



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

FROM: Cheryl Resha, Education Manager
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: March 12, 2010

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #10-10
The Farm to School Program and School and Community Gardens

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) *Farm to School Program* is in full force and part of this important program is the concept of school food authorities (SFAs) and communities developing school gardens. School and community gardens can provide an excellent opportunity for children to learn, first hand, about plant life cycles and how these cycles relate to food and nutrition.

Recently, the child nutrition office received numerous inquiries regarding this topic. To assist districts in this area, the child nutrition programs' recommends that SFAs review the attached guidance document on school gardens from the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System before starting a school or community garden. The following questions should be considered:

1. What kind of approval is needed by the district, town, etc.?
2. What safety or health factors should be considered?
3. Where will the garden be located?
4. How will produce from the garden be used?
5. Will the garden be linked to learning in the classroom?
6. What kind of funding will be needed and what resources will be available to provide the funding?
7. What supplies will be needed?
8. Who will be involved with all stages of the garden (planning, prepping, planting and maintaining) and what procedures should be in place?

Additionally, Operational Memorandum #15-09 (which may be downloaded at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/LIB/sde/pdf/DEPS/Nutrition/OPmemos/09/OM_15_09.pdf) provided guidance on school and community gardens. The memorandum also indicated that schools that were considering accepting produce from a school or community garden must contact their local health department for approval in order to determine if the garden is an approved source for the growing of food. The Connecticut Department of Public Health has provided clarification regarding this area and schools are *not required to contact their local department for approval. SFAs may contact their local health departments for guidance; however, their approval is not mandatory.*

The USDA has numerous resources available in the area of school and community gardens and the *Farm to School Program*. More information may be found at the USDA's Web site: http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=14&tax_level=2&tax_subject=526&topic_id=2314&&placement_default=0.

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Questions may be directed to:

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CR:tdd

Attachment