



MASSACHUSETTS
FARM TO SCHOOL

Meal Costing 101

February 5, 2025



Agenda

- Welcome
- Considerations for Meal/Menu Costs
- Strategically Utilizing Local Foods
- Local Meals: Two Ways
- Smart Strategies Commodity Foods
- Terrific Trays Blend Local
- Resources
- Questions & Closing

Today's Presenters:

Barrett Grazioso,
Food Service Director
Belchertown Public Schools

Ellen Nylen,
Executive Chef
Brookline Public Schools

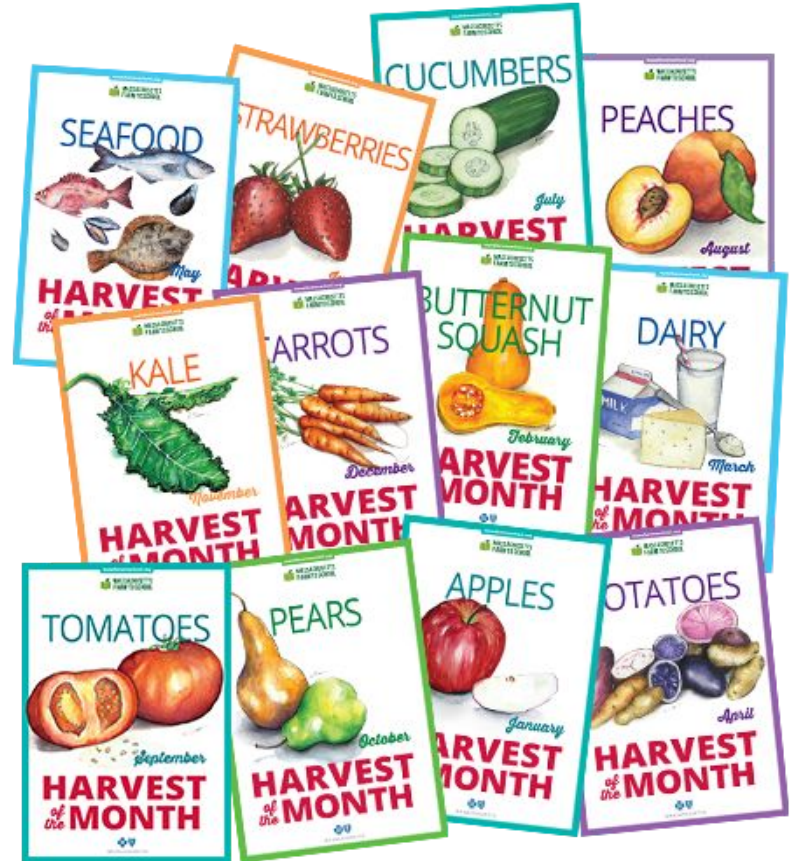


Massachusetts Farm to School Overview

Mass. Farm to School strengthens local farms and fisheries and promotes healthy communities by increasing local food purchasing and education at schools.

Get involved through our:

- Professional learning opportunities
- Networking
- Policy/Advocacy
- Communications



Belchertown Public Schools Food Service

Belchertown Public Schools

2,000 Students across 5 Schools
Grades PreK-12

- Serves Breakfast & Lunch
- “Self-Operated” Food service operations handled by school's own staff
- Works direct with farms and small distributors
- Able to handle raw, unprocessed product due to kitchen capabilities and well-trained staff



Brookline Public Schools Food Service

Brookline Public Schools

7,000 Students across 10 Schools
Grades PreK-12

- Serves Breakfast & Lunch, Snack & SFSP
- “Self-Operated” Food service operations handled by school's own staff
- Works with food hubs and distributors
- Able to handle raw, unprocessed product due to kitchen capabilities and well-trained staff

Strategically Utilizing Local Foods

Determine what you want to accomplish with local foods:

1. **Values-based procurement:** selecting products to meet your program goals to provide transparency in product selection, shorten supply chain on key items, etc.
2. **Student & Community Preferences:**
 - a. Culturally responsive menus,
 - b. Farm partners for your district, etc.
 - c. Keeping up with the neighbors (district-to-district inspirations)
3. **Product categories: protein, vegetables, fruit, dairy, grain**
 - a. Local Specialty Foods: Honey, Maple Syrup, Corn Tortillas, etc.
 - b. Fresh Foods: greens, orchard fruit, root or storage vegetables, seasonal Northeast-grown crops.
4. **Vendor relationships**
5. **Specific Programs: Harvest of the Month, Salad Bars, etc.**

Strategies to Build Menu Costs

Realities:

1. Establish your baseline:

- a. Stay well within your reimbursement rate \$4.48 or \$4.57/meal
- b. Work with existing entitlements, diverted products & grant funds
- c. Factor your labor and overhead costs
- d. Understand kitchen execution & capacity (both equipment and labor): don't overlook your smallware needs!

2. Know your customers: what do students want to eat!

3. Be realistic:

- a. Time to execute: Scratch tends to be cheaper food-cost wise, more expensive labor
- b. Complexity of menu
- c. Costs of raw vs. minimally processed vs take and heat

Determining Meal Costs

Food Costs:

1. **Breakdown entitlement products you'd like to use in menus vs. cost of purchased items.**
 - a. USDA/DOD/Diverted not always the best price!
 - b. Shop your existing vendors
 - c. See if there are gaps in available (local) foods that would justify additional solicitation
2. **Other costs to consider & leave room for:**
 - a. Delivery Fees: Brown Box/USDA: \$14.98/cs for 30# cases charged on the claim
 - b. Spoilage/damage on delivery: Monitor in order to ensure acceptable product upon receipt, gain credit with vendor or justification to switch vendors.
 - c. Labor: Scratch cooking requires more time and labor, even if some food costs may appear cheaper
 - d. Overhead: Plan for facilities maintenance, equipment upgrades, etc.



Burgers Two Ways: Food Cost Comparison



Brookline

Reimbursement Rate	\$4.48
Food Cost	\$3.45/\$5.20
Remaining Balance	\$1.03/ -\$0.72

Belchertown

Reimbursement Rate	\$4.48
Food Cost	\$1.84/\$2.23
Remaining Balance	\$2.64/\$2.25

Tacos Two Ways: Food Cost Comparison



Belchertown

Reimbursement Rate	\$4.48
Meal Cost	\$2.08/ \$4.06
Remaining Balance	\$2.40/\$0.42

Brookline

Reimbursement Rate	\$4.48
Meal Cost	\$1.22/\$1.90
Remaining Balance	\$3.26/\$2.58

Strategies

1. **Be a savvy shopper:**
price compare
2. **Manage your menus:**
 - a. Streamline products to make an item that is utilized on multiple days
 - b. Simplify labor needs (complicated recipes balanced with heat and serve options)
 - c. Buy high value/low labor needs: ex: hydroponic lettuce

Belchertown High School

MARCH

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>3</p> <p>Sausage Egg & Cheese on Croissant Hash Brown Orange Juice Milk</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Cheese Quesadillas Southwest Chicken Strip Spanish Rice Ranchero Beans Salsa Sour Cream Milk</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Pasta & Meatballs Garlic Bread Caesar Salad Milk</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Chicken Nuggets, Corn Mashed Potato, & Gravy Honey Wheat Biscuit Milk</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Build You Own Burger Day Oven Fries Lettuce, Tomato, & Pickles Milk</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Hot Dog on a Bun Veg. Baked Beans Garden Salad Milk</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Local Beef Chili Cornbread Salsa cheese Sour Cream Milk</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Buttered Noodles Garlic Chicken Steamed Carrots Milk</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Baked Potato Bar with cheese, broccoli Steamed broccoli Cheese Sauce Local Beef Chili Sour Cream Whole wheat roll Milk</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Chicken patty on a whole wheat roll Lettuce, Tomato, & Pickles Oven Fries Milk</p>

Strategies from Brookline & Belchertown: Take your full DOD

Use for high value produce items that are not locally available (ever) or in winter/spring months!



Strategies from Brookline & Belchertown: Brown Box & Diverted

Brown Box: Utilize foods that do well in meal service: frozen fruit, cut vegetables, cheeses, canned beans, black bean burgers, processed meat and poultry products.



Did you know local black beans and lentils are just some of the dry beans some Mass. schools use instead of canned USDA beans?



Consider adding local cheeses to blend with brown box items.

Diverted: Focus on quality items with high participation rates to balance with your labor costs:

- meatballs,
- burgers,
- whole piece chicken,
- pizza

Don't go all in on something you haven't tried before or have a plan to use.

Strategies: Find a local farm partner

Farmers, fisheries and local producers WANT to do business with schools

MASSACHUSETTS FARM TO SCHOOL

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Get Involved / Harvest of the Month

Food Source Map

Where to Find Local Food

Use our searchable database to find farmers and food producers interested in supplying your institution.

[View Local Producer List](#)

[List Your Business Here](#)

Filter by "Harvest of the Month" or Specialty

- ✓ All
- Specialties
- Food Hub
- Vegetable
- Fruit/Orchard
- Dairy
- Meat
- Poultry
- Eggs
- Seafood

NOW is the time to plan with growers, as they complete crop plans & seed ordering or breeding plans for livestock

Be specific:

- What do you want
 - Pack size & volume
 - Light processed product: cut products like: squash fries, cut sweet potatoes, diced potatoes, zoodles, etc.
- When do you want it
 - Months & menus
 - Delivery parameters: do you need every school delivered to? How do you move your DOD around?

Begin procurement process

Pittsfield Public Schools

Item	Cost	Notes
Milk	\$0.34	
Local Apple	\$0.34	Pine Hill Orchards
House-Made Cornbread	\$0.21	Comparable Premade Item \$0.48
Meatball Sandwich	\$1.01	Diverted meatball
Local Butternut Squash	\$0.29	Joe Cszakowski Farms
Salad	\$0.35	
House-Made Ranch	\$0.12	Comparable Premade Item \$0.29
Total Food Cost	\$2.60	*Pittsfield is a high-need district
Labor Cost	\$1.60	
Daily Cost	\$4.26	
Federal Reimbursement*	\$4.40	

TERRIFIC TRAYS
WINNER

MARCH

PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MASSACHUSETTS FARM TO SCHOOL

Office for Food and Nutrition Programs

Belmont Public Schools

Item	Cost	Notes
Milk	\$0.31	
Apple	\$0.25	Carlson Orchards
Carrot Raisin Salad	\$0.64	Joe Czajkowski Farm shredded carrots, USDA Raisins
Sweet Potato/Beet Noodle Salad	\$0.48	Joe Czajkowski Farm
Local Fish: Special Catch of the Day	\$1.48	Red's Best
Garnish	\$0.13	Little Leaf Lettuce, Backyard Farms tomatoes, & USDA corn
Tortilla	\$0.36	Fantini Bakery
Total Food Cost	\$3.66	*Average daily meal cost is \$2.25-\$3.00 and labor is usually around 40%. This higher cost meal is balanced by higher percentage entitlement meals.
Labor Cost	\$1.75	
Reimbursement rate	\$4.38	

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APRIL

BELMONT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MASSACHUSETTS FARM TO SCHOOL

Office for Food and Nutrition Programs

Belchertown Public Schools

Item	Cost	Notes
Milk	\$ 0.33	
Steamed Vegetables	\$0.31*	USDA Commodity associated cost
Orange & Plum	\$0*	DOD Produce
Local Beef	\$ 1.00	Austin Ridge Acres (In Belchertown!)
Vegetables for Stew	\$0*	DOD Produce
Texas Toast	\$ 0.29	(Source)
Beef Base	\$ 0.05	No MSG
Total Food Cost	\$ 1.98	Goal Daily Food Cost/Meal :
Federal Reimbursement	\$ 4.25	\$1.70-\$2.00 Goal Labor Cost/Meal: \$1.90-\$2.20

TERRIFIC TRAYS
WINNER

JANUARY

BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MASSACHUSETTS FARM TO SCHOOL

Office for Food and Nutrition Programs

DoD: Not Always the Best Price

DoD Product	Price	Food Hub	Product	Price	Price Difference
G/D APPLES (WA)	\$40.10	WORCESTER REGIONAL FOOD HUB	BUSHEL G/D APPLES, CARLSON ORCHARD(MA)	\$36.00	\$3.90
POTATO WHITE FR FOR PR 50 LB (ID)	\$45.30	GROWING PLACES	POTATO WHITE, 50 LB BG, PIONEER VALLEY GROWERS ASSOCIATION (MA)	\$26.16	\$19.14
ONIONS YEL DRY JUMBO 50 LB (CA)	\$35.30	BOSTON FOOD HUB	ONIONS YEL 50 LB BARDWELL FARM; ZIOMEK FARM (MA)	\$34.00	\$1.30

Strategies to Balance Local on your Menu:

- 1) Factor labor costs when assessing scratch made or ready-made products
 - a) Don't just compare ingredient prices, compare whole meal costs
- 2) Balance meal costs throughout the week to ensure financial health (and meal variety!)
- 3) Pair local items with DoD and/or USDA foods items on the tray
- 4) Consider utilizing Harvest of the Month to plan local highlights
- 5) Marketing & Communications: Highlight your local offerings!

Tips:

- Have goal costs per meal component:
 - Reimbursement rate is \$4.48
- Know local offerings year-round: fresh, local, frozen
- Leverage your role and responsibility supporting the local food system!

Mass. Farm to School Resources

- Northeast Produce RFP (collaborative purchasing)
<https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/awarded-local-vendors/>
- Local Food Map:
[massfarmtoschool.org/food-source-map](https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/food-source-map)
- Harvest of the Month:
Recipes, lessons for educators, marketing materials, and more!
www.massfarmtoschool.org/hotm
- Use this QR Code to access our procurement planning tool:



Work Your Network



- Tell your distributors/vendors what you're looking for
- Ask for food demonstrations or product samples
- Utilize product testing as marketing and engagement opportunities with your students and staff
- Remember your partners: JSI and Project Bread culinary training offerings!

Request for Quotes Template

Use DESE's Request for Quotes Sample

- Sample developed to help you easily request 3 quotes.
- Text in yellow is ready to be edited to your specifications.
- Use with vendors you're looking to spend \$10,000-\$100,000 with.

Note: A full RFP or IFB process is required by Chapter 30B Procurement Regulations for any vendors you anticipate spending more than \$100,000 within SY 23/24.

SAMPLE Produce

REQUEST FOR QUOTES

The **ADD SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME** (hereinafter "District") invites quotes from vendors that can provide the following items listed in Appendix B: RFQ Quote Form. We are requesting firm fixed pricing from **September 1, 2022**, through **December 30, 2022**.

District information:

PROVIDE GENERAL DISTRICT INFORMATION

New England Foods For Schools: We are participating in a grant that provides funding for unprocessed or minimally processed products (e.g., whole, cut, pureed, etc.) and/or forms (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, dried, etc.) with a preference that items are raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and distributed within 400 miles.

****All quotes/submissions are due to **ADD NAME** via email at **ADD EMAIL** by **ADD DATE** at 5pm**

Please contact **ADD NAME** at **ADD EMAIL** with any questions by **3:00 pm on August 12, 2022**.

PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

This solicitation is in keeping with the District's school food program principles, which are as follows:

- Access to nutritious, safe, healthy, and delicious food is paramount for the success of students.
- The work of area farmers is valued, and it is important to connect our school food program to local farms and agriculture.
- Providing health and nutrition educational opportunities for students is part of the overall educational experience.
- Supporting local and regional producers benefits everyone.

PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS and ESTIMATED QUANTITIES

Request for Quotes Template

Why you should use DESE's Request for Quotes Sample

- The Sample was developed to help School Food Authorities comply with Chapter 30B Procurement Regulations. (Most of the work has been done for you!)
- By doing the 3 quote process, you do not need to be concerned about reaching a \$10,000 cap (as with micro-purchases).
- The RFQ demonstrates the demand to small and local businesses that have not previously considered schools as a market.
- Product availability, delivery schedules, etc. can be specific considerations written into your Request for Quotes to identify the best vendor.

Questions?

Sign up for our newsletter:

www.massfarmtoschool.org/newsletter