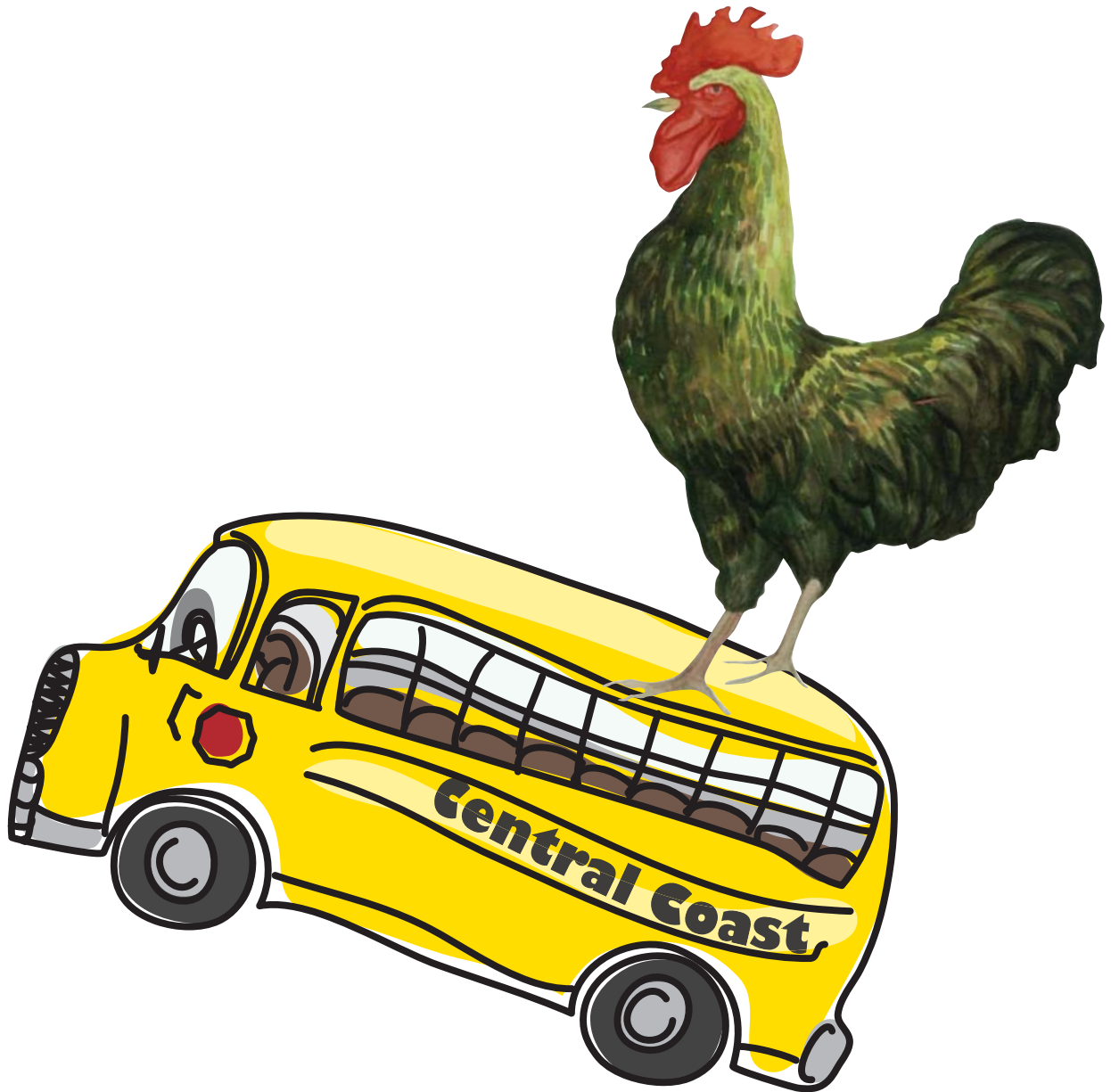


FARM *to* SCHOOL

FIELD GUIDE

FOR PARENTS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS

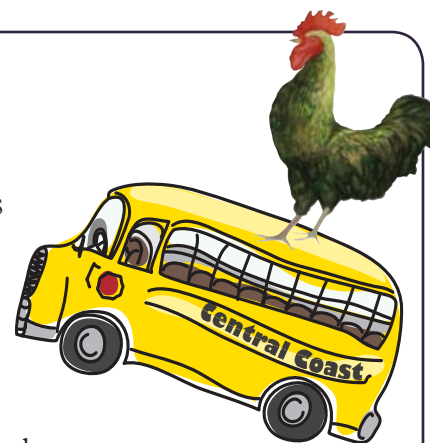


A publication of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers' *Farm-to-School Program* www.caff.org

WHAT IS FARM *to* SCHOOL?

Farm to School Programs connect farms with school cafeterias and classrooms. These programs can include everything from farm field trips to nutrition education in the school garden to farm-fresh salad bars. The programs come in all shapes and sizes, but they fall into two main categories: **Farm to School Education programs** and **Farm to School Produce Distribution programs**.

A comprehensive Farm to School program puts both elements together: Fresh, locally-grown produce appears on the school menu, while students learn about local agriculture. Farm to School programs are sprouting up across the country!



HOW CAN PARENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE FARM *to* SCHOOL MOVEMENT?

Parents have two roles to play in making farm to school happen:

1) **Support and encourage food and farming instruction.**

Whether they are in the classroom, school garden or out at a local farm, Farm to School lessons can teach to state standards while engaging students with agriculture and fresh foods. As a parent, you can encourage teachers and administrators to identify these opportunities, or take an active role in identifying and volunteering to help to implement them.

2) **Advocate for fresh foods in the cafeteria and at school.**

You can get involved in making changes in your school district's lunch program. Across the country, districts are connecting with local farms to serve fresh produce. District-level Wellness Committees provide an opportunity for parents to participate in discussions about school food.

Check out these website for more information about Farm to School:

Community Alliance with Family Farmers—www.caff.org

National Farm to School—www.farmtoschool.org

California Farm to School—www.cafarmtoschool.org

Sound like a lot to organize? Don't be overwhelmed! The strongest Farm to School programs start small and grow like pumpkin plants, extending vines in many directions and producing fruit that slowly ripens! If you're inspired to plant the seeds of a Farm to School program, start with a manageable project and have fun.



STEP ONE: PLANTING THE PROGRAM

Figuring out what you need to get started

The single biggest piece of advice we can give you is to build a Farm to School team. Farm to School programs have the potential to grow and effect changes that involve a lot of people, from students to teachers to custodians to parents. To create a sustainable project, you'll need to invite participation (and help!) from a diverse group of school staff and community members.

Some schools have formed School Nutrition Action Councils (SNACs) as one way to bring teachers, parents and staff together to talk about Farm to School at their site. SNACs have taken on projects ranging from serving healthy meals at school events, to planning farm-focused school assemblies, to coordinating parent garden workdays. And, SNAC efforts can help implement the federally mandated School Wellness Policy (every district has one!).

While you may not be able to recruit all of these team members right off the bat, an ideal Farm to School Team includes:

Parents and community members
School administrators
School food service

Teachers
School board members
Students

You'll also want to pull in farmers as well as community organizations and agencies, when their advice and help is needed.

TIPS FOR BRINGING FARM TO SCHOOL EDUCATION INTO THE CLASSROOM:



Whether you're helping conduct a Farm to School education program, or just encouraging your student's class or school to participate in one, the following advice will help make choices about your program.

1) Under the pressures of testing and performance standards enforced by the No Child Left Behind Act, class time is often highly regulated. As a parent, it is important to recognize that teachers and administrators working under this system have to follow very strict guidelines, regulating lesson time down to the minute. To successfully incorporate food education into the school day, build an alliance with school faculty and staff and find out the best place and time to conduct these lessons. Oftentimes, lunchtime or after school are ideal, since there are far fewer pressures on those slots of time.

2) Weave Farm to School into existing lessons. Tie food and farming topics to curriculum standards: cooking lessons make great math lessons, gardens are great places to learn new vocabulary, and nutrition lessons are key to teaching the new California state health standards.

3) Use existing resources. There are many fun, engaging agricultural education resources. We've listed a few websites here that are good places to start your search for lessons:

California School Garden Network—www.csgn.org (Check out their “curriculum” page!)

National Farm to School Program—www.farmentoschool.org

California Farm to School Program—www.cafarmentoschool.org

Harvest of the Month—www.harvestofthemonth.com

California Foundation for Ag in the Classroom—www.cfaitc.org

UC Cooperative Extension—cemonterey.ucdavis.edu

Life Lab Science Program—www.lifelab.org

The Food Project—www.thefoodproject.org

For tips on planning farm field trips, visit CAFF's website at www.caff.org

SPOTLIGHT ON HARVEST OF THE MONTH:



One simple way to introduce food and farming lessons to kids is through a Harvest of the Month program. CAFF offers Harvest of the Month Tasting Kits that feature a fresh, local fruit or vegetable each month—and include suggestions for easy classroom activities, recipes, and a parent newsletter. Contact farmtoschool@caff.org for more information.

4) **Make sure you let your administrators know the good, innovative work you're doing.**

Administrative support for garden projects and farm field trips can really help maintain Farm to School programs!

5) **Reach out to your school staff!** Farm field trips, school gardens, and even cooking projects are often more effective if you have a team of classes participating. If you're taking a trip on a school bus, for example, you'll probably want to fill it with 2 classes. If you're maintaining a school garden, multiple teachers and groups of parents can share the responsibility. An activated team of parents and teachers can really change the school food environment!

6) **Some parts of Farm to School education are free, but some elements require money.** Here are some great places to start researching funding opportunities:

California School Garden Network—www.csgn.org

Network for a Healthy California—www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS

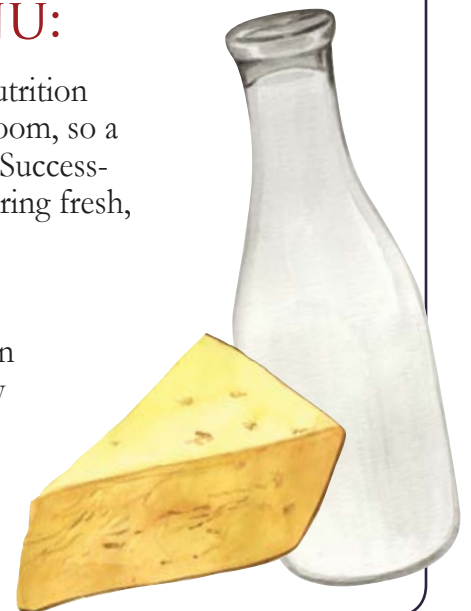
National Garden Association Youth Garden Grants—www.assoc.garden.org/grants

Your Local PTA/PTO—parent groups are often willing to sponsor Farm to School type programs.

TIPS FOR BRINGING FRESH, LOCAL FOOD INTO THE SCHOOL MENU:

1) **Meet with your food service director!** The director of the Child Nutrition Services program makes the decisions about what ends up in the lunchroom, so a meeting with them can provide insight into your school lunch program. Successful Farm to School programs work hand in hand with food services to bring fresh, local produce to school!

2) **Your district has a School Wellness Policy—use it!** All schools receiving federal money for school lunch have a policy supporting nutrition education, physical activity, and healthy school meals. You can get a copy of this policy and get involved in the School Wellness Policy Committee to become an informed advocate for a healthy school. The policy may be posted on the district website, if not, call the district office to get a copy.



3) Bring your farm education program to the cafeteria. Students who have learned about local foods (or different fruits and vegetables) and can recognize them are much more likely to eat them in the cafeteria. Think about labeling the locally grown foods in the cafeteria.



STEP TWO: GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM:

Once you've got a Farm to School program planned and planted, here are some suggestions to help your program take off:

- 1) Continue communicating with the food service director.** Whether this is through participation in the Wellness Committee or other meetings, make sure you're in regular touch with food services. It can also be helpful to act as a liaison between food services and the parent community: communicating your successes is key building on them!
- 2) Offer to volunteer to support changes.** Parent volunteer efforts are critical in the classroom as well the cafeteria. In the cafeteria, parents can make changes a lot easier by volunteering to help bring local food to the cafeteria. For example, parents have acted as salad bar monitors for the first month of a new salad bar program, guiding students through the salad bar until they learned how the new bar worked. Parent donations have also provided food service with the necessary equipment to provide fresh, local foods. Another powerful way to support positive food service changes is to organize parents to eat lunch with their kids. This is a good way to get parents engaged with school food issues and to encourage students to taste new cafeteria offerings.

Other ways to support educational programs include parent workdays in the school garden, PTA sponsorship of Harvest of the Month produce boxes, parent coordination of farm field trips (often in conjunction with educational farms or community farm to school programs), and many other creative projects. Throwing lunchtime or garden celebrations that highlight changes and recognize people for their hard work can be key to keeping up momentum in your Farm to School team.

Still looking for help, advice, or resources? Just ask our **Central Coast Farm to School Champions**.

Local organizations that specialize in this stuff:

Community Alliance with Family Farmers

Ildi Carlisle-Cummins
Farm to School Director
831-761-8507
farmentoschool@caff.org
www.caff.org

Kathryn Spencer
Farm to School Program Program Coordinator
831-582-5115
kathryn@caff.org
www.caff.org

Some of the most valuable advice could come from other parents and community members. Contact us to join our group of Parent Champions who've worked on these issues!

STEP THREE: REAPING THE REWARDS

Recording and Celebrating your Successes!

1) **Record successes.** Take photos of students on the farm or in the garden and share them with your school administrators and board; ask your students before and after the program about their knowledge of local foods and farming; survey students to see if they eat more fruits and vegetables in the cafeteria or at home. Healthy minds need healthy foods: track changes in your students' scholastic performance and behavior as they learn to enjoy fruits and vegetables.

2) **Share your ideas, resources and results.** Present your Farm to School work with your School Wellness Committee, PTA, School Board, and even the local media. Don't be shy—everyone likes to see smiling students eating healthy fresh foods!

3) **Stay in touch with local and regional efforts to promote Farm to School Programs.** Together we can spread the Farm to School Movement across the coast, state and country! Contact Ildi Carlisle-Cummins, Farm to School Director for Community Alliance with Family Farmers at 831-761-8507 or farmtoschool@caff.org to stay connected.



THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN TALKING WITH YOUR FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR:

- Your director may be very busy getting school meals together, but directors rarely hear from the students and teachers they serve. This is an opportunity—make sure that you come to the meeting prepared with suggestions, comments and a positive attitude.
- Your food service director is working hard to produce meals that meet many sets of requirements. School food is very regulated—learn about the restrictions and challenges to putting school lunch on the table.
- Once you've informed yourself about the challenges of school lunch, work with your director to start a small project incorporating local produce on the menu. Some districts have started with one local item per month (hand-held fruits are easy to put on the menu) or switching sourcing of an item to a local farm (e.g. Washington apples are traded for locally-grown apples).
- Start small! The best Farm to School programs begin with small changes and build into district-wide successes.
- After you've built a relationship with your food service director, you may want to share some resources that offer advice for food services when buying local produce.

A few good ones:

Glynwood Center's "A Guide to Serving Local Food On Your Menu"—

www.glynwood.org

Rethinking School Lunch—

www.centerforecoliteracy.org



WHAT'S IN SEASON?



	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Apples												
Apricots												
Artichokes												
Asparagus												
Asian Pears												
Broccoli												
Cabbage												
Carrots												
Cauliflower												
Cherries												
Celery												
Corn												
Cucumber												
Kale												
Kiwi												
Lettuces												
Mandrins												
Nectarines												
Oranges												
Peaches												
Peas												
Persimmons												
Radish												
Strawberries												
Tangerines												
Tomatoes												

Community Alliance with Family Farmers is building a movement of rural and urban people to foster family-scale agriculture that cares for the land, sustains local economies, and promotes social justice.

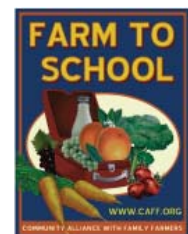


COMMUNITY ALLIANCE WITH FAMILY FARMERS

The **Farm to School Program** is part of CAFF's Community Food Systems Program. The Community Food Systems Program also includes the **Buy Fresh Buy Local** Campaign, which helps consumers find and choose local products while building relationships between growers, food artisans, farmers' markets retailers, restaurants, and institutions. CAFF's **Farm to Institution** Program connects institutions with local foods.



CAFF also operates the **Growers' Collaborative**, a produce distribution company that sells product from family farms to schools, colleges, hospitals, corporate cafeterias and other institutions.



CAFF works across the state, with offices in Davis, Watsonville, Oakland, Ventura, Humboldt, and Fresno. For more information about CAFF's programs please visit www.caff.org.

FARM *to* SCHOOL CONTACTS:

Who you need to get on your team
and how to contact them.....



District Food Service Director

Name:

Contact:

District Wellness Policy Coordinator

Name:

Contact:

School Garden Coordinators

Names:

Contact:

Champion Teachers

Names/Grades:

Contact:

PTA/PTO Allies

Name:

Contact:

Other Fired Up Parents and Community Members

Name:

Contact:

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