

Working with School Boards to Advance Good Food in Schools

Background for the Collaboration Session at Bring Food Home 2017

October 28th, 2017, from 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Session Description: This session will follow from the “How to Work with School Boards to Advance Good Food in Schools” presentation session. It will engage participants in discussion about how to support school food champions to work and communicate more effectively with school boards. The session will provide time for participants to ask questions of each other and will engage everyone in discussion about what tools, resources and knowledge we already have and know and where significant gaps exist that we could work to fill in collaboration with each other.

The session may explore questions such as: “At what levels are people working with school boards? What are they doing?” “What role can the Edible Education Network play to support this issue?” “How can we continue to collaborate and share information?”

Background Concept for Discussion

Across Ontario communities are working to advance healthy school food environments, often relying on school board approval and support. This is the case across issues including: establishing and maintaining school gardens, bringing educational programs into the classroom, local food procurement in cafeterias, cooking programs, integrating Student Nutrition Programs into the curriculum, and field trips to local farms and community gardens.

Members of the Ontario Edible Education Network, who are championing these types of initiatives, have repeatedly commented on their need for help with school board advocacy.

- How can they navigate school board culture?
- How can champions effectively make their case to improve the health and wellbeing of children and youth through a range of school food programs and initiatives?

The Network has come up with the following ideas for tools that could help champions to advance good food in schools:

1. **Examples of School Board Policies that Model Healthy Food Environments:** We would like to document and share some model school board policies so that anyone who is approaching their own board can refer to existing examples.
 - This could include a tipsheet with some discussion about how groups might make use of the policy / policy language to inspire their own school board to adopt such a shift.
 - The model policies should cover a range of issues (school gardens, local food procurement, curriculum links, etc.).
 - Ontario-specific examples are the ideal to have at hand though we may expand this to Canadian examples or broader (if no local examples are available).
 - If no excellent examples are available we could potentially draft our own with expert advice.

2. **Tip Sheet: working with school boards.** This would be a general info sheet about how school boards work, what motivates them, how to best approach and work with them, etc. It would include stories from those who have had successful partnerships with school boards relating to good food programs.

Ideas include:

- Find an internal champion
 - Link into programs with significant funding attached (e.g. SHSM).
 - Speak their language (e.g. current conversations are about student wellbeing, Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship (ICE) training,
3. **Pocket Guide to address common school board concerns:** This would be a guide about how to answer common concerns of school boards, facilities managers, public health etc... and how to mitigate any of the common risks that are identified.

Different focuses might include:

- Local Food procurement (cafeterias, parent-led meal services, hospitality programs, catering...)
- Gardens
- Food Skills / Culinary programs
- Curriculum (i.e. getting into the classroom)

Potential Questions for Discussion:

- What additional strategies might we collaborate on to build our collective capacity to work with school boards?
- How do we authentically engage with school boards in doing this work? Do we invite school board representatives to join a working group relating to good food that's striving to advance student wellbeing?
- What role can the Edible Education Network play to support this issue?
- How can we continue to collaborate and share information?