



## How Can You Get Involved in Farm to School?

### **BE INCLUSIVE!**

A successful farm to school program involves a wide range of people and organizations – students, parents, school principals, board members and administrators, school food service staff, teachers, PTA, community members, farmers and farmer organizations. The projects may be initiated by any of these stakeholders, but it is important to be as inclusive as possible in the project, as each one of these groups / individuals brings a unique set of ideas, skills and resources to the program. Students, parents and community groups can help provide resources and volunteer time and effort; school staff and administration help find ways to implement the program; farmers and farm groups can contribute time to conduct classroom sessions and farm visits, in addition to supplying the fresh produce needs of the school. You can get involved by finding existing programs in your area, or begin the process of starting a new one.

### **TIPS FOR STARTING A FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM:**

1. Start organizing by bringing folks together for a meeting, or start smaller with an inspirational activity, such as arranging a farm tour, or a tree planting on campus, to generate interest.
2. Research existing programs in your area. Contact your state farm to school contact person (see [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)), local school district, farm bureau and community groups for information.
3. Contact local farms, farmers' market managers, farm bureaus, and any other agencies working with farmers in your area. Establish a seasonal availability list, if it is not available through these sources.
4. Contact the food service director and administrators in the local school district. Review existing menus and infrastructure in schools to facilitate inclusion of fresh, local produce in menus.
5. Facilitate dialogue between farmers and school food services staff to understand each others' needs better. A good relationship between these two stakeholders is important for the long-term stability and sustainability of the project.
6. Convene a Farm to School organizing meeting with all the stakeholders involved to assess the feasibility of the program in your area. We can provide a sample agenda, organizing tools, and survey materials.
7. Identify possible funding sources as you gather information about farming and school food service.
8. Market the program to parents, teachers, students and community members.
9. Volunteer time at the school to assist in implementing the program – this may involve setting up a school garden, waste recycling or composting program; transporting kids to a local farm; conducting a cooking demonstration or nutrition education class; creating brochures and marketing materials; making presentations to the school board; helping in the cafeteria; writing an article for the local paper; etc.

**PLAN, PLAN, PLAN:** Many projects run into problems because of lack of planning. Plan ahead and involve as many people and groups as possible.

**TAKE SMALL STEPS:** For example, pilot a program at one school and learn from that experience before expanding to more school sites. Start with a small group of farmers, or start with one or two products that need minimal preparation (apples and oranges).

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