



WISCONSIN SCHOOL NUTRITION IN A NUTSHELL

How to Get Started with Farm to School

What is Farm to School?

Farm to School (F2S) is a movement that promotes the use of locally and regionally grown foods in schools and teaches students where their food comes from. There are three core elements of F2S: **local procurement, education, and school gardens**. Schools do not need to sign-up to participate in F2S, and every school can participate in their own capacity. The goals of F2S are to improve children's access to fresh, minimally processed foods, strengthen children's and communities' knowledge about agriculture, food, and nutrition, and strengthen local economies by expanding farmers' access to local markets.

Sample F2S Activities – involve students!

Local procurement: serve local foods in school meals, conduct a local food taste test, participate in a local foods event (i.e., [Great Apple Crunch](#), [Wisconsin Chili Lunch](#) or [Cucumber Crunch](#)). *There is no single definition for the word "local," each school defines what local means to them.*

Education: incorporate nutrition, agricultural, or culinary education into curricula, utilize [Harvest of the Month](#) educational resources, invite a farmer to visit or take students on a field trip to a farm.

School Gardens: build or expand a [school garden](#), incorporate school garden education, compost, participate in [Wisconsin School Garden Day](#).

Getting Started

Build Partnerships (the F2S Task Force)

Strong partnerships are critical to successful F2S programs. Not only do partnerships increase manpower and skillset, but a team of people invested in F2S helps ensure that if one key member leaves, the program continues. Partners may include:

- School staff – school nutrition department, administrators, teachers (agricultural, science, environmental, Family and Consumer Science, Tech Ed), educational assistants, special education classes, facilities, anyone with a passion for gardening or local food!
- Student clubs – sustainability, environmental, wellness-related
- FFA – current and alumni
- Student Agricultural Experience (SAE)
- Parents/grandparents/caregivers
- Local farmers and producers
- Non-profit organizations
- Culinary/foodservice professionals (i.e., restaurants, grocery stores, Culinary Arts)
- Master Gardener
- Local businesses (i.e., hardware store)

- Churches, hospitals
- [AmeriCorps F2S Program](#)

Start Small

Starting a F2S initiative is exciting, and it is tempting to take on everything at once. However, schools find the greatest success starting small and building on their F2S work as manpower and buy-in increase. Consider identifying one or two projects to start. Sample projects include:

- Examine the monthly menu and identify easy swaps for local products based on the season. Apples tend to be a great place to start; swap a conventionally grown apple for a local apple in the fall.
- Participate in a F2S event such as the [Great Apple Crunch](#), [Wisconsin Chili Lunch](#) or [Cucumber Crunch](#). Gain publicity and have fun by collectively enjoying local food together!
- Plant a windowsill garden or purchase a hydroponic grow tower. Establish a team to care for the plants prior to starting.
- Examine curricula and teaching standards for opportunities to connect lesson plans to nutrition and agriculture.
- Plan a meal featuring local products and invite the community to participate. This could serve as a fundraising opportunity for the F2S program.
- Schedule a field trip to a farm or ask a farmer to visit.

Funding

F2S projects may require funding and funding sources can include:

- Grants – View the [DPI School Nutrition Grant Opportunities](#) page for open grants.
- Donations – Parents/grandparents, local businesses, industry partners, etc. may be willing to provide donations of funds and/or supplies.
- Fundraisers
- School nutrition funds (Fund 50) – these may be used to purchase local foods specifically for the USDA Child Nutrition Programs or gardens supplies when produce from the garden is used in the meal programs.

Promotion

Always promote your F2S activities! Promotion helps with program buy-in, future funding, and gathering volunteers. Utilize [signage](#), [social media](#), notices on the school menu, newsletters and the school website. Taste tests for students and staff during the school day and for parents during parent/teacher conferences or parent nights are also successful.

Sustainability

Always keep in mind the future sustainability of any new F2S programming. Work to integrate activities into daily operations, gather a team of multiple people across departments, and build relationships to secure renewable funding sources.

Questions?

Contact DPIF2S@dpi.wi.gov with any questions. We would love to help you get started!