

TOPIC: HOW DO I ENGAGE MY COMMUNITY AROUND FARM TO SCHOOL?



“People don’t care about things until they understand why they should care. Education and outreach are critical.”
 -Rick Hughes

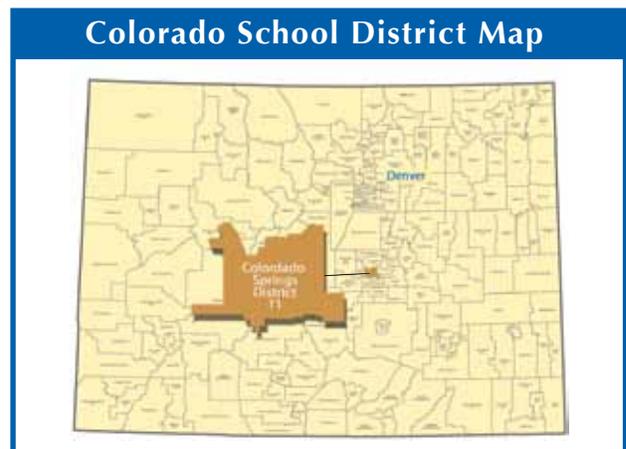
Many school cafeterias, have an image that is, well, “old school.” But in Colorado Springs, Rick Hughes is championing an effort to modernize the menus.

And to engage his staff and community in making the effort succeed, he’s running an ultra-modern, multi-media education and outreach effort in which Facebook is just as important as fresh fruits.

Describe District 11’s Partnerships with Local Producers.

For five years, District 11 has sourced natural, grass-fed beef, both raw and frozen, locally for District 11’s five high schools. The hormone-free, antibiotic-free meat is expanded to all 62 serving locations this year. The district also sources vegetables locally when it can. Mostly, Rick says he works with large local farms because they are better able to supply the needed volume. He is looking to add locally-grown fruits to his menu as well.

Rick says that many of his vendor relationships have grown out of networking through parent groups, vendor associations, Farm to School, and with staff in other school districts. “As producers find out we’re interested in sourcing locally, they contact us,” he said.



Photograph from Morguefile

How Did You Get the Word Out to the Community About Your Farm to School Project?

In addition to creating a Farm to School committee of parents, teachers and staff, District 11 employed a savvy outreach campaign to start a community-wide conversation about food matters and connect interested community members through the web and social media. To launch the conversation, the district hosted two movie nights, drawing 100 or more people to screenings of "Food, Inc." and "Fresh." These grounded the community in reasons why Rick wanted to pursue a healthy food project, and he used speaking opportunities after the films to describe his plans. To keep people connected and engaged, Rick also launched a website called the "D11 Good Food Project" (www.D11.org/FNS/D11GoodFoodProject.htm) and created a Facebook page of the same D11 Good Food Project name, where people can sign up to be fans (164 have done so). Rick also reached out to media, inviting them to events and school tours, and providing interviews. This has helped expand awareness of the district's efforts.

In addition, the district produces a monthly "Know Your Food" newsletter (see attached samples). It is distributed to all parents and students with monthly cafeteria menus and a new food issue each month. There is a Harvest of the month coloring page or child-friendly recipes printed on the back.



Who Supports Your Efforts and Why?

District 11's Good Food Project has attracted a diverse array of supporters, but Rick says most interest is "all centered around the move toward more natural food, toward better food that doesn't contain added or artificial ingredients." When provided with the knowledge of the current food system, all groups have gotten on board in the interest of making sure kids are eating healthfully and creating better food habits. Once parents, teachers, and students were educated on the current state of the food system and the need for change, it was not difficult to get them on board.

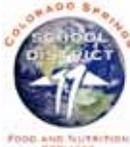
What Were the Most Successful Community Outreach Activities?

"The Good Food Movie Series was great for starting a dialogue in the community about food," said Rick. "People don't

Which Tools Have Proven Most Effective?

Rick says the "Know Your Food" newsletters, the video showings, and the Facebook page have been most instrumental in building community support and awareness.





Colorado School District
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

**The D11
Good Food
Project**



Food... it sustains life. Good Food contributes to a good life!

When you stop and think about it, the nourishment that we obtain from eating food sustains our lives. It stands to reason that the better food we consume, the better our lives will be.

So what is Good Food? Good Food is not a brand, or at least not in my book.

Characteristics of Good Food are the following:

care about things until they understand why they should care, so education and outreach are critical.”

The movies provide an eye-opening account of what’s in food and how it is produced. And Rick also used these to engage one of his most important constituencies: the food service staff. “If the staff doesn’t support it, it can’t work,” he said. “Kitchen managers watched Food, Inc. and were completely blown away. This opened a dialogue with the staff about issues and things they want to change. Now they are completely engaged in the change process even though serving good food often means more work for them.”

What Are Your Future Plans for Outreach and Engagement?

“I’d like to see more in the media about food and eating local, buying from the farm, joining a CSA,” said Rick. He’s also working to implement more ideas within his sphere of control. The district is working with LiveWell Colorado to bring in a guest chef to conduct a school meals assessment. Rick also hired an executive chef for the district who will help reach goals of minimally processed food for all schools by 2012.

Most importantly, and not surprisingly for this outreach-oriented leader, Rick says “we can’t sit in our offices. There has to be outreach to get the community involved.” ■

Learn More

To access other resources such as *Good Food Project vision flyer*; *Know Your Food newsletter*; *10 Reasons to Buy Local Food*; please visit: **Good Food Project on Facebook** <http://www.facebook.com/pages/D11-Good-Food-Project/254969185947?ref=ts>.

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Design by Six Rivers Graphic Design
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Photograph from Morguefile

Models & Resources

How Local Farmers and Food Service Buyers are Building Alliances

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, 2000

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3102250&acct=wdmgeninfo>

Explains in detail the specific needs and desires of select stakeholders involved in Farm to School. Provides advice for how to reach out to stakeholders and make Farm to School beneficial for all involved.

Eat Smart- Farm Fresh: A Guide to Buying and Serving Locally-Grown Produce in School Meals

USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2005

http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/Farm-to-School-Guidance_12-19-2005.pdf

This is a handbook that offers information on procurement, types and examples of Farm to School distribution models, how to find locally grown food and farmers, menu planning considerations, and strategies for success.

Farm to School: Minnesota Toolkit for Food Service

University of Minnesota, 2007

http://www.mn-farmentoschool.umn.edu/promoting_program_2.html

Advice for reaching out to teachers, students, and parents with links to videos, newsletters, and other resources that schools around the nation have developed for community involvement.

Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids: Evaluating the Barriers and Opportunities for Farm-to-School Programs

Community Food Security Coalition, 2001

<http://foodsecurity.org/pub/HealthyFarmsHealthyKids.pdf>

This includes case studies with a focus on connecting to Farm to School stakeholders.

Road Map: Rethinking School Lunch Guide

Ecoliteracy, 2010

<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/downloads/rethinking-school-lunch-guide>

The support of parents, students, and other stakeholders can be crucial in ensuring the success of a farm-to school meal program. Getting the message across about good food, health, and nutrition is often a matter being heard through the noise of commercials and junk food packaging. This section offers some ideas for helping to “sell” the new food policy to parents and students.

Know Your Food

CSSD11 Food and Nutrition Services, Sept. 2010

http://www.d11.org/fns/D11GoodFoodProject/KYF/Sept_Know_Your_Food.pdf

This is an example of how one Colorado district gets parents and students excited about fresh, local food. The newsletter, which focuses on a different food topic each month, includes a letter to students on one side and a letter to parents on the other, getting both groups engaged in knowing their food.

D11 Good Food Project

CSSD11 Food and Nutrition Services, 2010

<http://www.d11.org/fns/d11goodfoodproject.htm>

Check out this website for an example of how one Colorado district is getting their community excited about food and educating them on the health issues of processed food and the benefits of local, fresh food.