



Opportunities for Local Governments to Say Yes! to Good, Healthy Food in Schools

1. Support Community Partners and Partnership Building

- **Foster partnerships between schools and other public institutions.** This can include facilitating transportation so that kids can access community gardens (e.g. at a fire hall down the street or local city park).
- Parks and Recreation departments can **support summer care of school gardens** – e.g. through summer day camps. A garden / food educator could be housed in a community centre to support summer food literacy programming.
- Support the food and farming sector and **facilitate relationships between farmers and school food programs** to encourage local food procurement (e.g. local produce in student nutrition programs or looking at opportunities for gleaning from local producers).
- **Provide local forums for stakeholders to engage**, better understand each other, and partner to advance school food programming.
- **Engage youth in these conversations** and enable students to take more ownership in programs.

2. Champion Good, Healthy Food in Schools

- **Advocate for financial support from all levels of government.** While many provincial and municipal governments have allocated funding for school food programming, there is no support at the federal level for school food.
- **Participate in and support public education programs** such as **FoodShare's Great Big Crunch** and **Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution Day**.
- **Become 1) aware and 2) advocates** to communicate the value of food programming. Opportunities for communications are everywhere, from introduction to kindergarten sessions to public media channels.
- Champion school food programs, such as school gardens or kitchen projects, by **making calls to action, holding events, and by sending letters of support** when schools are trying to access external sources of funding.
- **Visit and learn about programs.** This can raise program profiles, gain media attention, and allow decision-makers to understand the range of possibilities for the programs.

Photos from left to right:

- *Students apply permaculture principles to building octogardens at Joan of Arc Academy in Ottawa. Credit: Tom Marcantonio.*
- *Cooking classes at The Stop Community Food Centre in Toronto.*

3. Provide Financial and In-Kind Support

- Provide **community initiative grants** towards school food programs.
- **Provide infrastructure and equipment funding** that could support many programs at a time. Healthy meal programs need to access affordable, easy to prepare fresh food. E.g. Invest in shipping containers and refrigerated storage units that could be used by multiple programs to store food outside of school hours. OR support community-shared processing equipment to enable programs to very quickly cut up fresh vegetables for snack programs.
- **Support logistics and distribution** so that nutrition programs are able to serve fresh, healthy food. This could involve supporting the establishment or expansion of food distribution hubs. As an example, **Kawartha Food Share** runs a warehouse to distribute emergency food to food banks. The organization, which receives municipal funding, has extended the use of its warehouse space and collective buying power to the region's SNPs.
- **Support schools to access community gardens** by providing city staff time and land.
- **Provide technical support or guidelines for programs to develop online ordering portals** that connect farmers to schools so that schools can easily access farm-fresh food and healthy products. As examples, **Ontariofresh.ca** and **Farms at Work in Peterborough** offer online portals that connect local farmers with purchasers.
- **Share relevant research and data.** Partners such as local economic development councils can be brought on board to share information and achieve mutually advantageous goals.
- **Support farm to preschool programs** that can be leveraged to support procurement for schools.

4. Develop and Enhance Supportive Policies and Guidelines

- **Establish and model good food programs and policies in other municipal spaces** (e.g. at city hall), including local food procurement policies and healthy eating initiatives.
- **Use land use planning / bylaws to limit unhealthy food environments around high schools** (fast food restaurants, convenience stores).
- **Establish policies that support a healthier food environment in recreation centres that surround schools and that students access** by means of vending contracts / hiring, and reducing marketing and advertising of unhealthy food and beverages. The **Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health Unit** has created the Super Snackables healthy food cartoon characters to promote healthy vegetable and fruit choices and are adding healthier options to canteens and vending machines.
- **Leverage school food to achieve other policy priorities such as youth employment.** E.g. employ youth to prepare snacks and meals for school food programs.
- **Support the implementation of established food charters and the development of new ones.** These can get communities talking about food and food security to increase understanding and guide supportive programs.
- **Examine by-laws and policies** to determine where they are posing barriers to healthy school food initiatives.

The information above has been brought together as a part of Sustain Ontario's Say Yes! to Good Healthy Food in Schools project and highlights some initiatives taking place in Ontario. For more Say Yes! to Good Food in Schools information and resources visit: <http://sustainontario.com/work/edible-education/say-yes/>