

# Farm to Early Care and Education

Increasing access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant local foods

Proper nutrition, including fruit and vegetable consumption, is important for optimal growth, development, and overall child health. Most children in the United States are not meeting the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables set by the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services<sup>4</sup>. According to the CDC, emphasizing the importance of proper nutrition in established programs and policies that impact children, like early care education settings, increases **positive food experiences**, helps children to develop an **awareness of good nutrition**, and develops **healthy eating habits** for a lifetime<sup>2</sup>.

The National Kidney Foundation of Michigan is part of Michigan's farm to ECE pilot program, supported by ASPHN's farm to ECE Capacity Building Grant (CABBAGE). The funding opportunity helped the NKFM team gain knowledge, resources, and relationships around farm to ECE.

**The investment in farm to ECE has set the foundation for long-term, sustainable policies, systems, and environmental change.**

## WHAT IS FARM TO ECE?

**Farm to Early Care and Education (farm to ECE) is a policy, system, and environmental (PSE) intervention designed to increase access to healthy, affordable, and local foods.** Farm to ECE strategies are implemented in the early care setting and support local food purchasing, site-based gardens, and food, nutrition, and agriculture education.<sup>1</sup>

## PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE



**62%** of Wayne households live in poverty<sup>6</sup>



**56%** of Westland households live in poverty<sup>6</sup>



**14% decrease** in the number of farms in Wayne County<sup>5</sup>

According to the 2021 National Survey of Children's Health<sup>2</sup>:



More than **2 in 5 children** in Michigan did not eat a daily vegetable



Almost **1 in 3 children** in Michigan did not eat a daily fruit

## APPROACH

The NKFM is a long-time provider of NAPSACC, a direct education and PSE change intervention designed to enhance nutrition and physical activity practices in early care and education settings. In 2019, the NKFM switched to Go NAPSACC, which is an expanded and updated version of NAPSACC and includes a farm to ECE component.

CABBAGE funding and its interventions supported sites in their garden adoption and farm to ECE goals.



### Early Learning Collaborative

NKFM convened a group of subject matter experts in local food and early childhood education to support the CABBAGE program. Sites who attend receive additional technical assistance, networking opportunities, and continued learning. The collaborative meets monthly.



### Farm to ECE Provider Facebook Group

NKFM staff and ECE members can connect with each other at any time. Members share resources, recipes, questions, and tips.



### CSA Boxes

Community Supported Agriculture, or CSA, supports local farmers and ensures sites had access to the best seasonal produce. Sites received produce boxes bi-weekly from June-October.



### Willow Run Acres

NKFM partnered with Farmer TC at Willow Run Acres to provide one-time site visits to all CABBAGE providers in June and July. This provides children the opportunity to meet a local farmer of color and learn all about growing fruits and vegetables and TC's farm.



### Everything in Good Season

NKFM staff, in partnership with Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems, published *Everything In Good Season*, a resource guide for ECE providers sharing sourcing tips, seasonal recipes highlighting the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and engaging activities<sup>3</sup>.



### Garden Resources

Sites received garden beds, green houses, gardening tools (for staff and children), soil, and compost.

# RESULTS

CABBAGE funding has provided opportunities for ECEs in Western Wayne County to engage in the farm to ECE Go NAPSACC modules, create gardens, move in a direction of food sovereignty, and work with knowledgeable, local partners regarding food systems.

**6** Sites served since January 2021

*Cassie's Daycare, Mrs. Jens Childcare, Nahdene's Daycare, Play and Learn Academy, Little Treasures Daycare, and Just Imagine Child Development Center*

**5** Partners

*Michigan State University - Extension, Family Roots Farm, Taste the Local Difference, City Commons CSA, and Willow Run Acres*

**83** Children served since 2021



**100%** of sites have created and sustained gardens since 2021

**80%**

In year 1 of CABBAGE, between all 5 centers, 15 goals were selected and **12 were met.**

**90%**

In year 2 of CABBAGE; between all 5 centers, 10 goals were selected and **9 were met.**

**100%**

This year, **100% of sites** are on track to meet at least one of their farm to ECE goals.



Produce planted: strawberries, cucumbers, corn, carrots, tomatoes, peas, tomatillos, spinach, green peppers, potatoes



*"Last year, Farmer Heidi brought the children an herb they'd never tried before: flowering garlic chives. The kids loved it! They loved it so much in fact, it was one of the first plants suggested when we started discussing what we'd grow in our greenhouse this year."*

- Cassie's Daycare

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Farm to ECE is a **multi-year investment**. CABBAGE funding has increased the capacity to facilitate long-term sustainable, comprehensive, and equitable food systems changes. Through partner engagement, resources, trainings, networking, and custom technical assistance over three years, **all six sites are successfully and confidently increasing exposure to local produce, health education, and hands on learning for young children.** It is through this investment that sites are now able to support the following for years to come:



Family and community engagement



Local food system through site gardens



Farm to ECE professional development



Healthy food preferences and eating habits for young learners



The NKF will continue to seek funding to **support** and **expand** farm to ECE efforts in Wayne County.

**Through the CABBAGE grant, the seeds of a new generation of young, healthy minds who have knowledge of growing their own food, have been sown.**



## PLANT THE SEEDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Learn how to bring farm to ECE to your community today!

**Email:** [mdistler@nkfm.org](mailto:mdistler@nkfm.org)

**Connect:** [facebook.com/MSUCRFS](https://www.facebook.com/MSUCRFS)

**Learn More:** [kidney.org/MiFarmtoECE](https://www.kidney.org/MiFarmtoECE)

### References

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