

# NCCDPHP Success Story

## Kansas Farm-to-School Program Builds Better Partnerships With Local Farmers

*By Jenalea Myers*

### Public Health Challenge

In the United States the rate of obesity among 6 to 11 years old increased from 7% in 1976–1980 to nearly 18% in 2015–2016, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The rate of obesity among adolescents 12 to 19 years old increased from 5% to nearly 21% over the same period. Childhood obesity carries many of the same health risks as adult obesity, including high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. Healthy eating and physical activity can lower the risk of obesity, and schools offer the ideal environment to learn and practice these behaviors. Farm-to-school programs can improve students' access to fresh fruits and vegetables.



### At A Glance

Twenty schools serving 10,000 K-12 students in Lawrence-Douglas County, Kansas, have improved Farm-to-School programs since the school district put a formal procurement policy in place. During the 2015–2016 school year, the school district partnered with the Douglas Food Policy Council and the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department to create and formalize 12 guidelines for buying healthy, fresh foods from local farmers. The schools bought 18 tons of produce in the first year.

### Approach

The Lawrence Public Schools' has long purchased local foods for its school meal program, but those efforts were not formalized in school policy. Working with the health department and the Douglas County Food System Coordinator, the school district drafted food procurement guidelines that give farmers a comprehensive overview of the district's needs and processes, delivery, and payment expectations. Farmers then submit information on growing practices, available products, and estimated volume and prices. This creates a more sustainable system for sourcing food at all levels of food service operations: purchasing, preparing, and serving. This initiative established gardens at 13 schools.

*Children who have the chance to learn where their food comes from and how it impacts their health are more likely to eat healthy, fresh foods. The farm-to-school program is an exciting opportunity to improve food choices among our children.*

- Chris Tilden

## Results

In the fall of 2015, the Lawrence Public School District adopted 12 food procurement guidelines, and during the 2016–2017 school year, it worked with six farms. The local farms provided the district with about 18 tons of produce, including tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, and melons. The health department organized a media campaign featuring participating farmers that included information about how people can get involved. In addition, the district has gardens at seven elementary schools, four middle schools, and two high schools. Produce from school gardens is used in school cafeterias, and the gardens are frequently used for teaching purposes.

## What's Next

Each school year, the school district works to create new partnerships with local farmers. As even more fresh foods become available, education around these foods and where they come from is a high priority. Lawrence Public Schools will continue to strengthen the farm-to-school programs and offer students fresh, locally sourced foods in their cafeterias. The district also hired an Outdoor Education Coordinator to further develop curriculum around the local food initiatives and garden education.

## Find Out More

This project was supported by CDC's Partnerships to Improve Community Health cooperative agreement. Businesses, organizations, and community members can explore local farm-to-school programs, volunteer, and donate. Visit the US Department of Agriculture Farm-to-School website at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school> (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school>) for more information.

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### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

#### Web site

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>  
(<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>)

#### CDC-INFO

<https://wwwn.cdc.gov/dcs/ContactUs/Form>  
(<https://wwwn.cdc.gov/dcs/ContactUs/Form>)

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



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