



# Farm *to* School

COALITION OF NC

Expanding and strengthening farm to school initiatives  
across the state





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# Farm to School

COALITION OF NC

North Carolina schools educate nearly 1.5 million students annually. Children spend nearly half their waking hours and consume more than half of their daily food at school. Because of this, schools are the optimum location to help students learn to make healthy choices that will last a lifetime. Through access to nutritious local foods and education, we can improve the health of children while creating strong local economies and engaged communities.



Farm to school connects schools, teachers, farms, families and communities to improve student nutrition, health and academic performance. Farm to school programs support local food procurement, school gardens and nutrition education. They connect schools to farmers by purchasing, serving and promoting local foods. School nutrition professionals, teachers, administrators, school nurses, school health coordinators, local farmers, students, families, policy makers and community organizations each have an important role in building capacity for and establishing a sustainable farm to school program.

School nutrition professionals and farmers can work together to increase procurement of local food for school meals and snacks to help to tell the story of local food systems. Teachers and school nutrition professionals can teach and promote farm to school to students and their families to increase the consumption of healthy foods. Students, families and community organizations can advocate for farm to school programming in their local school districts. School administrators and policy makers can establish policies and practices in support of farm to school.

The Farm to School Coalition of North Carolina (F2SCNC) brings together a dedicated group of farm to school stakeholders that will collaborate to expand and strengthen farm to school initiatives focused on K-12 students across the state.



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Willow Springs Elementary,  
Wake County Public Schools, North Carolina



## VISION

**The F2SCNC forecasts a farm to school effort in every North Carolina county. We foresee young people who participate in farm to school will benefit from evidence-based activities. In addition, by engaging young people, local farmers, school systems and whole communities in growing, distributing and promoting of healthy foods, we envision a vibrant and robust food system whereby everyone affiliated with the school community has knowledge of and access to locally produced, nutritious foods, resulting in healthier citizens, communities and economies.**

## MISSION STATEMENT

**The Farm to School Coalition of NC seeks to expand and strengthen farm to school initiatives across the state through outreach, network development, and capacity building.**



Verner Center for Early Learning, Asheville, NC



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# FARM TO SCHOOL IN NC

## DEFINITION

Farm to school connects schools, local agriculture and the community to improve student nutrition, health and academic performance. Farm to school implementation varies across settings and includes one or more of the following components:

- ☀ School gardens and garden-based education
- ☀ Healthy eating education
- ☀ Local food education
- ☀ Procurement of local food

## VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The statewide Farm to School Coalition of NC supports the following as part of a high-performing team. Together we will:

- ☀ Network and build relationships
- ☀ Coordinate and collaborate on farm to school efforts
- ☀ Respect multiple approaches
- ☀ Communicate clearly via diverse methods and strategies
- ☀ Address gaps and avoid duplication in farm to school programming
- ☀ Share farm to school best practices
- ☀ Strive to improve access to the components of farm to school
- ☀ Increase the consumption of locally-grown healthy food by our students



Reggie Stevenson, Farmer,  
Warren County, North Carolina

Whitewater Middle School, Charlotte-Mecklenburg  
Schools, North Carolina

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## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The following list includes examples of many farm to school stakeholders. Please let us know of others who should be added to this list. We welcome the participation of any organizations, individuals, and families!

### Education:

- ☀ Culinary schools
- ☀ Education organizations/foundations
- ☀ Farm to Preschool partners
- ☀ Future Farmers of America (FFA)
- ☀ Parent/Teacher Associations and Organizations (PTA/PTO)
- ☀ Public, private, and charter schools
- ☀ Universities, colleges, and community colleges

### Government Agencies:

- ☀ NC Cooperative Extension/4H/Master Gardeners
- ☀ NC Department of Agriculture
- ☀ NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- ☀ NC Department of Health and Human Services
- ☀ NC Department of Public Instruction
- ☀ NC Division of Parks & Recreation

### Businesses:

- ☀ Farmers
- ☀ Food distribution companies
- ☀ Garden/farm supply stores
- ☀ Health care

### Organizations/Nonprofits:

- ☀ Community gardens
- ☀ Community-based wellness organizations
- ☀ Dietetic associations
- ☀ Environmental organizations
- ☀ Equity focused organizations
- ☀ Faith communities
- ☀ Farmers markets
- ☀ Food/justice organizations
- ☀ Food policy councils
- ☀ Funders
- ☀ Hunger relief organizations
- ☀ Parent/family organizations
- ☀ School nutrition associations
- ☀ Sustainable agriculture organizations
- ☀ Service organizations
- ☀ Youth serving organizations



Chef Megan Lambert, Chef Instructor Johnson and Wales,  
Chefs Move to Schools

Please visit our website to join or access  
the directory for the F2S Coalition of NC.  
[farmtoschoolcoalitionnc.org](http://farmtoschoolcoalitionnc.org)

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# GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

GOAL ❶: GROW THE NETWORK.



GOAL ❷: BUILD CAPACITY FOR FARM TO SCHOOL.



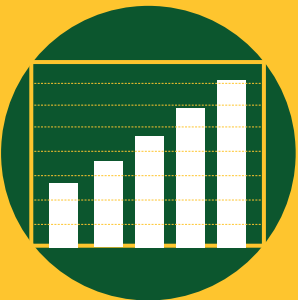
GOAL ❸: DEVELOP THE COALITION.



## COALITION GOALS



GOAL ❹: INCREASE AWARENESS.



GOAL ❺: ASSESS THE IMPACT.



### GOAL ❶: GROW THE NETWORK.

**Encourage networking and relationship-building among farm to school stakeholders.**

Building relationships as well as sharing resources between various types of stakeholders increases our ability to draw upon a wealth of expertise with multi-level strategies. Effective network development will ensure that knowledge and best practices are carried forward as the movement

grows, facilitating collaborative efforts to reduce barriers while developing creative, multi-partnered solutions.

#### Strategies:

- ☀️ Maintain communication tools for connecting farm to school stakeholders.
- ☀️ Support connections between producers, distributors, and school nutrition programs.
- ☀️ Encourage development of locally-based farm to school teams and collaborations.







## GOAL ②: BUILD CAPACITY FOR FARM TO SCHOOL.

**Support and encourage resource development and capacity building for farm to school in North Carolina.**

School administrators, teachers, students, nutrition professionals, and health/wellness professionals, along with families, farmers, and community partners each have an important role in building capacity for and establishing a sustainable farm to school program. All of these groups can

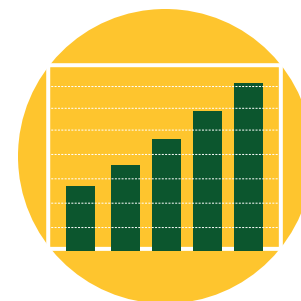
advocate for funding, resources, programming, practices, and policies in support of farm to school.

### Strategies:

- ☀ Develop and disseminate farm to school resources and best practices.
- ☀ Provide farm to school continuing education and professional development.
- ☀ Expand funding opportunities.
- ☀ Establish policies and practices in support of farm to school.
- ☀ Share best practices through a statewide communication network.



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina



## GOAL ③: ASSESS THE IMPACT.

**Stakeholders and partners will strengthen data collection and identification of common measures to demonstrate the impact of farm to school in North Carolina.**

Systematic data collection, analysis and evaluation facilitates the design and implementation of effective farm to school programming and substantiates its impact. Furthermore, a community-based participatory approach to data gathering

and translation will add to the relevance and reach of data-driven practices while telling the story of farm to school efforts across North Carolina.

### Strategies:

- ☀ Identify and standardize data measures.
- ☀ Support collection and sharing of data.
- ☀ Publish and promote the results.



## GOAL ④: INCREASE AWARENESS.

**Increase awareness and understanding of farm to school opportunities, benefits, and successes in North Carolina.**

Increasing awareness and understanding of farm to school reinvigorates community interest in schools, local food, and farming. By better understanding where stakeholders can connect to the movement, we hope to increase their engagement, expand their access to resources and funding,

and develop beneficial policies and practices together to advance farm to school across the state. Engagement in farm to school will lead to strong local economies and improved consumption of healthy, local produce.

### Strategies:

- ☀ Highlight success stories.
- ☀ Champion leaders.
- ☀ Showcase effective models.





## GOAL ⑤: DEVELOP THE COALITION.

### Develop a sustainable Farm to School Coalition of North Carolina that serves the statewide movement.

North Carolina is a leader in grassroots farm to school efforts. However, those grassroots efforts are often left without a larger community of resources, information and organization.

A staffed, sustainable coalition can serve as a centralized resource, connecting and supporting efforts across the state. Facilitating communication and sharing resources will enhance and expand current efforts. A coalition can also support shared measures and communicate the real impact of farm to school on North Carolina's economy, agriculture, schools and communities, elevating the work of leaders across the state.

#### Strategies:

- ☀ Recruit representatives from appropriate state agencies and other organizations, striving for geographical balance from educational regions across the state.
- ☀ Maintain communication infrastructure to share relevant best practices, funding announcements, learning opportunities and networking events.
- ☀ Coordinate a simple assessment tool that would allow practitioners to measure similar outcomes from farm to school efforts; collect, organize and disseminate regular reports on the state of farm to school in North Carolina.
- ☀ Support and connect local leaders implementing the strategic plan.
- ☀ Identify and share funding sources to support the coalition as well as grassroots efforts.



North Carolina High School Lunch,  
*Fuel Up to Win the Race to the Top*

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## How You Can Get Involved

We invite organizations and individuals interested in farm to school to support and use this strategic plan, as together we expand the impact of farm to school across the state. This strategic plan is intended to be a living document that will be adapted over time to support the movement. The committee recommends a thorough review and revision to the plan at least once every five years.

Evaluation is an integral part of this plan. Working together to strengthen data collection and identify common measures, we will be better equipped to demonstrate the impact of farm to school in North Carolina. We look forward to our shared progress in further demonstrating the impact of farm to school across our state.



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## HISTORY OF THE FARM TO SCHOOL COALITION OF NC

The Farm to School Coalition of NC began in 2011, with several planning meetings conducted in 2012 (April 23, June 26, and September 10, 2012). The coalition identified many existing areas of success in farm to school programming throughout North Carolina, including:



Coalition Planning Meeting

### **Farm to School Procurement Strategies:**

Current strategies include an existing large and expansive local purchasing school collaborative through the NC Farm to School Program which is coordinated by the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS).

**Promotional Efforts:** Promotion and resources are provided by the NC Department of Public Instruction, ASAP's *Growing Minds* Program, the NC Center for Health and Wellness, the Green Teacher Network, FoodCorps North Carolina, and others across the state.

**Hands-on Learning:** Experiential learning and nutrition education resources and programming are provided by ASAP's *Growing Minds* program, the NC Department of Public Instruction Child Nutrition Services, and the NC Center for Health and Wellness.

**Training:** The NC Department of Public Instruction, NC State University, Cooperative Extension, 4H, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!), the NC Center for Health and Wellness, and others have a rich history in training and capacity building throughout the state.

**Curriculum Development:** Effective nutrition education is led by the NC Department of Public Instruction, with additional support and work of many agencies and organizations, including NC State University, NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Cooperative Extension/4H, ASAP, FoodCorps North Carolina, and others.

**Planning and Evaluation:** The NC Center for Health and Wellness has served as a planning and evaluation support system for farm to school organizations and projects across the state.

The coalition also identified areas of need to further the reach and impact of farm to school efforts around North Carolina. There is a significant gap in communication between and among organizations involved in farm to school activities. While there is a wealth of knowledge about successful implementation strategies for farm to school efforts in North Carolina, there

is no "go to" network or resource to connect individuals, agencies and organizations trying to solve similar problems or identify locally successful best practices.

The coalition applied for a grant from the USDA Farm to School program to create a strong communication network and support collaboration among schools, government agencies, non-governmental and community-based organizations, agricultural groups and countless other community partners. This grant was awarded in November 2013, and the project began December 1, 2013. The goals of the grant are to support the Farm to School Coalition of NC in partnership/network development, strategic planning, and expansion of statewide programming around farm to school.

Stakeholder meetings were conducted to assess needs across the state. These meetings were conducted from April-June 2014 in various cities including: Asheville, Boone, Greenville, Pinehurst, Raleigh, and Wilmington.

Additional coalition meetings were conducted in 2014 and 2015 to plan the conference, develop the online directory, and to draft a strategic plan. The Steering Committee reviewed efforts from other states and identified that only three other states currently have statewide Farm to School Strategic plans. A Strategic Planning Committee worked together from March-July 2015 to develop this plan.





**SPECIAL THANKS TO FARM TO SCHOOL COALITION OF  
NC STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS:**

**Heather Barnes**  
*Marketing Specialist*

NC Department of Agriculture  
& Consumer Services  
NC Farm to School Program

**Tracey Bates,**  
**MPH, RDN, LDN, FAND**  
*School Nutrition Specialist*

School Nutrition Services  
Safe and Healthy Schools  
Support Division  
NC Department of Public Instruction

**Chuck Bridger, MA**  
*Executive Director*

The North Carolina Public Health  
Foundation

**Edna Chirico**  
*Executive Director*

Green Teacher Network Charlotte

**Liz Driscoll**  
*4-H Specialist*

Crops, Entomology, Horticulture & Soils  
NC State University /  
NC Cooperative Extension  
FoodCorps NC

**Michelle Futrell, MS, RD, LDN**  
*Nutrition Consultant*

Children and Youth Branch  
Division of Public Health  
NC Department of Health &  
Human Services

**Beth Mack, MPH, RD**  
*Registered Dietitian*

Chartwells UNC-Charlotte

**Caroline Stover**  
*Fellow*

FoodCorps NC

**Laurie Stradley**  
*Director of State & Community  
Collaboration*

Co-State Lead, National Farm  
to School Network  
NC Center for Health & Wellness  
at UNC Asheville

**Zoe McKay-Tucker**  
*School Nutrition Consultant  
for Special Programs*

School Nutrition Services  
Safe and Healthy Schools  
Support Division  
NC Department of Public Instruction

**Tessa Thraves**  
*Youth and Community-based Food  
Systems Coordinator*

Center for Environmental  
Farming Systems  
NC State University  
FoodCorps NC

**Brittany Wager**  
*Growing Minds Program Coordinator*

ASAP (Appalachian Sustainable  
Agriculture Project)  
SE Regional Lead Agency for  
National Farm to School Network

For more information:  
[farmtoschoolcoalitionnc.org](http://farmtoschoolcoalitionnc.org)