Family Food Centers and Farmers' Markets

Aurora Public Schools

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The goal of Aurora Public Schools' Family Food Centers and Farmers' Markets was to increase access to fresh, nutritious food while reducing barriers to support services for families experiencing food insecurity. By increasing access to healthy food, the program helped create the conditions necessary for students to arrive at school ready to learn.

Planning and implementation of the Family Food Centers and Farmers' Markets was a collaborative effort involving the Community Health Coordinator, school administrators, Family Liaisons, district departments, community partners, and parent volunteers. Family and community feedback played a key role in shaping program design, food offerings, and service delivery to ensure the programs remained responsive to the needs and preferences of families.

Family Food Centers operated year-round at designated school sites and provided families with access to nutritious groceries through a choice-based model, allowing participants to select foods that best met their household needs, cultural preferences, and dietary considerations. In addition to food access, families were connected to school- and community-based resources that supported overall well-being.



Farmers' Markets were hosted at schools throughout the district and provided fresh produce and healthy food items directly within the communities where families lived and learned. By bringing food access into school spaces, the program reduced transportation barriers and increased opportunities for families to engage with their schools.

Program staff tracked the number of families served, food distributed, and attendance trends across sites. Families were regularly surveyed to assess satisfaction, accessibility, and program impact, while school staff and community partners provided feedback on implementation and opportunities for improvement. This data was used to refine services, adjust food offerings, and strengthen resource connections.

One of the primary challenges during implementation was scaling the program while maintaining consistency and fidelity to its core values across multiple sites. Expanding districtwide required significant coordination, staff training, and relationship-building with schools and community partners. Additionally, balancing operational efficiency with a choice-based, culturally sustaining approach required intentional planning.

For districts interested in replicating this practice, it was advised to stay grounded in the core values that drove the work. When launching a districtwide initiative, it could be tempting to prioritize efficiency over impact, but maintaining fidelity to food-as-medicine, choice methodology, and culturally sustaining practices was essential. As one program leader shared, "The success of the program comes from staying true to the mission, even when doing so requires more time, coordination, and resources."