



## **NJ Farm to School Conference**

**April 18, 2009**

**Lawrenceville School**

### **Speaker Notes**

#### **Emma Davis-Kovacs, Director of NJ Department of Agriculture:**

Emma has worked in state programs since 1980, the last 10 years have been spent with the Department of Agriculture.

As a teacher in the late 70's Emma received a Nutritional Education Training Grant to incorporate more fresh fruits and vegetables into the classroom. Through this grant Emma's students were able to measure plate waste and participate in contextual programs. This grant also allowed for parent involvement and integration of nutrition education into the curriculum. Currently in state government there are more children needing free or reduced lunches than ever before and at the state level there are many people working to provide better foods to our school children.

Jackie Bricker: Farm to School Program

Janet Hawk: Coordinator of the School Nutrition Programs

Janet Sealy: Consultant for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program

We are partners, we have an active commitment to you. As Mikey said "This is the time, this is the moment." New Jersey faces challenges though, there are over 600 small school districts in the state as compares to MD which has 24 counties.

It is clear that this is the room but there are many different partners needed. We need to get the NJEA, principal groups, school nurses, PTAs, PTOs, etc. We need to expand the network we are working with.

Michele Obama is setting the tone for us by talking about fresh food, about how delicious fresh food tastes. There is support, the secretary at state level is supportive so there is much more we can develop and do at this point

Raising standards is on the horizon, there is just not enough money for free/reduced lunch even with the amount that NJ contributes to the federal dollars.

Fiscal accountability rule: Food service providers can't run at a deficit

Essence of conversation is we are here as partners in a time were we are trying to offer more fruits and veggies in our schools.

The 2008 farm bill allows us to work on geographic language. Governor Corzine was helpful with the Hunger Initiative which can be translated into what we are trying to do in schools

Jackie Bricker said earlier every state has a local preference but we need to step back and look at the battles of the last 18 months that the Department of Agriculture has faced. We have the tone, presence and, experience, but it is a challenging time. Would love farm to school to be a top priority but there are challenges.