

CHAPTER 6:

Identifying Shared Goals and Actions

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE FARM TO SCHOOL (F2S) LEARNING CIRCLE is to develop and improve access to healthy, local and sustainable food for students. The strategies and activities used to address that purpose may vary by location, reflecting the individual circumstances, strengths and capacity of the community.

Some F2S Learning Circles find it helpful to collectively craft a vision for F2S in their community to work towards. Participants then brainstorm and prioritize 3-5 initial achievable goals to work on that move forward that vision. Under each goal they articulate clear actions to take in between gatherings to make progress, and assign responsibility for those actions among participants. At each gathering, participants review their vision and goals and update on progress on actions. They share any external developments that they have learned of between gatherings that may sway their strategy, both opportunities and obstacles.

The following list shares some of the goals that have been articulated in previous F2S Learning Circles in Canada, and can be used as a starting point for discussions.

Potential F2S Learning Circle goals may include:

- **Develop awareness and understanding** – Improve awareness and understanding within the school community about the benefits of local, healthy and sustainable food. This can be done through education, programs, special events, curriculum links, etc.
- **Develop capacity to procure more and better local, healthy and sustainable food** – The F2S Learning Circle can develop strategies that encourage alignment between F2S values, purchasing policies and practices.
- **Increase consumption** – Once local, healthy and sustainable food is available within the school, a next step is to ensure that students are encouraged and able to make healthy food choices.
- **Strengthen relationships** – The F2S Learning Circle can create ongoing opportunities for relationships and shared understanding to develop among key players. Activities can include trust building exercises, networking, knowledge exchange, storytelling, and joint learning opportunities.
- **Develop sense of place** – strengthen connections to place, culture, and cultural diversity through place-based learning as part of the F2S approach.
- **Enhance knowledge** – The F2S Learning Circle can work to build knowledge about specific issues related to the local food system and school food.
- **Enhance food distribution** – The F2S Learning Circle can help generate fresh ideas, while encouraging the implementation of new (or improved) systems to distribute local, healthy and sustainable food.



ENERGIZING YOUR AGENDA: TIPS

Engaging a diverse group of people to work together over a long period of time isn't always easy. Everyone is busy and F2S might not be everyone's top priority. Building a F2S Learning Circle is like cultivating any long-term relationship. Look for opportunities to infuse inspiration and excitement into the process to maintain momentum. Clearly communicate the value that participants bring back to their core organizations by being involved.

Here are some ideas for getting participants excited about their F2S Learning Circle and sustaining its momentum:

- Facilitate fun icebreakers to start every session.
- Build informal networking and socializing time into agendas.
- Find creative ways to facilitate activities and work on tasks (e.g. World Café, dotmocracy, storytelling, illustrated timelines).
- Serve delicious, healthy, local and sustainable meals.
- Reflect at each gathering about whose voices are missing, and continue to recruit new members to enrich your Circle.
- Host sessions at interesting venues like farms, schools or community food hubs.
- Bring in speakers and show videos that help participants find inspiration in being part of a larger, national F2S movement.
- Engage participants in all aspects of decision making so they feel a sense of ownership.
- Create opportunities for participants to represent the group to the public through presentations and media.
- Take great photos at every opportunity and share them.
- Teach food skills, to build capacity and just for fun. For example, cooking and gardening lessons can be included in each gathering. Consider having members of the group take turns leading these activities as it can help team building and provide opportunity to take ownership in the work.
- Engage youth in the process in as many meaningful ways as possible.
- Cover costs for participants to attend and provide honouraria for elders.
- Give thank you gifts or notes as appropriate in the community or when people's efforts shine.
- Brainstorm together about how to improve the F2S Learning Circle and then follow through on suggestions.
- Check in occasionally to ensure that the workload is reasonable to participants' initial commitments of time and resources.
- Publicly acknowledge the dedication of participants in all documents and when public speaking.
- Engage skilled facilitators, or seek training to improve facilitation.
- Document the process creatively with illustrated notes or video, and refer back to it frequently for inspiration and guidance.
- Provide updates via newsletters or a shared social media channel.
- Create space or a virtual platform to share stories of success.

Always be aware of how the F2S Learning Circle can benefit individual participants and their home organizations, so that they get excited to attend, to report back and to act!



LOCAL FOODS TO SCHOOL (LF2S) LEARNING CIRCLE, HAIDA GWAII

