



# FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

## Nourishing and educating children 0-5 in the garden, at the table, and in the classroom

Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) programs connect early childhood professionals to local food producers and community partners with the goals of serving culturally relevant, Oregon-produced foods to young children. Farm to ECE also provides hands-on experiences with food, gardening, and agriculture and aims to improve child nutrition.

Also known as farm to preschool or farm to child care, farm to ECE enhances the quality of education in all types of ECE settings, including regulated subsidy exempt child care providers, Registered Family (RF) and Certified Family (CF) child care, tribal programs, child care subsidy programs, and K-12 school districts.

*Top Photo: The Farm to ECE Advisory Committee, photo by Jason Hill; at right: Children's Farmers Market at Adelante Mujeres*

### POSITIVE IMPACT

Most children (74%), families (66%), and ECE staff (54%) reported positive feedback on farm to ECE activities.

*From the 2021 National Farm to ECE Survey*



**Meet the Farm to ECE Advisory Committee**



# Meet The Farm To ECE Advisors

Founded in 2021, the Farm to ECE Advisory Committee brings early care and education professionals together. Members of the advisory committee are inspiring advocates for systems change at the intersections of food and early childhood. They are fully committed to improving the lives of communities in holistic ways that honor the culture, diverse needs, and aspirations of children in their care. They lovingly encourage the continued support of their work and hope to inspire others to join them in it. The advisors can be reached at [Farm2ECE@ecotrust.org](mailto:Farm2ECE@ecotrust.org).



## ALESIA HIGGINS

**Early Head Start Education Training and Development Coordinator/CDA Advisor, Albina Head Start, Inc.**

*It's my job as the teacher to introduce new things to the kids, but I never thought about how that affected the adults. I was like 'Oh okay, my own little light bulb moment!' How can I incorporate the teaching staff that I'm working with, making sure that I'm building them up as well?*

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## FRANCIA YERA

**Child Nutrition Coordinator, Adelante Mujeres**

*The kids get to ask questions to the parents about the food they're consuming. And even parents get to see and get to know more of their child. They're getting to know each other in a different way, thanks to food. That probably gets overlooked sometimes, because we have the assumption that children eat chicken nuggets all the time.*



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## GABRIELA BIZARI

**Bilingual Instructional Coach, Preschool For All, Multnomah Co.**

*Eating is not just checking a box. It's one of the most important moments in the classroom, where you can build connection with this, with the kids... I think we need to remind people to look back inside, find those connections. And see that it's possible to do it with kids as well.*





## LUPE YUNDT

ECE Quality and Compliance Coordinator, Adelante Mujeres

*I think one thing has been having schools understand the importance of having nutritious meals that also taste good and that are culturally relevant... It was really cool to see the kids eating posole for lunch or just some of those things that they eat at home.*



## MINA SMITH

Early Learning Senior Manager, Early Learning Multnomah Hub · United Way of Columbia-Willamette

*Food has always been one of my focuses. Food affects how children grow and how children view themselves. So that's always been with me. ...As the education funds get cut year after year, the food the children eat becomes less and less nutritious and less and less diverse, and that was my major concern.*



## NATALIE GORDON

Early Childhood Education Specialist: Infant Toddler Network Coordinator · Child Care Resource and Referral of Multnomah County

*I see this work as critical stage-setting for future generations, as well as changing our own mindsets. Nothing has inspired that more than children just being curious. They bring such innocent curiosity that we as adults have really lost.*



## ROBERTA RECKEN

Retired, Former Site Manager at Mt. Hood Community College Head Start

*I'm gonna call this a movement, but it's growing, and it is more supportive... Money doesn't solve everything, but money helps. Changing people's minds. Look at the development of farmers markets in the last 10 or 15 years. I see more and more young children at farmers markets. All what we're doing is good, but we need to keep it going. I think a group effort is really what is needed.*



# Farm to ECE can shine in every Oregon classroom & home

Collectively, we recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. We value a diversity of approaches, starting small, and tailoring programs to fit the needs and assets of providers, children, families, and communities.



## LOCAL FOOD

**Local foods are purchased, promoted, and served**

Examples: Oregon apples are served as a snack or multiple varieties offered as part of a tasting activity; local tamales are served as part of a special “local lunch” event; local potatoes are roasted and served as part of a family-style meal; families are invited to a pop-up farmers market at the ECE site



## GARDENS

**Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening —indoors or outdoors**

Examples: Children sprout seeds in the classroom; harvest herbs from a container or on-site garden outside; observe insects or other animals in the garden; taste a variety of edible plant parts (e.g. stem, flower, leaf, root)



## EDUCATION

**Students participate in activities related to food, agriculture, health, or nutrition**

Examples: Children sing songs about planting seeds; read stories about farmers or food makers; explore “eating the rainbow”; use descriptive language to describe fruits and vegetables using multiple senses; use large recipe cards to follow while making food; a local farmer or food maker is a special guest in the classroom

The Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network, Ecotrust, the Oregon Department of Education, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and a network of regional nonprofits and ECE-support organizations are working together to make it easier for ECE sites to access, serve, and celebrate regionally sourced and culturally relevant foods. Learn more at [ecotrust.org / farm-to-early-care-and-education](https://ecotrust.org/farm-to-early-care-and-education).

Regional Hub Coordinators provide technical assistance, resources, and networking opportunities that are place-based and community-specific while connecting to statewide farm to ECE efforts.

**Connect with  
your Farm to  
School & ECE  
regional hub:**

[oregonfarmtoschool.org/  
regional-hubs](https://oregonfarmtoschool.org/regional-hubs)