



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. VII, No. 9

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ **Support children's health**
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Support Children's Health

Nutrition – Learn, Grow and Cook

According to the Hawai'i Department of Health's Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division, "obesity is an epidemic in Hawai'i...about one in every three children entering kindergarten is already overweight or obese." Obesity can lead to chronic disease later in life, and eating healthy foods is one of the main ways to prevent obesity and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

Children's early experiences can affect how they eat as they get older. That's why it is so important to introduce them to a variety of healthy foods from the very beginning. To address this issue, "Farm to School" aims to enrich the connection communities have with local farmers; thereby, increasing children's access to fresh, healthy, local foods. By also including educational opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons and farm field trips, Farm to School empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities.

In 2011, the Farm to Keiki curriculum was developed by Tiana Kamen. This Hawai'i based resource draws on best practices from the National Farm to School Network. It was developed to guide caregivers in raising healthier children, by nurturing healthy habits in them as they are developing lifelong food preferences. This resource includes gardening, cooking, and nature-based experiences for young children.

By using this book as a guide to provide healthy nutrition practices in your child care program, you can successfully improve the health of all Hawai'i's children. This newsletter will share ideas and activities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, including:

- Healthy cooking with children
- Growing a Garden
- Eating from Farm to Table



Healthy Cooking

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that children may need to have frequent joyful experiences involving food to overcome the anxiety they may have around tasting the unfamiliar. Over time, cooking with children can help build that confidence and provide rich sensory experiences.

Here are 5 ways to cook with children:

1. **Engage other senses** – Get all of the senses working first, then think about the tasting element. This helps children to build positive associations with food. Kneading dough, rinsing vegetables and tearing lettuce all involve touching food and becoming comfortable with the textures before they even put it in their mouths.
2. **Learn about families' cultures and traditions** – Ask families to bring in recipes they might use at home. Incorporating foods that children are familiar with in their home environment makes a stronger home to school connection.
3. **Keep it safe** – Teach children kitchen safety while cooking by showing them how to hold and use kitchen utensils. Always supervise children when cooking to ensure they are engaged in safe and age-appropriate tasks. Toddlers can tear lettuce while preschoolers can begin to use plastic serrated knives to cut some foods with guidance.
4. **Build vocabulary** – Introduce and practice new words while following a recipe as you describe how food looks, feels and tastes. Use math language such as, "One, two, three crunchy orange carrots. Let's compare that to the green celery. You have *more* carrots."
5. **Ask for input** – Children feel more included in mealtime when they are asked to be part of the preparation. Collaborate with the children when selecting healthy choices for snack or lunch. Take a field trip to a farmers' market and let them help you find items that you need. Let the children be "in charge" of some of the details, which will help them feel invested in this part of the day.



Growing a Garden

According to an article from Rasmussen University, gardening is hard to beat for promoting well-rounded development in young children. Whether the garden is in pots on an apartment balcony, a community patch or right out the back door, children who engage with it are harvesting a lot more than food and flowers.

There are many benefits to introducing gardening to keiki even from an early age. Gardening encourages them to eat healthier. It also promotes engaging, moderate exercise. For example, when children dig, rake and turn compost, they use a variety of muscles in the upper and lower body. In addition, gardening builds a sense of confidence and helps to relieve stress.

Here are some ways to introduce gardening to the children.

- Talk to the children during meal and snack time and point out foods that can be grown in a garden. Discuss where the garden should be; ask what plants or food they would like to grow.
- Find a space that has lots of sunshine to make your home garden. Add enough soil that children can touch and freely explore or play with it.
- Introduce tasks that children can easily do such as:
 - Scooping dirt into pots or digging the ground and soil.
 - Watering and misting the plants.
 - Counting seeds.
 - Drawing pictures of seed, sprouts, plant, etc.

Remember it is about the process, not the product. You want to encourage children to explore the garden, work their muscles, and learn new things along the way. While gardening, you can introduce so many concepts to your children. For example, how plants grow; parts of the plants; fruits, vegetables, and flowers; and so much more!

Eating from Farm to Table

According to *Farm to Keiki*, if keiki never have the opportunity to see food growing on a plant, how would they know where it came from? How can we expect them to eat foods they know nothing about?



“Farm to Table” aims to increase children’s understanding of how farm fresh foods get to our tables and into our tummies, and how everyone plays important roles in the local food system. A great start is striving to eat produce grown from farmers in Hawai‘i.

Here are some ways to introduce Farm to Table ideas to your keiki.

- Take a field trip to a farm or a farmers’ market, and encourage children to taste foods grown locally.
- During circle time, describe how food gets from the farm to the tables by reading books, singing songs, and using props to reenact the local food system.
- Have a tasting party with assorted fruits or vegetables (see featured activity).

Most importantly, be a role model by sitting with the children during meals and tasting the fresh fruits and vegetables with them. By sharing your love of gardening and fresh produce, the children will be more willing to taste new foods as well.

Training Opportunity

USDA offers training on Nutrition – no certificate is offered for this training.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/halftime-cacfp-thirty-thursdays-training-webinar-series>

Featured Activity

Taste Testing



What You Need:

- Poster board – on the top write the name of the food they will be tasting (add a picture as well). Create 4 columns with the following picture headings: Happy face, face with no expression, sad face and compost bowl.
- Name tags or stickers.
- Food cut into small bite size portions (offer a variety of healthy, colorful and appetizing fruits or vegetables)
- Plates
- Forks

What to do:

1. Show children the chart and explain the faces –
 - Love it = Happy Face
 - It's just okay = Expressionless Face
 - Don't like it or maybe next time = Sad Face
 - Didn't try it = Compost Bowl
2. Have the children take the same food to taste. Create an atmosphere of excitement about being adventurous in trying something new.
3. Have the children place a sticker or their name tag under one of the faces and encourage them to say why they made that choice by describing how it tasted.
4. Repeat the process until all foods are tasted.
5. Tally the columns and compare/contrast. You can ask the children, "Which food did we like the most?"

*Never force or shame children into trying something new. If they do not want to try it, they can put it in the compost bowl or try it another time.

Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org

Infants and Toddlers

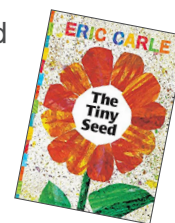
The Little Gardener by Jan Gerardi

This lift-the-flap book introduces tools and supplies needed to create a garden. Infants and toddlers will interact in this engaging book.



The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle

This book uses simple words and bright illustrations to tell the life cycle of a flower told through the adventures of a tiny seed.



Preschoolers

Kai Goes to the Farmers' Market in Hawaii by Catherine Toth Fox

Kai is hungry, his mom takes him for a walk to the farmers' market down the road. They find all sorts of fresh fruits and vegetables grown right here in Hawaii.



Flower Garden by Eve Bunting

Gardens don't only have to be for food. A girl and her father live in the city and create a beautiful flower garden for mother's birthday.



Citations

Farm to Keiki: Cooking, Gardening and Nutrition with Children 2018. <https://www.farmtokeiki.org/>

7 Tips for Vegetable Gardening with Your Toddler. NAEYC. <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/7-tips-vegetable-gardening>

Gardening for Kids: 7 Reasons Planting Seeds Enriches Their Lives. <https://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/education/blog/gardening-for-kids-benefits/>



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