

Farm to School Workgroup Meeting

April 30, 2009, Noon-2PM

Meeting Notes

Contact: Andrea Northup (andrea.northup@gmail.com)

About 25 people were present (including 3 on the phone). As a group, we did introductions and shared some recent Farm to School successes. We then brainstormed some Farm to School strengths and weaknesses unique to DC. Next, we broke into groups (farmer(ish), school food service providers and parents, and advocates) to brainstorm some key short-term objectives for the farm to school movement in DC, and to think about some longer-term (big picture) goals. We then discussed how best to structure a DC Farm to School Network and how it could best serve its stakeholders.

DC's Farm to School Strengths:

Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network (MAGNET), Kids have to complete community service hours, ability to make food vendor contracts, strong urban garden movement, economic stimulus funds, can specify geographic preference for produce in bid language, local farmers in the region looking to get involved, momentum

(and I'll add a few more - abundant Farmers Markets, lots of supportive local non-profits, strong Farm to Table movement, school wellness policy, Mayor's Commission on Food and Nutrition, plans for a Nutrition Center storage/food prep facility, diverse base of support from all of YOU!)

Barriers to Farm to School in DC:

Insurance/HASEP requirements for food service providers, produce is expensive, lack of information sharing, lack of variety available for what's needed in schools, seasonality, storage, transport, supply, prepwork/kitchen staff, USDA commodities are so readily available, focus on test-scores and other pressing needs in the schools

(and I'll add a few more - no farms within DC borders (no economic advantage to buy local for DC), traffic/transportation through city, confusing school food provision - public, charter, private, etc.)

Short Term Objectives:

1. Assessment/inventory of school gardens, farm to school efforts, urban farmland potential, and/or school food service providers in DC - *Email andrea.northup@gmail.com to lead this initiative, get involved, help solicit funding, share ideas about how to make this work, etc.*

2. Connect to get more people, organizations and initiatives involved - principals, parents, food service providers, PTAs, Wellness Policies, Alliance for a

Healthier Generation - *This is all you! Share the slides from the luncheon meeting. When we choose our next meeting, tell people about it! Email andrea.northup@gmail.com if you need materials to distribute or ideas to spread, etc.*

3. Buyer/grower matching meeting to connect food service providers or other champions interested to connect their schools with local produce vendors (farmers!) - *Email andrea.northup@gmail.com if you're interested to be on a committee to plan and execute this. Hopefully we can do it as soon as June!*

The following two were not stressed as much, but I'm adding them anyways:

4. DC Local Foods Week - We should start to think about a week in the Fall where DC schools can focus on local produce in school meals.

5. Funding - Please email andrea.northup@gmail.com if know if any of the foundations or grants you know of that might fund this DC Farm to School Network! As for funding actual Farm to School initiatives, see attached pdf for some funding ideas.

Long Term Goals:

1. Locally grown produce in DC schools
2. Create sustainable urban farms
3. Nail down sustainable funding sources
4. Processing/storage capacity
5. Move on to other commodities (proteins)
6. Change policies - local wellness policies, curriculum, contract language etc. to include local food, school gardens, nutrition education, etc.

Potential DC Farm to School Network Structure

- Monthly (or bi-monthly?) meetings of all interested stakeholders
 - Network together and share ideas
 - Address key needs expressed by stakeholders
 - Focus on key events and objectives
- Email list or google group to share information, events, funding opportunities, etc.
- Advisory Board to represent stakeholder groups and help coordinate efforts
 - Large food service providers/vendors
 - Individual school food service representatives/administrators
 - Parents/PTA's/kids
 - Local farmers/farmer's markets/farmer's collaborative/gleaners
 - Urban gardening/nutrition and environmental education
 - Advocates (food insecurity, sustainable farming, food access, healthy kids, conservation, etc.)
 - Government representatives (OSSE, DOH, DOE, DC City Council)