



What is the Marin Food Systems Project?

The Marin Food Systems Project is committed to fostering awareness of Marin's agricultural heritage and future through a dynamic curriculum linking school gardens, local farms, public education, community agencies and the environment.

Why was the Marin Food Systems Project Started?

- **Our children need healthy foods:** Children's bodies and minds are developing. In order to develop healthy minds and bodies, children must be nurtured both intellectually and physically. There are a number of visible trends happening among children today. Childhood obesity is on the rise, poor body image among children is increasing at younger and younger ages, in many schools foods are often not prepared fresh at the school, and there is a rise in the number of schools providing fast foods to their students.
- **Locally grown foods are fresher:** Fresh foods grown locally have higher nutrient value. The longer the time between harvest and consumption, the greater the loss of nutritional value. When foods are harvested and consumed within a number of minutes to hours to a couple of days, these foods serve to better nourish our children.
Marin's local agriculture offers a diversity of healthy farm-fresh foods.
- **Our children deserve the best:** Although our schools have the challenge to balance financial limitations with serving students to the very best of their abilities, student deserve the very best we can give them. Giving our children the very best food as their minds and bodies are still developing is important to their ability to learn, their self-esteem, their immune system, their attitude, and much more.
- **Health and nutrition of our children is an intricate part of education:** Education needs to address not only our children's intellectual development, but their physical development as well. Physical activity, education about health, nutrition and body image, as well as feeding our children healthy foods is all part of their education. By giving them healthy foods, they learn what healthy food is and how to take care of their own health.

Common Questions about the Food Systems Project:

Why develop a school food policy? Developing a school policy will bring people together to create a common vision. The process of developing a vision for students' health, nutrition, health education, school food service, serves to focus and clarify what you would like to see changed. An approved school food policy awards your effort essential support and will help guide implementation.

Who makes up a School Nutrition Advisory Council?

The principal, school nurse, food service director, teachers, parents and students are all involved in determining the needs and goals for your school.

Why establish a School Nutrition Advisory Council?

A School Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) provides the structure for all interested and involved individuals in the school community to work together.

Where can schools start? Any effort to create change takes the following four things: Motivation, Education, Mobilization and Activation. There is no one way to work within your school, however there are models and suggestions. Creating an atmosphere of positive change, being inclusive, and creating a sustainable plan are essential to long term success. See **Ten Steps to Healthy Food, Students and Schools** in this packet.

Why do a School Food System Survey? It is important to know what you are wanting to change before attempting to change it. Perhaps your school has a great school garden and it would only take that extra volunteer help to get some cooking classes going at your school. What the survey does is help you and the Marin Food Systems Project better understand your unique situation at your school so that together we can work for change.

How do we stay motivated and encourage more participation from the school community? Incorporate healthy refreshments at gatherings, make meetings positive and festive, focus on community and our children.

How can the Marin Food Systems Project help you?

We have monthly meetings that provide a place for parents and educators from Marin schools to come meet each other, find out about school food projects and problem solve together. See our website at www.eecom.net for meeting time and place.

ECom's Marin Food System's Project

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