

How to Strengthen Community-School Collaboration to Improve Food Literacy and Access for Children Where they Live

Summary of the Learning Report of the North Shore Table Matters Neighbourhood Food Collaboration Project

WHAT WE DID

The neighbourhood food collaborative identified opportunities to build school and community networks

Collaborated with **Farm to School BC** by building in additional capacity for their **Community Animator** to support the development and implementation of the NSTM Neighbourhood Food Collaboration Project

WHAT WE LEARNED

SUPPORT animation in the intersection between local governments, schools and organizations

The project demonstrated the **potential of a role** that is pro-actively connecting school staff and community-based programs. Aligning these efforts with local government priorities and policies is also important. This role needs to have **strong communication skills**, a **food system lens and experience of how schools and public policy structures** operate in order to be able to broker strategic relationships and “link up” healthy food actions across the community.

EMBRACE food system thinking and acting

The way that schools and school districts define and think about their food mandates, and the degree to which there is an **orientation to “being part of a larger, complex food system”** versus “supporting healthy snacks” or “having a garden” as singular activities is key. Organizations can play a leadership role in neighbourhoods by initiating the connection and conversations with schools. Local governments also have a leadership role in supporting land use and procurement policies that enable other aspects of local, healthy food for families.

STRENGTHEN cross sector, community wide food system engagement and collaboration

It is important to **dissolve** the artificial **barriers** between government, school and community **through information sharing and joint planning and action**. The challenges and goals are largely shared and the different roles are actually mutually reinforcing and complimentary, leading to more effective and efficient results for families.

BALANCE individual champions with organizational buy-in and partnerships

Individual champions (whether teachers, parents, organization staff or elected officials) are foundational for much of the food work being done in communities. Ongoing recruitment and mentoring is key but the sole focus on these informal champions also creates vulnerability and limits growth. The project demonstrated the potential of a **paid school district staff role to proactively connect school staff and community-based programs**.



WHY IS FOOD-BASED EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

The literature and experience of teachers supports the value of food-based education as a “multi-solving” strategy to achieve these goals.



It's good for KIDS

Contributing to increased health outcomes, well-being and better learning potential



It's good for TEACHERS

Providing hands on and innovative ways to achieve multiple learning outcomes



It's good for SCHOOLS

Supporting students system thinking skills, healthy food and diverse learning spaces



It's good for THE PLANET

Encouraging reduced carbon emissions through food growing, transportation and waste reduction



North Vancouver school district teachers learn about different methods of growing in Loutet Farm's greenhouse, which is stewarded by the Edible Garden Project



School community members share the work they are doing to advance sustainable food systems at the Carson Graham Family of Schools Community Food event



North Vancouver school district teachers learn and share promising practices, after doing a pickling workshop and Native plant walk at the Cheakamus Centre

