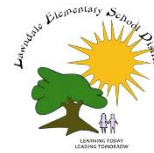


Agency Highlight

Lawndale Elementary School District



Making Strides to Increase Access to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables through Innovative Procurement Strategies

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The majority of students attending Lawndale Elementary School District (LESD) and Training Research Foundation (TRF) Head Start reside in the cities of Lawndale, Hawthorne, Inglewood and Lennox. These communities have rates of obesity for adults and children that either meet or exceed the county average. In addition to this, the very same communities are impacted by high poverty rates, and have limited resources to support healthy life choices. The widespread availability of unhealthy foods and lack of access to more healthful options pose potential health challenges for many low-income families living in Los Angeles County.

In an attempt to address these health concerns, LESD's Champions for Change Program met with parents, students and staff from LESD and TRF to discuss viable ways to improve the health of their community.

One recurrent item of concern was poor student consumption of healthy food options, with a specific emphasis on fruit and vegetable intake. As LESD and TRF are both educational institutions, a Farm to School procurement plan paired with the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) program was identified as the most appropriate intervention to educate and expose students to locally grown produce. Champions for Change was able to partner with both organizations to help develop and tailor this intervention to meet their specific needs.

LESD has maintained a HOTM program for the past 10+ years and will begin to expand the program during the 2017-2018 school year. TRF began implementing their HOTM program with LESD Champions for Change support in February of 2017. The Farm to School procurement plan was developed and implemented for both education institutions in the summer of 2017 and has the potential to impact all students who participate in their meal programs.

The Farm to School procurement plan also has an educational component through its marriage with the Harvest of the Month program. At LESD, this takes the form of monthly newsletters sent to teachers and parents featuring the Harvest of the Month produce item (sourced via the procurement plan). The HOTM is also highlighted on the monthly menus sent home with students. HOTM items sourced through the procurement plan are served at least twice per month at lunch time. Teachers receive emails reminding them to talk to their students about it and to encourage them to try it with lunch that day. Recess taste tests also take place once each month to educate the students about the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables. At TRF, teachers have received support materials to work with Head Start and Early Head Start students. Classrooms eat family style meals and teachers model healthy eating behaviors with students during meal times. TRF also conducts a monthly nutrition themed activity, developed by their in-house dietitians, with all classrooms.

Through increased access to locally grown produce and education both programs hope to improve the health of future generations.

