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# Farm to School: Dig In!

## 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.

## Getting Started

Farm to School offers multiple strategies to improve the health of children and communities, but getting started can be a daunting endeavor. This list provides some simple first steps to develop a lasting farm to school program in your community.

### 1. Assess your goals. Do they focus on:

- ✓ Procurement of local foods to be served in school?
- ✓ Establishing a school garden?
- ✓ Integration of Farm to School education within the curriculum?
- ✓ All of the above?

### 2. Form a team and collaborate. School food service staff, teachers, administrators, public health inspectors, funders, local farmers, students, parents and community organizations each have important roles to play in establishing a sustainable farm to school program.

### 3. Establish one or two attainable goals to get started. Some ideas include:

- ✓ Identify menu items that you would like to transition to local products.
- ✓ Find a farmer or distributor to connect you to local items.
- ✓ Plan a local meal event.
- ✓ Determine training needs to assist food service staff with incorporating farm fresh items in meals.
- ✓ Bring a school garden planning team together.
- ✓ Identify curricular opportunities to connect to a school garden. Bring a chef into the classroom.
- ✓ Plan a farm field trip or host a tasting event featuring local produce.

## Haida Gwaii Digs In!

A small group of islands just off the northern coast of British Columbia is making incredible inroads towards their vision - island foods on every plate. In Haida Gwaii, Farm to School and Farm to Hospital programs are taking root, establishing and linking 3 different farms with 8 different public agencies to provide foods to local hospitals, health care centres, and schools.



4. **Learn from others.** If you are running into obstacles there are guides, toolkits, and people out there to help! Download the following resources from the websites promoted on this sheet:

- ✓ A New Crunch in School Lunch: BC's Farm to School Guide
- ✓ Starting a School Garden

Or contact a Farm to School lead by sending a note to the email addresses promoted on this sheet.

5. **Promote farm to school in your school and community.**

- ✓ Signage in the cafeteria
- ✓ Bulletin boards throughout the school
- ✓ School newsletters (print and electronic)
- ✓ School website
- ✓ School events, PAC, etc.
- ✓ Local media

## New Brunswick Digs In!

Reseau des Cafeterias, a local group with expertise in managing school cafeterias, has partnered with the Really Local Harvest, a cooperative of farmers, and District Scolaire francophone Nord-Est to revamp the foods eat in 20 francophone schools. Kids are now lining up for homestyle lunches prepared with as much fresh, healthy local foods as possible. The cafeteria network group has expanded the project to 20 of 36 schools in the francophone south school district compared to one school when it started two years ago.

## 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.

This resource has been amended from the National Farm to School Network in the United States:

[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)

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:

