



# FRAC: Summer Nutrition Programs

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## Model Program

### School District Purchases Local Produce for Summer Food Program Litchfield Elementary School District, AZ

#### **District Demographics**

- The Litchfield Elementary School District has 9,000 students enrolled in 10 area schools.
- Thirty percent of the students in the school district qualify for free or reduced price meals.
- The district is located in a rapidly growing area west of Phoenix that is both rural and urban.

#### **Meal Program**

- The school district serves breakfast and lunch to students during the summer months through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).
- The main summer food site operates at the elementary school with the highest free and reduced price rate in the school district.
- A small number of meals are transported to other sites around the community.
- The school district serves an average of 900 children per day, with 25,000 breakfasts and 35,000 lunches throughout the summer.
- To advertise the summer meals program, the district hands out flyers to all Litchfield Elementary School District students plus students of surrounding school districts, and puts notices in local newspapers, food banks, churches and local city recreation departments.

#### **Purchasing**

- The district purchases a variety of local produce from local farmers, such as watermelon, honeydew, peaches, cucumbers, tomatoes, cantaloupes, squash, citrus and onions, and incorporates it into the summer meals.
- Farmers notify the district about what produce they have available and the school district stays flexible with its menus so it can incorporate produce that is in season.
- The Food Connection, a local non-profit Food Security organization, works with the school district to tell it what local products are available throughout the year.
- The district staff feels that the local produce is much fresher and of a higher quality than the produce they received from non-local vendors.

#### **Delivery**

- The majority of the produce comes from four area farmers that are all located within a 10 mile radius of the summer food program, and more than 50 percent of the produce served during the summer is grown in Arizona.
- Half of the farmers deliver the produce right to the school, and the others require school district staff to drive out to the farm to pick it up.

#### **Menus**

- Fresh produce is incorporated into both the breakfasts and lunches during the summer.
- The main summer food site offers two salad bars, which makes it easy to incorporate different fruits and vegetables when they become available.

**Funding and Costs**

- The district is able to serve fresh produce in all of its meals while staying well within the federal meal reimbursement.
- Serving local produce actually has helped the school save money on food costs because local fruits and vegetables tend to be cheaper than non-local produce.

**Creative Practices**

- The school district also receives donated produce (that is not necessarily local) from the area food bank, which is given out to parents and children who attend the summer food program.
- This has helped create enthusiasm and support for the summer meals program, increase participation rates and help parents stretch their food dollars during the summer months.
- This also has created a passion in the younger children to consume more fresh fruits and vegetables. This passion is carried over to the regular school year, and produce consumption by students continues to increase each year.

**Challenges and Solutions**

- The local fruits and vegetables typically require more washing once delivered than does produce from other vendors.
- The school district trained the food service staff to include extra washing in their preparation process before the produce is cooked or served.
- According to the school food service director, the quality, freshness and variety of local product outweigh the extra preparation time.

**Response to Program**

- The children love the fresh fruits and vegetables that are incorporated into the meals and district staff believe the fresh produce and high quality meals help them keep summer participation rates high.

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