The Farm to Keiki Preschool Program

Program Information
The Farm to Keiki Preschool Program (F2K) is designed to influence early childhood eating habits and increase the availability of local fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals and snacks, both crucial to maintaining a healthy weight for preschools and preventing childhood obesity. The project will include the introduction of farm fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables as part of the preschool menu, weekly local and fresh fruits and vegetable taste tests, a year-long nutrition and gardening curriculum, garden based children’s books, parent gardening and nutrition workshops and commitment to a preschool wellness policy.

Through community partnerships with farmers, organizations, produce sellers and various media outlets, this program also seeks to create greater awareness of, increase access to, and develop a preference for fresh fruits and vegetables within the students home, for the benefit of the entire family and the community. This project also supports local farmers and the local island economy through farm and market-based purchasing from preschools and preschoolers ‘ohana. All of these components work together to reinforce the overall health and well being of young children and their families

Program Components

Food Purchasing and Preparation
The program managers can work directly with site administrators to find the best mode of purchasing locally sourced fruits and vegetables for meals, snacks, taste tests and other educational activities. They will help facilitate menu changes at preschools to incorporate locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables which may include working with contracted vendors to incorporate the produce into meals and snacks, substituting one or more items in vendor or site produced meals, or working directly with local farmers or farmers’ markets to arrange for regular purchases. This program aims to work with existing food contracts to find means for improving school nutrition with seasonal and fresh items most compatible with the site’s resources.

Food and Nutrition Education and Wellness Policy
To complement the introduction of more and varied fresh fruits and vegetables in the classroom, sites will provide food and nutrition education to the students through the Farm to Keiki Preschool Hawaiian Harvest nutrition and gardening curriculum. In class activities involve reading books about fruits and vegetables, conducting art and gardening activities, as well as holding weekly taste tests and interactive snack preparations. If a site is interested in starting a garden The Farm to Keiki staff will provide assistance such as garden consultations, workdays and garden resources. The program staff will provide a copy of educational materials and train teachers with the Hawaiian Harvest curriculum. The F2K Director will offer ongoing technical assistance with the materials throughout the year. Classroom activities are designed to reinforce a seasonal menu using produce that may be unfamiliar to many children, and can be integrated in regular class activities, such as reading, art and snack time.
All schools will adopt the Farm to Keiki Preschool Program Wellness Policy. Preschools will commit to the minimum elements of the Wellness Policy to ensure the sustainability of improved nutrition and healthy practices for their students every year.

**Parent Workshops**

In order for sustainable dietary changes to be made at the preschool level, it is vital that healthy habits are also being reinforced in the home. In the beginning of the year, all preschools will educate parents and caregivers about the F2K program their children are participating in and will encourage parents to attend the biannual parent/caregiver workshops led by the F2K staff. The content of parent workshops will focus on nutrition and gardening. Preschools are encouraged to work with the Farm to Keiki staff to design the workshops to specifically meet the needs of their parents.

**Evaluation**

Each preschool site will help the F2K staff evaluate the success of their program by measuring outcomes such as increased consumption, knowledge, and preference for fresh fruits and vegetables among preschoolers and their families. It is with evaluation measures that a program can improve and become a “best practices” model for others to use. The F2K staff will provide schools with child and parent pre and post surveys, student taste test worksheets and lesson checklists. All evaluation measures mentioned above will be collected by the preschools staff (except for the Child Pre/Post Survey) which will be administered by the F2K staff. The F2K staff will collect completed forms at the end of the year and will analyze the results. The F2K staff will also work with sites to improve program components as they are being implemented, if needed.

**Partnerships and Sponsors**

The Farm to Keiki Preschool Program is a program in partnership with Get Fit Kaua‘i. F2K is one of three projects in Get Fit Kaua‘i’s, Access to Health Foods Committee. Get Fit Kaua‘i helped secure program funding for F2K from the Hawaii Healthy Initiative, Communities Putting Prevention to Work-Hawaii and the Kaua‘i County Farm Bureau! This partnership has secured a volunteer co-chair and evaluator for F2K as well as partnerships with other Get Fit Kaua‘i programs: EBT in the Farmers Market and Kaua‘i Grown.

Alliance with The Center for Food & Justice, a division of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute (UEPI) at Occidental College has provided F2K with materials from their successful Farm to Preschool Pilot and permission to modify. They also serve as program advisors. The non-profit organization, Na Lei Wili AHEC is the fiscal sponsor for the program.

_Mahalo F2K partners and sponsors!_

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