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# Farm to School

## WHAT is Farm to School?

Farm to School programs bring healthy, local food into schools, and provide students with hands-on learning opportunities that foster food literacy, all while strengthening the local food system and enhancing school and community connectedness.

Farm to School empowers students and school communities to make informed food choices while contributing to vibrant, sustainable regional food systems that support the health of people, place and planet.

Farm to school programs differ by school, but always include one or more of the following:

### Healthy, Local Food:

Schools source local food in many ways, including direct farmer relationships, through food distributors, schoolyard farms, or the harvesting of wild or traditional foods. When local food arrives in schools it is often served in the form of a salad bar, hot lunch program, tasting activity, fundraiser, or community celebration.

### Hands-On Learning:

Food literacy is a critically important component of Farm to School programs. Step into any school offering a Farm to School program and you will find students learning about food in the school garden, greenhouse, kitchen or classroom. They may also be getting ready for field trips to local farms, forests, and shores.

### CORE ELEMENTS OF FARM TO SCHOOL

HEALTHY,  
LOCAL FOOD

HANDS-ON  
LEARNING



SCHOOL & COMMUNITY  
CONNECTEDNESS

### School and Community Connectedness:

The most successful and sustainable Farm to School programs are built upon strong relationships. Schools establish relationships with farmers, community members, and support organizations, tapping into local knowledge, passion, skills, and resources.

## WHY Farm to School?

### Students Win

Farm to School programs provide students access to nutritious, high quality, local food so they are ready to learn and grow.

### Farmers Win

Farm to school provides farmers opportunities to educate and connect with students in their community and can serve as a new market opportunity.

### Communities Win

Buying from local producers and processors helps stimulate the local economy, while engaging community members helps to foster deep community connections.



# WHAT ARE the Benefits of Farm to School?

Farm to School programs have the potential to address key priorities within the education, health, agricultural, environmental and economic sectors:

## Education:

- ✓ Develops opportunities for flexible, place-based learning.
- ✓ Assists schools in taking a whole school approach to food.
- ✓ Creates more green, sustainable schools.
- ✓ Promotes school and community connectedness.

## Health:

- ✓ Promotes healthy eating habits, including increased consumption of vegetables and fruit.
- ✓ Promotes a positive relationship with food.
- ✓ Addresses issues of inequity in access to healthy food.
- ✓ Improves food knowledge and skills (food literacy).

## Agriculture:

- ✓ Develops local markets for farmers.
- ✓ Inspires the next generation of farmers.
- ✓ Links schools to regional food systems.
- ✓ Creates new models and structures for regional food distribution.

## Environment:

- ✓ Reduces food miles.
- ✓ Provides opportunities to grow a new generation of environmentally conscious citizens with a stronger connection to the land and water.

## Economy:

- ✓ Contributes to the local economy.
- ✓ Creates new jobs.

## The Evidence is IN!

When a Farm to School program is offered:

- ✓ Students eat more servings of fruits and vegetables (on average .99 - 1.3 more servings)
- ✓ Students are willing to try new and healthy food, and choose healthier options in the school cafeteria and at home
- ✓ Students are more knowledgeable about their food and the food system
- ✓ Food service staff have increased morale and knowledge about local foods
- ✓ Each new farm to school job contributes to the creation of 1.67 additional jobs
- ✓ \$2.16 economic activity generated for every \$1 spent

This data has been drawn from "The Benefits of Farm to School" (2014), The US National Farm to School Network [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)

## Start a Farm to School Program in Your Community

If you would like to start or expand a Farm to School program be sure to download the following resources. Each is available on the websites listed on this sheet.

- ✓ Getting Started with Farm to School fact sheet
- ✓ Starting a School Garden fact sheet
- ✓ A Fresh Crunch in School Lunch – The BC Farm to School Guide
- ✓ Farm to School Learning Lab fact sheet

Farm to School programs are a part of growing momentum across the country to bring more healthy local and sustainable foods into hospitals, campuses and other public institutions. Check out the national conversation at these Farm to Cafeteria Canada links:

