



## Farm to School: Building Capacity

*Why long-term capacity building in farm to school? Farm to school work goes beyond locally sourced meals or fun lessons in the garden. Sharing the benefits of farm to school can help build support and allies.*

**For students**, on-going farm to school commitment has the potential to impact immediate wellness and food/farming knowledge that encourages life-long health habits and engagement in a just food system, impacting not just individual children but whole families' eating and buying choices.

**For schools**, farm to school can increase meal participation, multi-directional community engagement (families in schools and schools in local businesses), advancement of environmental and justice actions, and facilitation of career opportunities, resulting in improved educational performance and graduation.

**For farmers and local businesses**, farm to school commitments can add to farmers' and other food-related businesses' diversified, stable market base as well as increase community exposure and engagement.

**For whole communities**, farm to school is part of building a value-based local food economy that keeps local dollars circulating locally, while also nurturing a culture that values food and farming, individual and community health, and economic resilience.

### Benefits of Farm to School



Economic  
Development



Public  
Health



Education



Environment



Community  
Education

graphic from the [National Farm to School Network](#)

### Actions to Build Capacity in Farm to School

#### BUILDING FARM TO SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

Creating or increasing the visibility and extent of school gardens and outdoor learning spaces, including:

- Gardens and permanent growing spaces that focus on growing food and pollinators for educational purposes.
- Outdoor classroom spaces to encourage opportunities for emersion in garden spaces.
- Campus art and signage that promote farm to school culture.

Upfitting cafes and kitchens to enhance the engagement and promotion of farm to school, so that:

- School cafes promote local farms and farmers, engage students in school meals and farm to school, , involve students in reducing food waste, and invite students to choose fresh and seasonal options.
- Kitchens promote local food, provide equipment to facilitate using fresh local foods, and support professional development training for staff around seasonal, local food preparation.



### **INCORPORATING FARM TO SCHOOL LANGUAGE IN WELLNESS POLICIES**

*Farm to school can be incorporated into wellness policy goals for nutrition education, nutrition promotion and other activities to support student and staff wellness.*

#### ***Steps to Integrating farm to school language into School Wellness Policies***

- 1. Find out the current district status in developing, implementing or evaluating a school wellness policy and whether farm to school (f2s) has been included. The Superintendent or a designated LEA official will have oversight for the Local Wellness Policy (LWP), know what is included in the policy, and what progress has been made regarding implementation. Also seek to involve other farm to school champions in your community.*
- 2. Write new farm to school language that fits the needs and interests of your school district. Keep in mind that Local Wellness Policies must include certain required elements. Use language and cite resources to build a strong case for why including or adding Farm to School language is important. If farm to school is not addressed directly in the Local Wellness Policy, you can include f2s specifics in the LWP Action Plan.*
- 3. Present an updated version to your school board for adoption and potentially bring community partners who are advocates of local food and farming to help support this effort.*
- 4. Celebrate approved language including farm to school. Always celebrate wins—it is part of spreading the word and will draw new champions to your efforts.*
- 5. Effective policy depends on implementation. Develop an evaluation plan that measures the components of f2s programming so you can adjust as needed and identify successes. Join the group that evaluates its implementation. If there isn't a group, help bring together your SHAC (School Health Advisory Council), convening stakeholders including school administrators, School Nutrition staff, teachers, families, students, agricultural professionals, and invested community partners.*
- 6. Share out your plan with other LEAs to encourage collective learning and again celebrate on an even broader scale advances in farm to school.*

### **ENGAGING LOCAL FOOD POLICY COUNCILS IN FARM TO SCHOOL**

Local Food Policy Councils (LFPC) are stakeholders who come together to examine how the local food system operates and provide recommendations to improve that system. More than 35 food councils now exist across North Carolina covering 40 of the 100 counties. More information about NC LFPCs can be found at <https://communityfoodstrategies.org/what/network/members/>.

Like SHACs, LFPCs convene partners who might be strong allies to farm to school efforts and can link farm to school opportunities/needs more broadly to farms, distributors, food processing businesses, and other local food system efforts, ensuring that schools become integral players in vibrant, resilient local food systems.

### **STRENGTHENING COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS AROUND FARM TO SCHOOL**

Consider new partnerships or expand the ones you have. It takes a village.



- North Carolina Cooperative Extension
- North Carolina Department of Agriculture
- N.C. Department of Public Instruction
- ASAP Growing Minds
- FoodCorps NC
- Farm to School Coalition of NC
- National Farm to School Network
- USDA

## Additional Resources

### SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY RESOURCES

- Local Wellness Policy approaches and resources for School Wellness Policies: *The National Farm to School Network's resource page has sites and sample language meant to offer assistance in creating healthier school food environments.* <http://www.farmtoschool.org/policy>
- Louisiana Fit Kids School Wellness: *This page on the Louisiana Fit Kids side contains information and resources regarding comprehensive school wellness policies.* <https://www.louisianafitkids.com/FarmToSchool/ModelLanguage>
- School Garden Wellness Policy Tool: *This is a sample language to incorporate school gardens into school wellness policies.* <https://cdnlfk.pbrc.edu/pdfs/farm/building-sustainability/school-garden-wellness-policy-tool.pdf>

### PARTNER RESOURCES

- The Farm to School Coalition of North Carolina, (<https://www.farmtoschoolcoalitionnc.org/>) brings together state agencies and not for profit leaders to work collectively on advancing farm to school in NC. See the website for more information. To join the listserv or talk to us about programming, contact Arneisha Smallwood, [ansmallw@ncsu.edu](mailto:ansmallw@ncsu.edu), or Tracey Bates, [tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov).
- The National Farm to School Network ([www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)) provides training and technical assistance, information services, networking, and support for policy, media and marketing activities to state partners. Contact our North Carolina Core Partner, Tes Thraves at [tes\\_thraves@ncsu.edu](mailto:tes_thraves@ncsu.edu) for information.
- The USDA FNS Farm to School Program, (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-school-resources>) provides state-level data on F2S programs, a grants program, as well as technical training and resources for local food purchasing and F2S activities.