



Nourishing School Communities is a collaborative, evidence-based initiative that aims to get more healthy and local foods into the minds and onto the plates of school children across Canada.

The initiative is funded by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and Health Canada through the Coalitions Linking Action & Science for Prevention (CLASP) initiative.

Learn more: farmtocafeteriacanada.ca/nsc

Farm to School Evaluation Plan

Prepared by the Propel Centre for Population Health Impact

November 17, 2014 (updated May 15, 2015)

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the proposed evaluation of the Farm to School activities in seven New Brunswick schools. The Propel Centre for Population Health Impact at the University of Waterloo will work with Farm to Cafeteria Canada (F2CC) and the Farm to School programs to learn together what is working well, where improvements can be made, and what difference the program is making. Specifically, we want to learn whether the program is increasing the availability of healthy, local food in schools; whether there is a change in behaviour, knowledge and attitudes about healthy, local food among participants; and how a program like this might be expanded to other jurisdictions. This evaluation plan is part of the evaluation of the larger Nourishing School Communities Project (NSC) funded by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer.

To learn how the Farm to School programs are working in the schools we plan to gather information in several different ways. By putting all the information together, we will be able to tell the “Farm to School” story in New Brunswick.

Program activities

Farm to School Salad Bar programs will be implemented in seven New Brunswick schools. Local agricultural partners will provide foods for these programs. Schools will also have a variety of educational activities related to nutrition, local food, growing, preparing and preserving food.

Data Collection Tools and Timelines

There are six main ways we plan to gather information for the evaluation of the Farm to School programs in New Brunswick. Some information will be collected from all seven schools while four of the schools will participate in a more in-depth evaluation: two that contract with Chartwells and two that do not, documenting the models in each school. These four schools will be asked to participate in key informant interviews, provide more detailed food procurement data, and participate in the food consumption protocol described below.

Brief Telephone Survey with Principals:

We plan to conduct a brief telephone survey with school principals to understand the school food environment and the principal’s role in promoting healthy eating and nutrition policies at the school. The survey will also ask about the use of the Healthy School Planner as a tool to assess the school environment and plan improvements. Telephone surveys will be conducted in the spring of 2015.

Healthy School Planner:

The Healthy School Planner is a free online tool that schools can use to assess the current health environment and build a plan to make improvements. Schools will be asked to complete the Healthy School Planner Foundational Model and Healthy Eating Express Module (at a minimum) if they are not already using them. The Healthy School Planner will provide a consistent source of data that can be compared across our NSC

projects as well as with schools across Canada that are using it. In addition to providing information for the Farm to School Evaluation, use of the Healthy School Planner will provide schools with reports they can use for their own school health assessment and planning. The Healthy School Planner can be previewed by going to the website <http://www.healthyschoolplanner.uwaterloo.ca/> and clicking “Preview as Guest”. The foundational module and detailed and express healthy eating modules can be selected to review the questionnaires.

Student questionnaire:

A student questionnaire has been developed and was piloted in another NSC Initiative (YMCA After School Programs). The student questionnaire includes some core questions for the overall evaluation and some questions tailored to the Farm to School initiative. We propose to implement the questionnaire in fall 2015. Students in grades five¹ and higher in up to 5 classes will be invited to participate in the student survey. Those who have parental permission to participate will be asked to complete the questionnaire in class. The survey will be a paper and pencil questionnaire.

Procurement tracking:

In order to understand the impact of the project on increasing the amount and variety of locally sourced healthy foods on school premises we plan to track food procurement information. We ask that schools ensure that the following information is available (e.g., on invoices or in a database) for tracking:

- Food item purchased (and date purchased)
- Level of processing of the food item (e.g., is it fresh, frozen, canned)
- Number of units purchased
- Supplier and source (origin of food)
- Cost per unit and total cost

Procurement data will be tracked for a specified number of weeks in the fall and spring of each year beginning in 2014 for the duration of the project. For schools that begin data collection in the fall, they will need to track before they implement their project (i.e., approximately 2 weeks), and after they implement their project (i.e., approximately 2 weeks).

Food Consumption Protocol

To measure servings of fruit and vegetables, a research assistant will take photographs of meal trays before the salad bar program begins (if possible) and during the salad bar program. Photographs will be taken of meal trays as students leave the salad bar and again when lunch is over in order to see what students are taking and what is not being eaten. We plan to take photographs of meal trays in four of the seven schools over a set time period, e.g., two days a week for up to 3 weeks.

Key Informant Interviews:

Interviews will be conducted as a “cluster” with key partners including principals, champions within the school community, other school staff, program coordinators, farmers and other food suppliers. While each person will be interviewed individually, the cluster design will help us understand how the model is working in each of the participating schools and provide insight into what is working well and what might be improved from the perspective of the different partners. Propel will work with F2CC and the local program leads in New Brunswick to identify a list of partners to participate in the interviews. Interviews will take place in the fall of 2015.

¹ Because one of the schools has up to grade 5 only, we plan to survey students in grades 4 & 5 in that school.

Proposed Timelines for Data Collection:

Data Collection Tool	Participating schools	Timeline
Telephone Survey with Principals	All schools	Spring 2015
Healthy School Planner	All schools	Spring 2015
Student Questionnaire	All schools, students in grades five and higher in up to 5 classes	Fall 2015
Procurement tracking	All schools	Fall 2014, Spring 2015, Fall 2015, Spring 2016
Food Consumption Protocol (photographing meal trays)	Schools participating in more in-depth evaluation	to be determined
Key informant interviews	Schools participating in more in-depth evaluation	Fall 2015

Contacts:

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