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School Food and Food Education Training Hub:

Impacts of “Introduction to Food Education” Professional Learning Course Spring 2026 Pilot

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Farm to Cafeteria Canada’s **School Food and Food Education Training Hub** is Canada's first nationwide online learning space that provides professional development courses, resources, and peer-to-peer networking to grow food literacy education and comprehensive school food programs.

The Hub’s food education courses help educators equip children and youth with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to nourish themselves and the planet. The aim is to inspire and support educators to use food to teach the curriculum through hands-on, student-centred activities rooted in connections to culture, community, place, and land.



In spring 2026, we piloted "Introduction to Food Education: Teaching with Food to Nourish Connection." The 4-module cohort-based pilot course featured guest speakers from across the country, peer-to-peer learning, and guided discussions on:

- Positive relationships with food
- Food stories and culture
- Student action in food systems
- Food, people and the environment

Pilot Feedback

Fourteen educators who collectively support over 525 Kindergarten to Grade 8 (K-8) students from across Canada participated and shared feedback through surveys and semi-structured interviews:*

100% felt like the course material was relevant, valuable, and exceeded their expectations.

"**I've been teaching a food and sustainability course for 21 years. This is the first professional development that I've done that has just hit so many pieces that I value.** I think it is so important for not only our students, but also our staff and community... It was phenomenal. "

"One of the most valuable things I learned is that food education is not about teaching—it's about relationships. The course made me realize that it's not my role to deliver information about food, but to create the conditions where children can build their own connections to it."

"What felt especially valuable was **recognizing how deeply food is tied to identity, culture, and belonging. It's not neutral.** The foods we offer, the way we talk about them, and the experiences we create all send messages about what is valued and who is seen."



92% felt their knowledge about food has grown

"**Every session has left me feeling inspired, intrigued, and curious**. So many tips, resources, and windows into schools and minds across the country!"

"I gained a broader understanding of how food education can support student well-being, cultural learning, environmental sustainability, and community engagement."

"It opened my thinking about how important food is in the lives of students (and my own), but it's often not an explicit part of learning experiences."

*Percentages are based on participants responding 'agree' and 'strongly agree' during evaluation, including feedback received through surveys after each module, an end-of-course survey, and an online interview.

100% felt their motivation and ability to teach about food systems had grown

"**I've shaped my whole Grade 2/3 year around food systems this school year- weaving the BC curriculum for my grade levels with the beautiful complexity of food systems.** Thanks to the profound impact the course had on me, I've never been so excited about an upcoming school [year] adventure!"

"The conversations, ideas, and connections throughout this experience have been inspiring and have encouraged me to continue building intentional food systems learning into my program. Thank you again for this amazing opportunity and for creating such a thoughtful and inspiring learning experience. "

Most educators shared the course helped them make cultural connections and support inclusive classrooms

"The biggest change was the culture piece, which is in our curriculum, but I just wasn't doing it before. [**It] wasn't important to me, so I didn't teach it. Now I realize that it's actually really important.** That's a big mind shift for me."

"I think in terms of inclusion of students with special education needs, I have a lot of that in my class, and the hands-on and experiential kind of learning is very accessible and inclusive and gives them an opportunity to thrive and connect in a different kind of way."

"My background is in culturally relevant pedagogy. So to see the cultural inclusion embedded in this [course], it just made my heart so happy... just taking the time to consider all of our students and not just one primary group of them, you see the impact that it has when you can make these connections with their students and they feel understood and they feel seen."

92% of educators valued the opportunity for peer to peer learning.

I think it was cool to connect with other teachers and see where they're at... in some ways that made me feel like I've done a lot of things already, but also, there's also so much room to grow.

"The course was created with so much thought, intention and respect towards all learners and educators. We were provided time to discuss with other participants and connect with educators with similar roles and experiences. **I think this was a fantastic course and I am so excited for other educators to have an opportunity to experience it.**"

"It was well done - the best part was the community that was built with the [other educator] participants."

85% of educators had tried a food activity from the course with their class.



100% of educators felt the course helped them support students to develop a positive relationship with food.

"I've seen the language around food change; I've seen kids open to trying new foods/flavours; **I've seen my own language around food and health change**; I'm amazed by the interconnectedness of food in every element of our lives."

"[The course] was very well done, and the resources too, very practical, which as a teacher, oh my goodness, is so greatly appreciated."

"The activities sparked curiosity, encouraged participation, and helped students make meaningful connections between food, culture, and everyday life."

"I've noticed curiosity and wonder consistently emerge as students learn together and build connections through food. As they engage in hands-on experiences, they become more willing to take risks, embrace failure as part of the learning process, reflect on their experiences, and try again with new understanding. Over time, this also opens space for students to **share their personal food journeys, creating meaningful conversations that deepen empathy, connection, and appreciation for the diverse ways people experience food."**

"...It wasn't just about teaching children about food, but about creating opportunities for them to experience it with their whole bodies—touching, tasting, growing, preparing, and sharing. That shift from instruction to experience felt really powerful to me. I also appreciated how it **challenged some of the normalized practices around convenience and control.** It made me reflect on how often, even with the best intentions, we can rush food experiences or limit children's involvement because it feels easier or more efficient. The module reminded me that those moments—messy, slow, unpredictable—are actually where the deepest learning happens."

"I gained a deeper understanding of food sovereignty and its importance in education. It pushed me to think more critically about who has access to food, whose knowledge is valued, and how food connects to identity, culture, and power. This learning helped me see **food education not just as a teaching tool, but as a way to support equity, respect diverse ways of knowing**, and empower students to see their own experiences reflected and valued."

Looking Forward

While feedback on our pilot course was overwhelmingly positive, participants also shared ideas for improvements such as adding more time to explore course topics and more focused guidance for small-group discussions. We've made these changes and are excited to officially launch the Hub in November 2026 with another offering of Intro to Food Education for 50 educators from across Canada.

Our team is also developing two more Hub courses launching in early 2027:

"School Foodways Through the Seasons"

will support educators to deepen their understanding of Indigenous foodways, decolonization, food education and their responsibilities within school food systems.

"Food Systems Education for Climate and Community Well-Being"

will explore how to engage students in hands-on climate action and learn about food systems that work for people and the planet.

Beyond these, we're working to create:

- Courses to support practitioners to develop and deliver comprehensive school meal programs, covering topics such as scratch cooking, sourcing local foods, and more.
- The Food Education (FEd) Network, which will be another tool to bring educators and experts together and help them to maintain the relationships they developed during Hub courses.

All Hub learning opportunities are being designed to support Canada's National School Food Program and the implementation of the vision, objectives, and principles of the National School Food Policy in all provinces and territories.

Throughout this work, we will continue to evaluate and share Hub's impact. We'll use what we learn to inspire and empower educators to teach about food, and support advocacy efforts towards governments and institutions to grow food education in Canada.

Thank You

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