



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**About IATP**

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

# **New Farm to Childcare curriculum connects youngest eaters with fresh local fruits and vegetables**

**MINNEAPOLIS** – The new Farm to Childcare Curriculum Package released today gives childcare providers a roadmap to start their own Farm to Childcare programs in order to connect young children with locally grown, minimally processed foods and the farmers who grow them. The curriculum was developed for preschool-age children by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) in partnership with childcare provider company New Horizon Academy (NHA) with support from the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. The curriculum and associated materials include practical, experience-tested strategies to try out new approaches in child care settings including menu innovations, classroom activities and family engagement ideas.

“We know children between the ages of 3 and 5 are busy developing their taste preferences, and younger children are often more willing to try new foods than older children,” said IATP’s Erin McKee VanSlooten who helped lead the curriculum’s creation. “That makes it the perfect age to influence their eating habits by stressing healthy food choices from nearby farms and integrating experiential learning activities that will set them on the path to healthy eating and build awareness of where food comes from.”

The Farm to Childcare Curriculum Package contains information on designing a Farm to Childcare menu and implementation schedule, recommendations on how to highlight local farmers to make the connection real for children, detailed examples of family engagement strategies and extensive experiential learning activity suggestions to incorporate Farm to Childcare themes into Circle Time, Math and Science, Sensory and Dramatic Play, Arts and conversations at mealtime. It also includes resource recommendations for further ideas.

“We saw the program have a positive impact both inside and outside of our childcare centers,” said Cisa Keller, Director of Government and Community Relations from New Horizon Academy. “In fact, 48 percent of the families we surveyed said they did something different at home because of the program, such as eating more fruits and vegetables or buying more local foods.”

“IATP has an impressive track record with its work on connecting schools and children with healthy food,” said Janelle Waldock, director of the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. “We are excited to partner with them again in targeting younger children to help build lifelong habits, reducing the risk of obesity and diet-related disease long term.”

A complementary report tells the story of implementing a Farm to Childcare program based on the curriculum package at 62 NHA childcare centers, providing an inside look at lessons learned. Together with the curriculum, these resources give childcare providers real tools to start or expand their own Farm to Childcare programs, helping kids develop a healthy and informed relationship with their food while simultaneously opening up a new market for our local farmers’ fresh fruits and vegetables.

Find the Farm to Childcare Curriculum Package and Farm to Childcare: Highlights and Lessons Learned Report available online at [www.iatp.org/farmtochildcare](http://www.iatp.org/farmtochildcare).

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