

The National Farm to School Network drafted a list of barriers to starting and maintaining F2S programs:

- Perceived limitations in children’s tastes (though we have seen that there is no limitation here – but perceived barriers are just as challenging as real barriers)
- Food Service concerns and interpretations (real and perceived) about health regulations regarding food they serve
- Limitations in what distributors carry and offer. Also distributors less interested in talking to farm to school advocate types and only really listen to their customers – food service directors
- Lack of respect for school food service profession – a group of people not empowered to make change
- The aggregation and distribution of products from small farms to schools (“the truck won’t come down our dirt road” or “we don’t have enough product for the distributor to come to our farm”)
- Lots of small farms have fixed high end accounts and markets (restaurants/farmers markets/CSA’s) and don’t always see the opportunity with schools (schools make a great seconds market, and growing contacts)
- Upfront costs to purchase local foods that cost more – but can be balanced in a budget over the long-term. This is not saying that every year food service has to fundraise for \$ to buy local food. It can be incorporated into the budget successfully without extra income. But to take the risk of new foods, there needs to be funds available to try things out.
- Community awareness and support to try new things and back up the school and food service has to be there to start and maintain f2s programs Amount for federal reimbursement for meals is very low
- Many school kitchens lack space, equipment, trained staff, refrigerators, freezers, and other needs to “cook” food and not just warm food
- School year is out of sync with growing season – which means that the school cafeteria budgets are also out of sync. It is hard to set up growing contracts that cross over budget years (ex: pay money in April for product delivered in Sept is challenging to justify)
- Though food and farm education is easy to integrate into curriculum, not all teachers willing or interested. “Teaching to the tests” and standardized curriculums limit teachers creativity and use of local community for place based lessons.

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- Limited access to local processing and the regulations around processed foods is challenging
- Teacher, administrative, and food service staff turnover is always challenging in schools. So unless things are part of the accepted culture and not just the efforts of one superstar, then programs can disappear in a blink of an eye when staff leave.
- Enthusiasm and willingness to do “extra” wanes, programs need to be institutionalized and set as policy within schools, districts, counties, states, etc....



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