



Abstract Title: Healthy farm to school fundraising with Nourish Your Roots

Melissa Stewart
Nourish Nova Scotia
Dalhousie University

Introduction/background

Nourish Nova Scotia is a non-profit organization that supports the nutritional health and well-being of Nova Scotia children and youth by supporting programs and policies that make the healthy choice the easy choice in the school setting. Nourish Your Roots (NYR) is a healthy farm-to-school fundraising program of Nourish NS that challenges the school food culture around fundraising norms in our province (Province of Nova Scotia, 2007), demonstrating that healthy food can be used as an effective fundraising initiative.

Purpose

NYR was designed to support the Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Schools (Province of Nova Scotia, 2006) and to help sustain healthy food-related programming in schools' and non-profit childcare centres while also supporting the whole, healthy local food economy in Nova Scotia.

Approach/action

NYR was developed in partnership with stakeholders who share a common goal of reconnecting children and youth with their food "roots" as a way of educating, cultivating food skills and promoting health. By connecting schools/centres with local farms to sell boxes of fresh produce, schools/centres are able to raise funds to support their own healthy eating initiatives, like Breakfast Programs and Edible School Gardens. Yearly developmental evaluation has been conducted, inviting consumers, farm partners, volunteers and school staff to participate in surveys and focus groups to give feedback on program development, implementation and impact.

Outcomes

The program has grown exponentially each year, increasing from 3 farm partners and 13 schools/centres in the 2015 pilot to 23 farm partners and 108 schools/centres in 2017. Over its three-year existence, NYR has generated \$238,099 for school healthy eating programs and just under half a million dollars of new market revenue for local farms (Nourish Nova Scotia, 2016, 2017).

Preliminary indicators suggest NYR contributes to increases in local farm awareness and families trying new fruits and vegetables.

Conclusion

This collaborative model of farm-to-school fundraising has far exceeded expectations. NYR challenges the norms of our school food culture, showing that healthy, local food can be a sustainable method to generate funds in school settings. Going into its fourth year, we hope to see the program continue to grow over time, making a healthier school food environment for Nova Scotia students one farm box at a time.

References

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Cite this document in APA:

Stewart, M. (2018, September). *Healthy farm to school fundraising with Nourish Your Roots*. Paper presented at the Healthy Living, Healthy Life: Collaborative Health Conference on Research, Practice and Community Innovations Conference, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS. Retrieved from <https://ojs.library.dal.ca/HLHL/>

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