

Farm to Early Care and Education Self-Assessment

PUBLISHED | OCTOBER 2021



Farm to early care and education (farm to ECE) is a set of activities that include purchasing and serving local foods, gardening (indoors or outdoors), and food and agriculture education activities.* Farm to ECE supports access to nutritious food for young children and their families, and engages families and communities in their food system. This self-assessment is designed to help you assess and document your ECE's current farm to ECE activities and identify goals for the future.

How To Complete the Assessment:

- This assessment should be completed by the team of staff that work on planning or doing farm to ECE at your site. This could include teachers, kitchen and nutrition staff, family engagement staff, and administrators/directors. For smaller centers or family child care homes, this could be just one or two individuals.
- As a group, the team reviews each item, marks the column that best describes where the ECE site currently is with the activity, and shares any comments.
- After reviewing current activities, the team identifies one area that they would like to work on and up to three goals they would like to work towards in that area.
- The team should agree to a date to do this assessment again to review their progress.

**To learn more about farm to ECE and to find resources for farm to ECE initiatives, visit the National Farm to School Network's Farm to Early Care and Education website: www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/early-care-and-education.*

Team Members Completing Assessment:



NATIONAL
FARM to SCHOOL
NETWORK



Date:

Buying and Serving Local Foods						
	Unable or Uninterested	Interested in Starting	Not Started Yet, but Planning to Start	In Process	Fully in place	Notes/Comments
Locally grown or raised foods are served in meals, snacks, and/or in farm to ECE activities (such as taste tests) one time per week or more.						
More than one type of local foods (e.g., fruit, vegetables, grains, dry beans or peas, dairy products, meat or other protein) are served as part of meals and snacks.						
We have relationships with and regularly (e.g. monthly, weekly, seasonally) buy from more than one local food source (a local farm, farmer's market, grocery coop, food hub, etc.).						
Producers of color are prioritized when buying food and/or for activities such as farmer visits.						
Menus and foods used in meals or activities reflect the cultural, religious, and family preferences of children and families served.						
Menus and foods used in meals or activities regularly (e.g., weekly, monthly) expose children to different food cultures in the region and community.						
We have a written policy related to prioritizing local, seasonal foods and culturally reflective menus and foods.						



Gardening Activities

	Unable or Uninterested	Interested in Starting	Not Started Yet, but Planning to Start	In Process	Fully in place	Notes/Comments
Children participate in indoor or outdoor gardening activities at least once a week in season.						
The program has a garden bed, in-ground garden, or container gardens.						
Children take field trips to other gardens growing vegetables, like a community or learning gardens.						
Gardening education is aligned to Early Learning Framework, Common Core or state-adopted content standards.						
Garden grown produce is used in taste tests, meals or snacks.						
A variety (7 or more) types of fruits and vegetables are grown in the garden, representing a variety of different colors, flavors, edible plant parts, and seasonality						
Garden activities and/or items grown in the garden reflect the cultural, religious, and family preferences and foodways of families served.						
Garden activities utilize trauma-informed practices and approaches.						



Food, Nutrition and Agriculture Education

	Unable or Uninterested	Interested in Starting	Not Started Yet, but Planning to Start	In Process	Fully in place	Notes/Comments
Food education is provided to all children at least once a week (e.g food-related books, cooking activities, food and nutrition curriculum).						
Food education is aligned to Early Learning Framework, Common Core or state-adopted content standards.						
Farm to ECE tools and curricula are intentionally trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and/or culturally relevant.						
Food education is regularly (e.g., weekly, monthly) a part of children's sensory development, language, science, math, and/or dramatic play activities.						
Children are taught about where food comes from and how it is grown.						
Children learn about food through both formal opportunities (e.g. circle time) and informal opportunities (e.g. mealtime conversation).						
Children regularly learn about food and foodways that reflect the cultures, ethnicities, and religions of their region, community, or their own family.						
Children regularly (e.g., weekly, monthly) have the opportunity to learn about food through sensory experiences (e.g., taste, smell, and texture of foods).						
Hands-on learning is included in nutrition education such as taste tests, cooking demonstrations, and/or field trips to farms or other sites (orchards, nurseries).						
We have a written policy regarding culturally reflective food and nutrition education.						



Family, Staff, and Community Opportunities

	Unable or Uninterested	Interested in Starting	Not Started Yet, but Planning to Start	In Process	Fully in place	Notes/Comments
Families are provided educational materials and/or information about farm to ECE activities at least once a month (e.g newsletters, flyers, recipes, or at-home activities).						
Families are encouraged to participate in farm to ECE activities such as gardening, cooking classes, family meals, taste tests, field trips, etc.						
Families are in leadership and decision making roles in farm to ECE initiatives and activities.						
Families and community members have greater access to local foods because of farm to ECE (e.g., extra food from gardens or farmers given to families, coupons given and redeemed from farmers' markets, farm stands, etc.).						
All staff are engaged in professional development opportunities that enable them to lead or help with farm to ECE activities in their roles.						
Professional development includes focus on racial equity in farm to ECE.						
Kitchen staff have paid training opportunities related to using fresh, local, and seasonal ingredients.						
The community is involved in farm to ECE activities with community volunteers, providing food, equipment donations, guest speakers, and/or field trips.						
We have a written policy regarding family engagement and leadership.						
We have a written policy regarding culturally reflective food and nutrition education.						



Work Plan

Step 1

What area do you want to focus on?

☐

Buying and Serving Local Foods

☐

Food, Nutrition, and Agriculture Education

☐

Gardening Activities

☐

Family, Staff, and Community Opportunities

Step 2

Write down up to 3 goals that contain a **what** and **when** that address your above focus area (for example: we will incorporate **2 classroom activities per week** for the **rest of the year**).

Goal 1: We will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

Goal 2: We will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

Goal 3: We will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

Step 3

Break your goal into as many small steps as you need, making sure they contain a specific **what**, **when** and **who**.

Goal 1: _____

_____ (who) will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

_____ (who) will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

_____ (who) will _____ (what) by _____ (when)



Goal 2: _____

_____ (who) will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

_____ (who) will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

_____ (who) will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

Goal 3: _____

_____ (who) will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

_____ (who) will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

_____ (who) will _____ (what) by _____ (when)

Step 4

Determine what resources you will need to take action. Consider:

- Funding
- Space available for cooking and/or farm to ECE activities
- Supplies (kitchen equipment, gardening tools, books, etc)
- Support from teachers, cooks, families, and/or volunteers
- Lesson plans, curriculum, educational materials

Resources Needed:



NATIONAL
FARM to SCHOOL
NETWORK



Potential Barriers to Address:

Notes:

Date to re-assess progress:

The National Farm to School Network (NFSN) appreciates the technical assistance and financial support provided to us by the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN), as a part of the ASPHN 2020-21 Farm to ECE Implementation Grant (FIG). The FIG is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of cooperative agreement number NU38OT000279-03. The FIG, along with many other projects, is funded through this cooperative agreement that totals \$4,370,000. Seventy five percent of this resource is funded by the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity/National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion/CDC/HHS. The contents of this resource are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by DNPAO/NCCDPPH/CDC/HHS, or the U.S.

Additional support for NFSN's farm to early care and education work is generously provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

farmtoschool.org  [@farmtoschool](https://twitter.com/farmtoschool)  [NationalFarmtoSchoolNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/NationalFarmtoSchoolNetwork)  [@farmtoschool](https://www.instagram.com/farmtoschool)  [national-farm-to-school-network](https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-farm-to-school-network) info@farmtoschool.org

asphn.org  [@asphn](https://twitter.com/asphn)  [asphn](https://www.facebook.com/asphn)  [association-of-public-health-nutritionists](https://www.linkedin.com/company/association-of-public-health-nutritionists)