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# **The 2020 Vision Plan for School Nutrition**

Georgia Department of Agriculture | Georgia Department of Education | Georgia Department of Public Health



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## **1. Preface**

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Leaders within the agriculture, education and public health sectors joined together in December of 2015 to discuss a plan to increase the presence of more nutritious, local foods within the school cafeterias in Georgia. The “2020 Vision for School Nutrition” was announced during a meeting led by Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black, Georgia School Superintendent Richard Woods and Dr. Kathy Peavey, Assistant Director of School Nutrition Program for the Georgia Department of Education.

### ***1.1. The 2020 Vision***

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The vision cast by the team for the 2020 project is to have at least 20 percent of every meal in every Georgia public school to be comprised of Georgia products by the start of the 2020 school year. In addition, 20 percent of Georgia public schools will be challenged to reach the 50 percent mark for their menu content.

### ***1.2. The 2020 Vision Team***

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The 2020 Vision Team was carefully selected so that all stakeholders are represented. The teams consisted of suppliers, growers, students, parents, education and school nutrition leaders, government officials, concerned citizens, and leaders in communities throughout the state. The team will expand as necessary to accomplish the 2020 Vision Plan goals.

### ***1.3. History***

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The kickoff meeting for the “2020 Vision for School Nutrition” was held December 11, 2015 at the Georgia FFA-FCCLA Center in Covington, Georgia.

## 2. Research

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It is no surprise that studies suggest a strong link between eating healthy and better academic achievement. Furthermore, funding programs with an emphasis on eating locally grown foods helps spark local economic growth and adds value to the community. These are just two of the many reasons why expanding upon Georgia's farm to school efforts is in the best interest of Georgians.

### ***2.1. Student Health***

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It is vital that Georgia students have access to healthy food options in their cafeterias. Taste, however, is sometimes overlooked despite it being equally important according to recent research conducted by Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health. This research has proven that better tasting meals are key to engaging students and leading them to make better food choices in the long run. In order to give Georgia students the fuel they need to reach their full potential, we must give them better access to healthy foods and engage them in school cafeterias.

#### ***2.1.1. Better School Nutrition Leads to Better Student Performance***

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According to a study done by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), healthy students have greater academic achievement. This means that healthier students not only perform better in the classroom and on standardized tests, but also behave in a way that is better for academic enrichment. For example, healthier students are proven to have higher attendance rates, lower dropout rates and less behavioral problems at school. Furthermore, healthy students have an increase in overall cognitive skills such as concentration and memory. So what do Georgia students need to be more successful? According to the CDC, the following are key:

- Breakfast - skipping breakfast is associated with decreased cognitive performance (e.g. alertness, attention, memory, processing of complex visual displays, problem solving) among students
- A well balanced diet - lack of adequate consumption of specific foods, such as fruits, vegetables, or dairy products, is associated with lower grades among students
- Nutrition guidelines - deficits of specific nutrients (i.e., vitamins A, B12, C, folate, iron, zinc and calcium) are associated with lower grades and higher rates of absenteeism and tardiness among students
- Sufficient food intake - hunger due to insufficient food intake is associated with lower grades, higher rates of absenteeism, repeating a grade and an inability to focus

Fortunately, school cafeterias have the opportunity to influence student eating behaviors and prepare young Georgians for a healthier, more productive lifestyle. Programs like the Georgia Grown Feed my School for a Week Program focus on using locally grown foods to produce

quality meals and engage with students. All Georgia students deserve the benefits that come from programs like this. However, it is up to us to take ownership of our school cafeterias and expand upon our farm to school efforts.

### ***2.1.2. Improved Taste Leads to Healthier Choices***

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In a study done by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, researchers found that healthy school lunches need to taste good to effectively increase student consumption of fruits and vegetables. The study examined the long-term impact of choice architecture and chef-enhanced meals. The results showed significantly greater impact on students choosing healthier foods long-term under the chef-enhanced meal programs.

“The results highlight the importance of focusing on the palatability of school meals. Partnerships with chefs can lead to substantial improvements in the quality of school meals and can be an economically feasible option for schools,” said lead author Juliana Cohen, research fellow in the Department of Nutrition at Harvard Chan School. “Additionally, this study shows that schools should not abandon healthier foods if they are initially met with resistance by students.”

While hiring a chef may not be possible in many public schools, programs like the Georgia Grown Test Kitchen create fantastic opportunities for school nutrition directors to bring better tasting, healthy food options to school cafeterias. The goal of the Georgia Grown Test Kitchen program is to create cafeteria recipes that are not only good for the students, but taste good too. The program started in 2013 and already has a number of cafeteria-ready recipes available for free online.

## ***2.2. Local Economies***

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Schools sourcing food locally can result in a ripple effect for the local economy thanks to public funding being circulated back to local taxpayers. With well over 2,000 public schools serving nearly 2 million students in Georgia, the economic impact of farm to school programs can be quite substantial.

### ***2.2.1. The Farm to School Ripple Effect***

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According to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) census data, public schools purchased nearly \$600 million worth of local food during the 2013-2014 school year. This was a 55% increase over the previous year, and the momentum continues to build as more farm to school programs are being developed across the nation. The reality is farmers have nearly as much to gain from farm to school programs as the students themselves. According to the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, the number of farmers with gross annual farm sales of



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\$50,000 - \$500,000 fell nearly 18% from 1997 to 2007. When a small or mid-size farmer is able to connect to a large institution like a school, the impact can be life changing.

According to research by the National Farm to School Network, farmers selling to schools see an average 5% increase in income. Furthermore, every \$1 spent on farm to school programs stimulates an additional \$2.16 of local economic activity. This local economic activity leads to an average of 1.67 new community jobs. Georgia has a strong backbone in agriculture and we have the ability to increase our farm to school efforts dramatically. Imagine the economic impact if farm to school was the norm in schools throughout the state.

### **3. 2020 Vision Plan Meeting**

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During the “2020 Vision for School Nutrition” meeting, members organized into focus group to discuss obstacles that must be overcome from their perspective to make the 2020 Vision Plan a reality in Georgia. Strategies and opportunities emerged from many of the groups as they collaborated and laid the groundwork for the vision’s success. Common factors began to emerge amongst the groups focusing on three key questions:

How do we recognize the schools participating?

How do we control the costs?

How do we advertise the positive results of the program?

Groups presented their unique perspective of the vision focusing their discussion on the bullet points below. With many obstacles still to overcome, members of this group plan to meet regularly until the goals are met in 2020.

#### ***3.1. Group 1 (Industry)***

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- Identify items needed in schools (to serve, use, possible supplemental sale items)
- Logistics of delivery
- Food safety concerns/licensing needed

#### ***3.2. Group 2 (School Leadership)***

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- Incentive added programs
- Inspiration of participation
- Costs to school nutrition programs
- classroom connections/standards applications



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### ***3.3. Group 3 (Parents and Students)***

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- Improvement of selections
- Identification of products as local
- Improved foods, service, availability

### ***3.4. Group 4 (School Nutrition Directors)***

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- Participation Incentives
- Recognition, state and local levels
- Costs
- Logistics of delivery
- Availability of products during off season
- Identification of current Georgia products available in quantities needed

### ***3.5. Group 5 (Good Georgians)***

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- Getting the word out
- How to involve more industry
- Community support
- How to recognize schools/systems that are participating and reaching the goals



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## 4. 2020 Vision Plan Strategy

<b>Goal: By 2020, identified Georgia products account for at least 20% of all public school meals.</b>				
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Accountable Individuals</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<b>Meet with food service distribution companies to see where food comes from currently</b>	75% of product used in GA cafeterias are identified by their state of origin	Misty Friedman	July 1, 2016	NA
<b>Award all schools that reach the goal</b>	20% increase of GA Schools awarded annually	Misty Friedman State DOE	July 2017 (Annually)	Award
<b>Increase awareness of 2020 Vision Plan</b>	2020 Vision Plan has a presence at GAEL, Bootstrap, GSNA, Spring Conference and Directors Conference	Misty Friedman GDA Marketing State DOE	April 2016 (Annually)	Marketing Materials
<b>Review and improve upon current legislation and rules that are obstacles to locally produced food</b>	100% of current legislation and rules have been reviewed	Commissioner State Superintendent Various elected officials	Session of 2017  (Bi-Annually)	NA
<b>Annual student survey</b>	Student survey data shows a 10% increase in awareness of Georgia products in meals annually	Neil Gilbert	October 2016 (Annually)	Survey Monkey Account
<b>Secondary Goal: By 2020, identified Georgia products account for 50% of meals in 20% of public schools.</b>				



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## 5. Get Involved

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Are you interested in helping Georgia students, farmers and communities? Well here are some ways that you can help make the 2020 Vision Goals a reality:

1. Contact your local school leadership – It is important to us that no one is left behind when it comes to school nutrition. By contacting your local school leadership and showing your support of the 2020 Vision Plan, you can help ensure that the students in your community are included.
2. Improve current legislation – There are some obstacles that make it more difficult for school nutrition directors to purchase local foods. Commissioner Gary Black is looking for ways to improve these rules for the sake of Georgia’s youth and agricultural community. Any support for these changes is support for students and farmers across the state.

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