelphia-based Common Market, a food distributor that is mission-driven to connect farmers in the Mid-Atlantic to schools,

hospitals, grocers, nonprofits, and other workplaces. Common Market's vision is to promote the concept that fresh, local, healthy food should be available to everyone, including those in vulnerable communities, in a safe and affordable manner.

Working with volunteers from Temple University, Yamasaki has spent time gathering information from parents about needed health and wellness services, as well as consulting with parents, families, and community groups to develop a strong program for meeting educational and health goals for the community. These workshops and discussions were already setting the stage for NSCA's larger transition into offering targeted farm to ECE services.

Formally, the new Farm to Plate Healthy Eating Initiative targets over 700 low-income children in the three- to four-year-old age group and their families. The program has implementation funding as of early 2016, and will begin with strategic planning and testing, followed by full implementation in 2017. NSCA's current plan for the program is to combine a culturally relevant farm-to-plate curriculum with a focus on gardening, nutrition and physical activity, a robust parent engagement component, and a food access program for qualifying families.



### **Cultivating Healthy Kids**

The Farm to Plate Healthy Eating Initiative is part of NSCA's larger move towards seeking health improvements through a spectrum of program initiatives targeted at the children enrolled in its Head Start programs, and training parents to advocate for themselves to positively influence their own economic, social, and health status. Impacting health outcomes is a major objective, as envisioned in the organization's most recent strategic plan.

NSCA is also engaged in a multi-million-dollar rehabilitation project centered on expansion and the repurposing of a 39,000 square



foot building formerly part of the historic St. Boniface's church complex. The new facilities will feature a performance space, basketball courts, exercise space, and an industrial kitchen to offer cooking classes and provide local food entrepreneurs with affordable kitchen space.

### **Forging Cross-Sector Partnerships**

Yamasaki and her team have also been working diligently to leverage all the intellectual resources Philadelphia offers, going beyond the partnership with Temple to secure relationships with local hospitals to offer staff and family training in comprehensive health strategies; working with local chefs to think through menus and engage parents and family members in cooking classes; and connecting with other universities for health assessments and screenings. The Norris Square Neighborhood Project, a local nonprofit specializing in urban gardening, will help with gardening lessons in the classroom.



For parents, the program shift will offer activities, special events, and workshops so that they can be a part of the lifestyle that is being imparted to their children. NSCA expects that through the comprehensive trainings to be offered, parents will be empowered to positively

influence their own economic, social, and health status.

Again, since the project has not formally launched, the team will work in the first year to develop a strategic plan and also test out different approaches to engaging parents, seeing what has worked in the past (for example, persistence in communicating with children and parents) and how new approaches can be flexible yet content rich.

The curriculum will also be in the testing phase. A committee of stakeholders has been organized and charged with developing an appropriate learning and experiential curriculum that will be piloted and reviewed during the first two years of the new project.

Common Market, a regional food hub with offices in Philadelphia, views the relationship with NSCA as a great opportunity to continue connecting its farmers to new market access points and a way to help organizations make healthy and affordable food choices. One way that Common Market has found to make healthy food a financially viable choice is through its Food Access Program. The program enables nonprofit organizations serving low-income populations to benefit from a 25





percent program discount that is sponsored by pharmaceutical company GSK. Together NSCA and Common Market have found a way for this discount to be counted as part of the in-kind support that Head Start centers must contribute to an overall Head Start program budget. These leverage points have meant that the local interest in Common Market's produce has expanded into low-income areas, and, for those organizations like NSCA, there is no cost burden that comes with shifting to farm fresh food. NSCA has also benefitted from Common Market's experience, participating in Common Market-hosted trainings and demonstrations on skills that staff can use in their work with parents and other community members.



## The Next Phase

With the efforts they have been testing out over time, NSCA has already heard of parents who are doing more cooking at home and even sharing their own healthy recipes. For example, when a nutritionist from Penn State Extension recently visited with parents to discuss healthy options, the parents talked more about the different choices they are making and what they are learning than they had in the past.

NSCA knows, however, that this is just the beginning of a long road. They have committed to a participatory strategic planning process involving community partners, parents, teachers, kitchen staff, and other community members. In doing this, NSCA understands that everyone is coming with their own biases, perspectives, and needs that will all need to be carefully discussed and negotiated. The parent and community organizer assigned to the project will also work to include community priorities into this process, knowing that local residents worry about safety, employment, living wages, and other situations that impact the ability to create a safe and healthy environment for local children.

To begin, the Farm to Plate pilot will focus on roughly 60 children and their parents, with the goal of building an evidence-based model that will be available for replication, particularly in communities of color. To do so, NSCA is committed to a rigorous evaluation of the process in order to see what did and did not work and make course corrections as quickly as possible. Nilda L. Pimentel, the project's consultant, says, "There is a lot of work to do, and it's going to require a lot of

resources and effort. To the extent that the Head Start program could genuinely engage parents, and train them to advocate for themselves, they will develop a sense of ownership and spread the word throughout the neighborhood.”

The NSCA team will carry the following lessons forward as they fully delve into the project:

*“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 will fail.”*

NSCA staff member

- **Comprehensive farm to ECE activities don’t happen overnight.** NSCA experienced a steady growth of activity to get it to the point where it could launch into a formal project. Even so, it will engage in strong planning and testing, along with evaluation, to ensure that resources are well used and that stakeholders feel represented.
- **Genuine parent engagement is a must.** NSCA staff note that they work with parents who feel powerless to change their situation and that their opinions will not be valued. It is important that parents feel they are a part of the project and that activities are inclusive, not top-down. The focus will be on fun, engaging, and creative lessons with rewards for participation.
- **Acknowledge the realities of parents and families.** With the social and economic conditions of the neighborhood, NSCA must be thoughtful about how it approaches the project and what expectations it can have from parents and families. The residents experience many stressors that impact families in different ways, many of which connect with health and activity. Staff know they need to be aware of these factors and always view the project through this lens.
- **Invest in partnerships.** Pimentel is focusing on fundraising, but with an emphasis on developing strategic partnerships. While NSCA has a long history in the community, relationships require constant nurturing and an iterative approach to make sure there is balance and understanding. NSCA will use both its history and its new strategies to keep partners involved while seeking out new relationships to add more dimensions to advance the project goals.



## Conclusion: Cross-Site Reflections

The six sites that contributed their thoughts and lessons to these case studies all operate in unique contexts, shaped by history, geography, and local interests. There is no one-size fits all approach to farm to ECE. Yet each of these sites found that bringing together complex issues 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 work with different populations and 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 insights from these groups include:

**Context matters.** While the core components of farm to ECE must reach into curriculum—family engagement, experiential learning (including gardens), 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 hands to be successful, and this is how it should be. Ensuring health and opportunity for future generations is everyone’s business 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. NEIF&F offers an interesting example since it is not an incorporated organization, but rather a collaborative that relies on community organizations and individuals to move the work forward. While each farm to ECE project needs a driver to keep the project on track, partners make sure that different contributions are considered, and no one organization bears the full burden of such a multi-disciplinary endeavor.

In particular, the role of administrators and teachers should be prioritized, given the time they spend with children and their ability to influence preferences and behaviors. As several of the cases point out, there will likely be resistance from teachers and administrators. This 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.** In farm to ECE, the community is a broad one, including staff and teachers at the education or care center; families; children;



farmers; caterers and food processors; and others who contribute their knowledge to building a dynamic curriculum. Because farm to ECE involves changing attitudes and behaviors, ownership helps ease the transition from a mindset of resistance to one of acceptance, inclusion, 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, from curriculum design to gardening, to cooking lessons, to just getting to know each other on a personal level. NSCA is currently working on a participatory strategic plan for their farm to ECE project so that families and community members know they are a part of building this, not having it built upon them. CentroNía has carefully trained its kitchen staff to expand their skill set, supporting their development in addition to being better prepared to serve the nutritional needs of young children. Finally, the partnership in Minneapolis/St. Paul has made farm visits a part of the curriculum, connecting children to the farmers who provide their food, while also allowing the farmers to share their knowledge and culture in addition to their produce.

**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. For example, staff turnover at the Head Start centers is something that the sites found they had to adjust to, and they know this problem will continue until salaries increase. This is something partners know they have little influence over, so they adjust their tactics and do the best they can to train staff and support them with additional resources. Teams also talked about resistance to change and how important it was to develop inclusive strategies for helping parents see the value of changing eating habits, and that this was not as expensive or difficult as it seemed. 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 an additional task on their already heavy workloads. And sometimes outreach efforts simply don't work, which teams are learning to accept. They will find teachers ignoring the curriculum or parents sending their children to school with processed food lunches. They go back to the drawing board and consult with parents and teachers to find ways to create small, simple, lasting changes.

**Think creatively about resources.** There is precious little money for expanding the farm to ECE movement. There is competitive funding from the US Department of Agriculture and other government programs, reimbursement programs, and some grant funding, 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, such as CentroNía's catering service for home-based care providers. They are also diversifying strategies for building the local economy, like BSRC's efforts to launch farm shares and other healthy food services by and for



Central Brooklyn residents. NSCA has staff dedicated to leveraging partnerships for educational services and health assessments for communities, and has even been able to work with Common Market to meet the Head Start financial contribution requirements.<sup>99</sup>

**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 this 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 like the one with CAPRW in St. Paul, or the various center-driven changes that BSRC facilitated in Brooklyn. Many groups will not have the luxury of a planning grant such as the one NSCA has received, so stakeholders need to design together, thinking about possible ‘what-ifs’ and developing strategies for identified challenges. Both NEIF&F and BSRC benefited from participation in the national Food & Fitness Initiative, and some of the sites had experience in farm to school in the kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade 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. 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 to not only get healthy food for children at an affordable price, but also 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.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> In this project, Good Food is defined as food that is just, green, healthy, and affordable as outlined by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> "InBrief: The Foundations of Lifelong Health," Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2010, <https://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>

<sup>3</sup> "Early Care and Education (ECE)," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/strategies/childcareece.html>

<sup>4</sup> Farm to School is also designed to support local, small scale farmers and build up community-based food systems. See: "What is Farm to School?" National Farm to School Network, <http://www.farmtoschool.org/about/what-is-farm-to-school>; Todd Oder, "How Farm to School Programs are Chipping Away at Childhood Obesity," Mother Nature Network, March 20, 2013, <http://www.mnn.com/food/healthy-eating/stories/how-farm-to-school-programs-are-chipping-away-at-childhood-obesity>

<sup>5</sup>This report uses the definition of farm to ECE developed by the National Farm to School Network: "...food-based strategies and activities that support healthy development and learning goals in all types of early care and education (ECE) settings (e.g., preschools, childcare centers, family childcare homes, Head Start/Early Head Start and programs in K-12 school districts)." This definition is used with the understanding that not all providers or practitioners will or need to strictly adhere to any one definition or approach. See <http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/early-care-and-education>

<sup>6</sup> "Childhood Obesity Facts," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html>

<sup>7</sup> As of the writing of this document (Summer 2016). See Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Christian Gregory, and Anita Singh. "Household food security in the United States in 2013." *USDA-ERS Economic Research Report* 173 (2014) <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/2137663/err215.pdf> See also "Child Hunger Facts," Feeding America, <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/child-hunger/child-hunger-fact-sheet.html>

<sup>8</sup> Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Christian Gregory, and Anita Singh. "Household food security in the United States in 2013." *USDA-ERS Economic Research Report* 173 (2014) <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/2137663/err215.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> "Early Child Care: Daycare Is the New Frontier for Obesity Prevention," Harvard University School of Public Health, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/obesity-prevention/early-child-care/>

<sup>10</sup> Laura Bellows, and Jennifer Anderson, "The Food Friends: Encouraging Preschoolers to Try New Foods," *YC Young Children* 61, no. 3 (2006): 37

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> "CACFP provides aid to child and adult care institutions and family or group day care homes for the provision of nutritious foods that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children, and the health and wellness of older adults and chronically impaired disabled persons." See the USDA Food and Nutrition Service website for more details <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>

<sup>13</sup> Marjorie Wechsler, David Kirp, Titilayo Tinubu Ali, Madelyn Gardner, Anna Maier, Hanna Melnick, and Patrick Shields, *The Road to High-Quality Early Learning: Lessons from the States*, (Palo Alto: Learning Policy Institute, 2016)





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<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/our-work/publications-resources/the-road-to-high-quality-early-education-lessons-from-the-states/>

<sup>14</sup> “The Benefits of Farm to School,” National Farm to School Network, <http://www.farmtoschool.org/Resources/BenefitsFactSheet.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> “Farm to School in Early Childhood Builds Healthy Kids with Bright Futures: Results from a National Survey of Early Care and Education Providers”, National Farm to School Network, <http://www.farmtoschool.org/early-childhood-survey-results>

<sup>16</sup> James J. Heckman, "Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy," *The Heckman Equation 7* (2012).

<sup>17</sup> Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Christina Weiland, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Margaret R. Burchinal, Linda M. Espinosa, William T. Gormley, Jens Ludwig, Katherine A. Magnuson, Deborah Phillips, and Martha J. Zaslow, "Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education," (Ann Arbor, MI: Society for Research in Child Development, 2013), <http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20Base%20on%20Preschool%20Education%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Marjorie Wechsler, David Kirp, Titilayo Tinubu Ali, Madelyn Gardner, Anna Maier, Hanna Melnick, and Patrick M. Shields, "The Road to High-Quality Early Learning: Lessons from the States," (Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2016) <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/our-work/publications-resources/the-road-to-high-quality-early-education-lessons-from-the-states/>

<sup>19</sup> Katie Hamm, “How Child Care Is Becoming a Crisis in America,” *Think Progress*, September 11, 2015, <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2015/09/11/3700668/childcare-cap-report-guest-post/>

<sup>20</sup> Does not include Alaska or Hawaii, where rates are US\$30,380 and US\$27,950, respectively. “Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines,” The Federal Register, January 25, 2016, <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/01/25/2016-01450/annual-update-of-the-hhs-poverty-guidelines>

<sup>21</sup> “National Study of Child Care for Low-Income Families Patterns of Child Care Use Among Low Income Families Final Report,” Abt Associates, [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/patterns\\_childcare.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/patterns_childcare.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> “Head Start Program Facts Fiscal Year 2015,” Head Start, <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/factsheets/docs/head-start-fact-sheet-fy-2015.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> “Head Start Programs,” Office of Head Start, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/about/head-start>

<sup>24</sup> Head Start also includes Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Tribal Head Start Programs, though these are not the focus of this report.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/images/families-and-children/publications-articles/kpmg/kpmg-fig1.gif> or include Bronfenbrenner?)

<sup>27</sup> “Innovation,” National Head Start Association, <https://www.nhsa.org/innovation>

<sup>28</sup> “Healthy Food Access,” United States Department of Agriculture, <http://www.usda.gov/documents/7-Healthyfoodaccess.pdf>



<sup>29</sup> The full set of resources, guidelines, and requirements for Head Start nutrition components can be found at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/nutrition>. The [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#) also outlines expectations regarding knowledge, skills, and expectations of progression, including various components connected to health and nutrition. Additionally, several schools, universities, and related agencies provide more 'user friendly' versions of this material, often adapted to reflect certain cities or regions. Local resources should be searched for maximum information.

<sup>30</sup> "Farm to School Census," United States Department of Agriculture, <https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/>

<sup>31</sup> See Jane Wardle, Monica L. Herrera, Lucy Cooke, and E. Leigh Gibson. "Modifying Children's Food Preferences: the Effects of Exposure and Reward on Acceptance of an Unfamiliar Vegetable," *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 57, no. 2 (2003): 341-348 <http://www.nature.com/ejcn/journal/v57/n2/pdf/1601541a.pdf>; "In Baby's 'First Bite,' A Chance To Shape A Child's Taste," Fresh Air radio broadcast, February 4, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/02/04/465305656/in-babys-first-bite-a-chance-to-shape-a-childs-taste>; *Developmental Stages in Infant and Toddler Feeding*, (Wimbledon, UK: Infant and Toddler Forum, 2014); and Verna Hildebrand, *Guiding Young Children*, (Macmillan; Collier Macmillan Publishers, 2009)

<sup>32</sup> The boroughs of New York are Manhattan, Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island.

<sup>33</sup> "Food & Fitness Cross-Site Evaluation 2015." Provided by BRC.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> EC Olson, G. Van Wye, B. Kerker, L. Thorpe, and TR Frieden, *Take Care Central Brooklyn: NYC Community Health Profiles*, Second Edition; 2006; 10(42):1-16 <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2006chp-203.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> "1 in 4 Children in New York City is at Risk of Hunger, New Study Shows," Food Bank New York City, <http://www.foodbanknyc.org/news/1-in-4-children-in-new-york-city-is-at-risk-of-hunger-new-study-shows>

<sup>40</sup> Erin Hagan and Victor Rubin, "Economic and Community Development Outcomes of Healthy Food Retail," (Oakland, CA: PolicyLink, 2013) [http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/FINAL\\_HER\\_ECONOMIC\\_WHITE\\_PAPER\\_FINAL\\_1%2018%202013.PDF](http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/FINAL_HER_ECONOMIC_WHITE_PAPER_FINAL_1%2018%202013.PDF)

<sup>41</sup> Document provided by Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

<sup>42</sup> Document provided by Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Food & Fitness collaboratives are initiatives sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in six sites across the country that bring "community organizations and residents together to create healthy places for children to thrive." <https://www.wkcf.org/what-we-do/healthy-kids/food-and-community>

<sup>45</sup> Document provided by Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.



<sup>46</sup> “Collective Courage: Jessica Gordon Nembhard on Black Economic Solidarity,” May 8, 2014, PolicyLink Equity Blog, <http://www.policylink.org/blog/collective-courage>. See full source at Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice*. (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, May 2014)

<sup>47</sup> Susie Cagle, “The Case Against Sharing,” The Nib, May 27, 2014  
<https://medium.com/the-nib/the-case-against-sharing-9ea5ba3d216d#tlvcdb6ar>

<sup>48</sup> Institutional procurement refers to organizations such as school, hospitals, agencies, and other formal (and typically large) organizations engaging in purchase of food from suppliers.

<sup>49</sup> Food & Fitness Cross-Site Evaluation 2015. Provided by Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

<sup>50</sup> Survey details provided by Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

<sup>51</sup> CACFP is part of the National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1766) and issues by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (7 CFR part 226). It supports cash reimbursement for organizations serving meals to enrolled low-income children and adults that meet Federal nutritional guidelines. Children who are participants of Head Start or Even Start programs are automatically eligible for free meals; children whose families receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or State programs funded through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are categorically eligible for free meals. Each day, 3.3 million children receive nutritious meals and snacks through CACFP. The program also provides meals and snacks to 120,000 adults who receive care in nonresidential adult day care centers. CACFP also provides meals to children residing in emergency shelters, and snacks and suppers to youths participating in eligible afterschool care programs. See “Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): Why CACFP Is Important” on the USDA Food and Nutrition Service website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/why-cacfp-important>

<sup>52</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment Indicators Report, run March 2016 for custom region on Creative Commons at <http://www.communitycommons.org/maps-data/>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative, “Working Across Geography to Cultivate Meaningful Community Change,” Prevention Institute,  
[http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/uploads/PDF\\_File\\_72954280.pdf](http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/uploads/PDF_File_72954280.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> “Food and Community,” W.K. Kellogg Foundation, <https://www.wkcf.org/what-we-do/healthy-kids/food-and-community>

<sup>59</sup> “The HealthierUS School Challenge: Smarter Lunchrooms (HUSC: SL) is a voluntary certification initiative recognizing those schools enrolled in Team Nutrition that have created healthier school environments through promotion of nutrition and physical activity.” Read more at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/hussc/healthierus-school-challenge-smarter-lunchrooms>

<sup>60</sup> NEIF&F Proposal Narrative, 2012. Provided by NEIF&F.

<sup>61</sup> Head Start Comprehensive Evaluation Summary 2015. Provided by NEIF&F



<sup>62</sup> I Am Moving, I am Learning is a Head Start curriculum enhancement that encourages more and better quality activity and healthy eating. See <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/healthy-active-living/imil/IamMovingIam.htm> for more details

<sup>63</sup> Columbia Heights is where CentroNía is located and so used here for demographic reference. However, parents of Centro children may live in other parts of DC. Nía also has facilities in Takoma Park, Maryland, and demographics on those areas can be viewed at <http://www.city-data.com/city/Takoma-Park-Maryland.html>

<sup>64</sup> "Appendix B: Columbia Heights Demographics," Networked Neighborhood (Georgetown University), [https://blogs.commonsworld.org/georgetown.edu/networkedneighborhood/appendix-b/#\\_ftn1](https://blogs.commonsworld.org/georgetown.edu/networkedneighborhood/appendix-b/#_ftn1)

<sup>65</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment Indicators Report, run March 2016 for custom region on Creative Commons at <http://www.communitycommons.org/maps-data/>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Prices for all goods have gone up by 1.2 percent in the past year alone for the DC-Baltimore region. "Consumer Price Index, Washington-Baltimore—May 2016," Bureau of Labor Statistics [http://www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic/news-release/consumerpriceindex\\_washingtondc.htm](http://www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic/news-release/consumerpriceindex_washingtondc.htm) Another study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics also found that DC residents spend more on housing and related expenses than do New Yorkers and residents of San Francisco. See Dana Hedgpeth, "It's More Expensive to Live in D.C. Than New York, Study Says," *The Washington Post*, October 13, 2014 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/local/wp/2014/10/13/its-more-expensive-to-live-in-d-c-than-new-york-study-says/>

<sup>68</sup> CentroNía was selected as one of three Early Learning Quality Improvement Network (QIN) hubs in DC, responsible for ensuring that the child development centers and homes that are part of the Network meet Early Head Start standards. See "Mayor Bowser Launches Early Learning Quality Improvement Network," DC.gov, March 23, 2015, <http://dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-launches-early-learning-quality-improvement-network>

<sup>69</sup> "Early Childhood Education Centers," CentroNía, <https://centroniafood.wordpress.com/nutrition-education/childhood-education-centers/>

<sup>70</sup> Caron Gremont, "Picky Eaters? It's Not About the Food," *The Huffington Post*, January 31, 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/caron-gremont/picky-eaters-its-not-about-the-food\\_b\\_4682159.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/caron-gremont/picky-eaters-its-not-about-the-food_b_4682159.html).

<sup>71</sup> Leann Birch, Jennifer S. Savage, and Alison Ventura, "Influences on the Development of Children's Eating Behaviours: From Infancy to Adolescence," *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research* 68, no. 1 (2007): s1–56.

<sup>72</sup> Research on the topic of number of exposures needed to develop a preference varies. See, among others, Wardle J, Cooke LJ, Gibson EL, Sapochnik M, Sheiham A, Lawson M (2003). Increasing children's acceptance of vegetables; a randomized trial of parent-led exposure. *Appetite* 40(2):155-162; "How Children Learn to Like Food," The Ellen Satter Institute, <http://ellynsatterinstitute.org/hf/howchildrenlearntolikenewfood.php>; Mennella, Julie A., and Gary K. Beauchamp. "Understanding the origin of flavor preferences." *Chemical Senses* 30, no. suppl 1 (2005): i242-i243; and Birch LL, McPhee L, Shoba BC, Pirok E, Steinberg L. 1987. What kind of exposure reduces children's food neophobia? Looking vs. tasting. *Appetite*. 9(3):171-8.

<sup>73</sup> Guadalupe X. Ayala, Barbara Baquero, and Sylvia Klinger, "A Systematic Review of the Relationship Between Acculturation and Diet Among Latinos in the United States:



Implications for Future Research," *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 108, no. 8 (2008): 1330-1344. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3727241/> and "CU-Boulder Research Explores Why Hispanic Health Outcomes Worsen With More Time in U.S.," University of Colorado Boulder, October 13, 2015, <http://www.colorado.edu/news/releases/2015/10/13/cu-boulder-research-explores-why-hispanic-health-outcomes-worsen-more-time-us>

<sup>74</sup> See more about the Creative Curriculum at <http://teachingstrategies.com/curriculum/>

<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth Brotherton-Bunch, "An A for Achievement," *Prevent Obesity*, June 16, 2011, <http://www.preventobesity.net/inside-track/achievement>

<sup>76</sup> "Healthy Tots Act," D.C. Hunger Solutions, [http://www.dchunger.org/currentbills/healthy\\_tots\\_act.htm](http://www.dchunger.org/currentbills/healthy_tots_act.htm)

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> DC Central Kitchen is a nonprofit that works to reduce hunger with recycled food, train unemployed adults for culinary careers, serve healthy school meals, and rebuild urban food systems through social enterprise. See more on the partnership between Nía and DCCK at <https://dccentralkitchen.org/dcck-partners-with-dc-nonprofit-centronia/>

<sup>79</sup> Erin McKee VanSlooten, Shiney Varghese, and Karen Hansen-Khun, "Farm to Head Start in Minnesota: Planting the Seeds for a Community-centered Food System (A Case Study of Connecting Smallholders to Markets), 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment Indicators Report, run March 2016 for custom region on Creative Commons at <http://www.communitycommons.org/maps-data/>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> "Our Story," Hmong American Farmer's Association, <http://www.hmongfarmers.com/story/>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Maja Beckstrom, "Hmong Farmers Work to Get Twin Cities-area Produce in Stores, Schools," *Twin Cities Pioneer Press*, October, 02, 2015 <http://www.twincities.com/2015/10/02/hmong-farmers-work-to-get-twin-cities-area-produce-in-stores-schools/>

<sup>85</sup> "Good Natured Family Farms: Farmer Meets Chef, Head Start Kids Win," W.K. Kellogg Foundation, <https://www.wkkf.org/what-we-do/featured-work/good-natured-family-farms-farmer-meets-chef-head-start-kids-win>

<sup>86</sup> Food Is Elementary was developed by Dr. Antonia Demas, who founded the Food Studies Institute. The curriculum addresses food, nutrition, culture, and healthy living through instruction and hands-on learning. It is used in classrooms across the US. See more at <http://www.foodstudies.org/#!about1/c1x1t>

<sup>87</sup> The survey was completed by 11 staff, and results were combined with interviews for complete lessons. Reported in the Good Natured Family Farms 2011 Evaluation Report.

<sup>88</sup> The University of Kansas Medical Center, "Evaluation Report on behalf of Good Natured Family Farms for W.K. Kellogg Foundation," May 2013

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Good Natured Family Farms Final Evaluation Report 2014.



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<sup>92</sup> “Human-centered design is a creative approach to problem solving... It’s a process that starts with the people you’re designing for and ends with new solutions that are tailor made to suit their needs. Human-centered design is all about building a deep empathy with the people you’re designing for; generating tons of ideas; building a bunch of prototypes; sharing what you’ve made with the people you’re designing for; and eventually putting your innovative new solution out in the world.” See more at <http://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design>

<sup>93</sup> Blueprint Communities, “Community Profile: Norris Square Neighborhood, Philadelphia,” FHL Bank Pittsburgh, <http://www.blueprintcommunities.com/pa/locations/profiles/First%20Draft-Norris%20Square%209-1-05.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> NSCA Community Assessment Break-out 2016.

<sup>96</sup> “Pennsylvania’s First Congressional District Is the 2nd Hungriest in the Nation,” Philabundance, January 28, 2010, <https://www.philabundance.org/pennsylvanias-first-congressional-district-is-the-2nd-hungriest-in-the-nation/> and “Food Hardship in America – 2010 Executive Summary,” (Washington, DC: Food Research Action Council, 2010) [http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/food\\_hardship\\_report\\_mar2011.pdf](http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/food_hardship_report_mar2011.pdf)

<sup>97</sup> “About Us,” Norris Square Community Alliance, [http://nscaonline.org/?page\\_id=36](http://nscaonline.org/?page_id=36)

<sup>98</sup> “The American Heart Association’s Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit was created to help organizations improve their food environment and promote a culture of health. It provides practical action steps and suggestions that are easy to understand and apply.” See more at [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/WorkplaceHealth/EmployerResources/Healthy-Workplace-Food-and-Beverage-Toolkit\\_UCM\\_465195\\_Article.jsp#.V9NBQZgrLIU](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/WorkplaceHealth/EmployerResources/Healthy-Workplace-Food-and-Beverage-Toolkit_UCM_465195_Article.jsp#.V9NBQZgrLIU)

<sup>99</sup> Agencies and organizations that receive Head Start funding must show that 20 percent of their program costs come from non-federal funds. This is referred to as the non-federal match. See Alan Dallmann, “The Non-federal Match Requirement for Head Start: Why Does It Exist and How Does It Affect a Local Head Start Program?” University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 2013, [http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=cppa\\_capstones](http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=cppa_capstones)

## Appendix A: Interview Participants

Name	Title	Organization
Matt Anderson	Warehouse Manager / Field Operations Manager	CKC Good Food
Amy Bachman	Procurement and Sustainability Manager	DC Central Kitchen
Afia Bediako	Community Health Advocate and Farm to Early Care Manager	Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation
William Berry	Head Start Cook	Norris Square Community Alliance
Rosalba Bonilla-Acosta	Maryland State Director	CentroNía
Tracey Capers	Executive Vice President, Programs / Organizational Development	Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation
Jeff Capizzano	President	Policy Equity Group
Catalina Cruz	Head Cook	CentroNía
Billo Diawara	Teacher	CentroNía
Dennis Derryck	Founder/President	Corbin Hill Food Project
Diana Endicott	Founder and Director	Good Natured Family Farms
Natasha Frost	Staff Attorney	Public Health Law Center, Mitchell Hamline School of Law
Angela Gibbs	Health and Development Specialist	Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation
Merrill Ann Gobetz	Bistro Kids/Education District Manager	Treat America Food Service
Pakou Hang	Executive Director and Co-Founder	Hmong American Farmers Association
Alexis Glasgow	Farm Share Coordinator and Former Head Start Parent	
Diane Harris, PhD, MPH, CHES	Health Scientist and Team Lead - Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Suzanne Henley	Healthy Tots Management Analyst	Office of the State Superintendent of Education - District of Columbia Government
Silvina Hopkins	Founder and Director	Bambini Play and Learn
Cricket James	Sales Specialist/Account Manager	Russ Davis Wholesale
Jon Jensen	Director, Center for Sustainable Communities and Associate Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies Program	Luther College
Haleisa Johnson	Early Childhood Program Coordinator	Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative—NICC Calmar
Dave Kayoum	Director of Operations	CKC Good Food

Sherri Killins	Director of Systems Alignment and Integration	The BUILD Initiative
Derek Kilmer	Owner/Operator	Kilmer's Farm Market
Huguette Lareche	Director	Brevoort Children's Center
Rebecca Lemos-Otero	Executive Director	City Blossoms
Carmen Luciano	Head Start Cook	Norris Square Community Alliance
Ann Mansfield	Project Coordinator	Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative—Iowa State University Extension and Outreach - Region 4
Erin McKee	Farm to Institution Project Director	Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Delores Mims, MEd	Director, Edwards L. Cleaveland Children's Center	Brooklyn Kindergarten Society
Rosa Moraes	Director of the QIN-HUB Standards and Compliance, CentroNía Institute	CentroNía
Jerome Napson	Director of Early Learning	Norris Square Community Alliance
Myrna Peralta	President & CEO	CentroNía
Kris Perry	Executive Director	First Five Years Fund
Cindy Petsche	Family and Community Partnership Specialist – Enrollment	Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation
Nilda Pimentel	Head Start In-kind Consultant	Norris Square Community Alliance
Angela Prokop	Head Start Nutrition Coordinator	Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties
Shanna Putnum-Dibble	Elementary Schools Learner Advocate	West Side Child Center
Omaira Santiago	Family/Health Coordinator	Norris Square Community Alliance
Julia Schindlmayr, MS RD	Registered Dietitian	FixEat Nutrition and Health Services LLC
Krista Scott	Senior Director of Child Care Health Policy	Child Care Aware of America
Linda Shak	Associate Program Officer for Children, Families, and Communities Program	The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Margaret Smith	Outreach Coordinator	Common Market
Lacy Stephens, MS, RDN	Farm to Early Care and Education Associate	National Farm to School Network
Natalie Talis, MPH	Policy Associate	National Farm to School Network
Denise Tapscott	Family and Community Partnership Specialist – Enrollment	Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation

Yoshiko Yamasaki	Health Nutrition and Facilities Specialist	Norris Square Community Alliance
Yao Yang	Organizer and Food Hub Co-Manager	Hmong American Farmers Association
Amy Yaroch, PhD	Executive Director	Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition
Laurie Yohn	General Manager	CKC Good Food
Bea Zuluaga	Director, Food and Wellness Department	CentroNía
Marguerite Zauner, MPH	Senior Health Improvement Project Manager – Early Childhood	BlueCross BlueShield of Minnesota