Buying Local for School Food Services
Myth, Dream or a Possibility?

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MCPASD At A Glance……

- School nutrition program with 60 staff, 10 sites and about 4,500 meals daily
- Commissary – satellite system with a blend of conventional & convenience service models
- Annual budget of 3.5 million
- National School Lunch and Breakfast Program participant
School Lunch Realities 101

- Meal price = $2.25(K-5), $2.65(6-8) & $2.85(9-12) + $0.25 for each federal lunch served
- Must have protein, fruit, veggie, grain and milk
- Meal choices = K-5 two, 6-8 three & 9-12 seven
- 40% or less of each revenue $$ for food/supply
  K-5=$1.00  6-8=$1.16  9-12=$1.24
USDA Commodities & School Meals

• NSLP supplemented with commodity food
• 19.5 cents for each lunch served
• $155,000 in value for this year
  (< 10% of current food budget)
• 220,000# of food diverted directly to manufacturer for finished products
MCPASD Purchasing Model

- K-12 Menu - written four weeks pre service (Three tiered modified cycle)
- Products - ordered to central warehouse two weeks pre service
- Orders - picked & delivered weekly to service sites the week pre service
- Finished products - shipped day of service as needed
School Meal Purchasing
The Traditional Model

• Prime Vendor (95% dedicated)
• Bids with specifications for bread, dairy and supplies (5%)
• Cooperative membership for best food and supply pricing
• Full warehouse and dock delivery accommodation
Advantages of Traditional Purchasing

• Cost Containment
• Uniformity of product
• Food safety tracking
• Standardized dock delivery
• Refrigerated and freezer fleets
• Support of food brokers & sales staff
Common Disadvantages for Traditional Purchasing

- Carbon footprint is enormous
- Food must be processed to be shelf stable
- Processed food contains additives for product stability
- Many layers of product handling to track the product pathway
Why Schools Buy Local

• Supports the environmental mission of a conscientious society
• Fresher, quality products
• Supports small local businesses for community economic sustainability
• Educational opportunities for students and families
Challenges of Local Buying

- Large versus small in terms of economies of scale
- Ability to fulfill product needs of a larger system
- Consistency of product
- Midwest weather and growing season
- Delivery to commercial docking
- System billing and remittance
- Labor for prep of products
We use Farm to School for Grades K-5

- Parents volunteer for all levels of program
- Parents deliver monthly taste testings featuring local products
- Those products are integrated into the menu when possible
- Information sent home to connect parents to the producer
Our System Success Story

- Lapacek Apples, Poynette, WI for my K-12 students – a great fit for everyone
- Model used for statewide connections between schools and orchards
- Cartons recycled
- Product spec perfect for schools but not the commercial market
And Another

• Purchased tomatoes, onions, cucumbers & green peppers from a local grower
• August until supply ran out in late October
• Prices lower and quality phenomenal
• Next year – grower will grow to my needs
Bridging the Gap

• For a larger system like mine, buying local is also supporting statewide agriculture
• Milk – 70,000 gallons per school year
• Potatoes – 55,000# or 27.5 tons
• Cheese – 25,000# & then some
• Apples – January to May – 800 bushel
Future Directions

• Contract for fall tomatoes & salad produce – 150 to 200 pounds per week for 7-8 weeks
• School gardens as a tool to educate students
• Continue Farm2School outreach to MS through demo cooking with fresh ingredients
• Composting with resale of garden humus to enhance program sustainability
Thank you