

Mealtime Matters: Integrating Farm-To-Preschool Education into Family Mealtimes



Kara Ikeda, MPH-Nutrition Student & Dietetic Intern, Department of Food Systems, Nutrition, and Health
Site Supervisors: Mari Mazon, MS, RDN, CD & Susan Ramage, RN | Site: University of Washington Experimental Education Unit

Introduction

- Limited access to sustainable and affordable sources of local produce hinders children's ability to grow and thrive
- Farm-to-Preschool (F2P) program aims to eliminate those barriers and provide locally sourced produce (see Figure 1)
- Increasing access to fresh food and learning opportunities that celebrate local food cultures within early education settings
- Improve nutrition, instill sustainable eating patterns, and educate children about where food comes from
- Haring Center's Experimental Education Unit (EEU) is a current participant of the F2P program in Seattle, offering local produce twice per month throughout the school year



Figure 1. "How it Works" diagram of Seattle's F2P Program

Methods

Site Visit

- Conducted site visit during the school year to observe the F2P program at the EEU
- Interacted with the EEU's nurse, behavioral analyst, and FamilyWorks representatives, the partnering organization who provide local produce
- Gathered insights and ensure the program aligned with project goals

Educational Material Development

- Created a nutrition education activity book that highlights local produce and includes engaging activities for children
- Developed infographics with mealtime tips to help parents overcome common mealtime challenges

Interdisciplinary Support

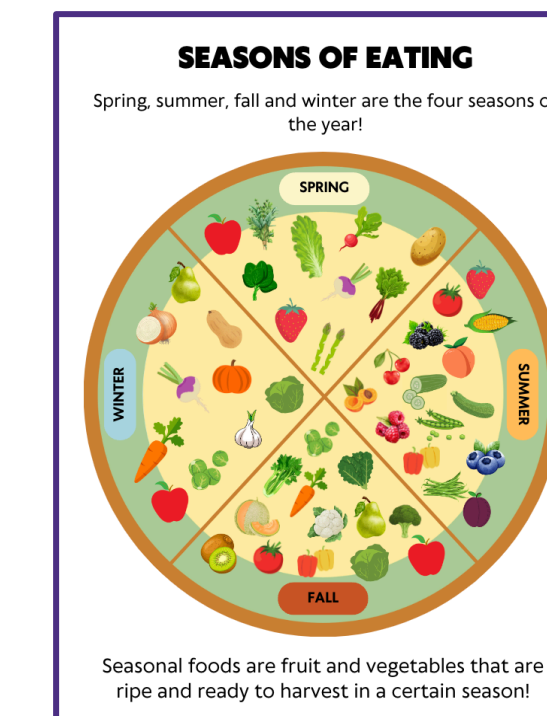
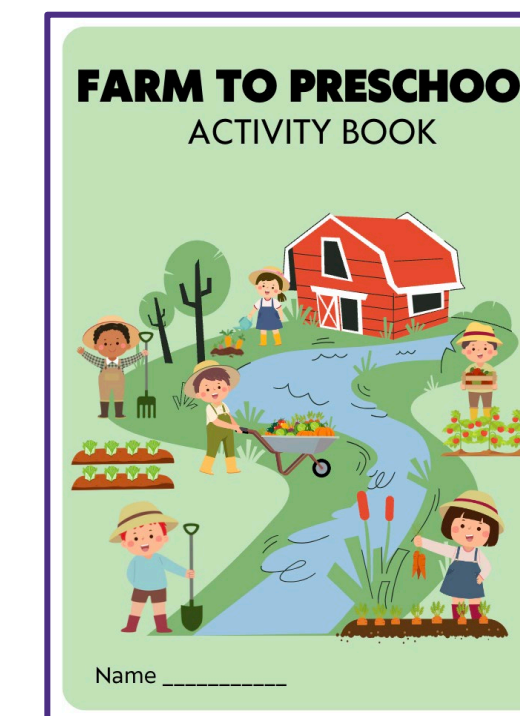
- Conducted public health research on mealtime strategies
- Attended weekly ECHO discussion groups with interdisciplinary providers and local families with mealtime challenges

Educational Materials

Nutrition Activity Book

30-page nutrition education activity book

- Designed to be interactive and educational, making learning and reflecting about food enjoyable between parents and their children



Mealtime Infographics

10 infographics focused on general mealtime tips for parents

- Offered to families at early education centers during produce pickup
- Featured topics include:
 - Meal Preparation
 - Age-Appropriate Kitchen Activities
 - Setting Up Your Mealtime Environment
 - Incorporating Local Produce



Conclusion

- This project can effectively integrate F2P education into family mealtimes, enhancing children's understanding of food sources and nutrition in a digestible and enjoyable way
- Use of nutrition activity book and mealtime infographics provide engaging and informative resources for children and their families that are enrolled in early learning centers, like the EEU
- Collaboration with the staff at the Haring Center's EEU and the ECHO discussion groups heavily contributed to the project's success

Next Steps

Pilot Testing

Implement materials in the upcoming school year at the EEU to gather feedback from parents, children, and educators

Evaluating Impact

Conduct formal evaluation to measure changes in food purchasing and consumption behaviors among participating families

Continuous Improvement

Refine materials based on feedback and evaluation results and explore additional ways to support local farmers and early education centers through the F2P program

Expanding the Program

Roll out materials to more early education centers in the Seattle area who participate in the F2P program if pilot produces impactful outcomes

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Objectives

The primary objective was to develop nutrition education materials to supplement and support the Farm-to-Preschool program at the EEU which will:

- **Increase** awareness and consumption of local, seasonal produce among families with young children
- **Emphasize** the importance of supporting local farmers
- **Build and foster** a strong nutritional foundation for children at an early age
- **Assist** children develop an enjoyment for fresh produce, leading to lifelong healthy eating habits
- **Address** the challenge parents face in making mealtimes enjoyable and stress-free
- **Promote** positive family dynamics around food