



# Growing with Farm to Early Care & Education in Oregon

**Tools & resources for early care and education providers, specialists, and support organizations to increase local food procurement, gardens, and nutrition education in early childhood settings.**



*Farm to early and education (ECE) works to connect early childhood education settings to local food producers so that they can serve culturally relevant and locally produced foods to young children (ages 0-5), while providing related experiential education, opportunities for family engagement, and improving child nutrition. Farm to ECE is part of the broader farm to school movement in Oregon and across the U.S.*

*In this document, we share an overview of farm to ECE, Oregon-specific support, and a curated list of resources.*

*For additional support, reach out to us at **Farm2ECE@ecotrust.org***

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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:

- **Preschools and recorded preschool programs**
- **Regulated subsidy exempt child care providers**
- **Certified Child Care Centers (CC)**
- **Registered Family (RF) and Certified Family (CF) child cares**
- **Head Start, Early Head Start, Preschool Promise, Baby Promise, and other child care subsidy programs**
- **Programs in K-12 districts**

Implementation of farm to ECE varies by site and goals and may include one or more of these elements:

### **Local food sourcing/procurement**

Local foods are purchased, promoted, and served in meals, snacks, or tasting

*Examples: Oregon apples are served as a snack or multiple varieties are 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*

### **Gardens**

Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening indoors and/or outdoors

*Examples: Students sprout seeds in plastic bags taped to the window; harvest herbs from a container or on-site garden outside; observe insects or other animals in the garden*

### **Food and agricultural education**

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

*Examples: Students 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*

## Farm to ECE aligns with the ECE community's priorities and goals:

- enhances and integrates with existing programming and educational experiences
- provides opportunities for family and community engagement
- connects to learning standards
- increases health and wellness
- supports an inclusive learning environment that benefits all children

## Benefits

We understand that early childhood is a key period to establish healthy eating habits when taste preferences are still forming.

### Children win:

- exposure to and increased consumption of more varieties of fruits and vegetables
- increased knowledge of gardening, agriculture, and nutrition
- greater willingness to try new things
- offers opportunities for hands-on, experiential learning

### Communities win:

- increased market opportunities for local food producers
- engagement opportunities for families related to food, agriculture, and nutrition

**Cultural relevancy** means cultivating a learning environment that reflects and celebrates the language and culture of children and families served by your child care program. Culturally relevant practices create environments of inclusion and support social and emotional development of all children in your care.

*Students feel valued and welcome when they are able to see themselves reflected through school food and educational activities.*

Because culture and food are strongly linked, farm to ECE provides opportunities for cultural relevancy by:

- tapping into the cultural and agricultural wisdom of the community served
- providing children with opportunities to learn about foods from multiple cultures—their own and others
- sourcing from producers and food entrepreneurs who are Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color



## Racial Equity

Racial inequities are a reality of the food system within which we work. Food system inequities affect health, wellness, and educational outcomes, in addition to being interlinked with environmental and economic disparities that Black, Indigenous, and communities of color are more likely than white communities to experience. Farm to ECE programs rooted in equity can contribute to growing and cultivating a more fair and just food system for all. Racial equity is a vital issue across the food system and urgently needed where food systems most directly impact children.

When we talk about farm to school and farm to ECE, we are talking about opportunities to nourish children AND communities with food. We are talking about reimagining the food system, moving it toward equity and justice at every point.

## Farm to ECE in Oregon

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. 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.

Connect with your farm to school and ECE regional hub:

<https://oregonfarmtoschool.org/regional-hubs/>

## Local food sourcing and procurement

Local foods are purchased, promoted, and served in meals, snacks, or tasting.

Ideas for incorporating local foods:

- **Start small and seasonal.**
- **Swap in something local for one or two items that are already in rotation.**
- **Create predictable and regular routines to practice trying new foods.**
- **Start with items that can be used whole or easily cut or that require little preparation.**
- **Use in meals, snacks, and activities.**
- **The “farm” in farm to ECE doesn’t only mean fresh whole fruits or sliced vegetables! Sometimes it’s locally made tamales or BBQ sauces, yakisoba noodles created with Oregon grain, dried blueberries, frozen ground beef, or Oregon strawberries turned into a smoothie with local yogurt.**

- **Also, note the “farm” in farm to ECE may not resonate with everyone, and some sites may be doing elements of farm to ECE, without calling it that. For example, ECE in tribal communities may already incorporate local, traditional foods without identifying with the word “farm.”**

Where to get local foods:

- **farmers markets**
- **local grocery store or food co-op**
- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs**
- **directly from a farmer or food producer**
- **U-pick**
- **food hub or distributor**
- **on-site gardens**

Find Oregon producers online with the Oregon Harvest for Schools Directory:

<https://directory.oregonharvestforschools.com/>

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) considers local food procurement in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) a best practice. Some CACFP centers are eligible for Oregon’s Farm to School Procurement Grant funds. Find out more: [www.bit.ly/orh4s](http://www.bit.ly/orh4s). See “Procurement Grant” for slides from the CACFP/SFSP webinar. Contact the ODE Farm to School Team via email at **FarmtoCNP@state.or.us**.

## Resources

### **Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems**

[Local Food for Little Eaters: A Purchasing Toolbox for the Child & Adult Care Food Program](#) (2017)

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/local-food-for-little-eaters>

[A Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Guide to Local Food Purchasing](#) (2018)

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/local-food-for-little-eaters-a-migrant-seasonal-head-start-guide-to-local-food-purchasing>

[Farm to Early Childhood Programs: A Step by Step Guide](#) (2015)

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/farm\\_to\\_early\\_childhood\\_guide](https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/farm_to_early_childhood_guide)

## National Farm to School Network

[www.farmentoschool.org](http://www.farmentoschool.org)

[Farm to ECE webpage](http://www.farmentoschool.org/ECE)

<http://www.farmentoschool.org/ECE>

[Benefits of Farm to School Fact Sheet](http://www.farmentoschool.org/Resources/BenefitsFactSheet.pdf) (2020)

<http://www.farmentoschool.org/Resources/BenefitsFactSheet.pdf>

Getting Started with Farm to ECE (2018) ([Spanish](http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources-main/introduccion-a-de-la-granja-al-pre-escolar): <http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources-main/introduccion-a-de-la-granja-al-pre-escolar>) ([English](http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources-main/getting-started-with-farm-to-early-care-and-education): <http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources-main/getting-started-with-farm-to-early-care-and-education>)

[Local procurement for child care centers](http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources-main/local-procurement-for-child-care-centers) (2016)

<http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources-main/local-procurement-for-child-care-centers>

[Local purchasing for family child care providers](http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources-main/local-purchasing-for-family-child-care-providers)

<http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources-main/local-purchasing-for-family-child-care-providers>

[National Farm to School Network Resource Database](http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources)

<http://www.farmentoschool.org/resources>

Archived webinars, including Indigenous Foods in Early Care and Education Settings Search by setting "preschool/early care"

## USDA Office of Community Food Systems

[Community Food Systems Fact Sheets](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/fact-sheets)

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/fact-sheets>

[Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in ECE Settings Fact Sheet](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-to-preschool)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-to-preschool>

[Farm to CACFP resource list](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-cacfp)

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-cacfp>

## Gardens

Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening indoors and/or outdoors and growing edible plants in various ECE environments:

- **outdoor gardens on site**
- **edible landscaping**
- **community garden plot**
- **container gardens**
- **windowsill gardening**
- **indoor grow labs/lights**



Some CACFP centers are eligible for Oregon's Farm to School Education Grant funds. Find out more: [www.bit.ly/orh4s](http://www.bit.ly/orh4s). See "FAQ" and "Grant Guidelines" under "Education Grant." Contact the ODE Farm to School Team via email at **FarmtoCNP@state.or.us**.

*Note: The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funds can be used to purchase items for gardens such as seeds, fertilizer, watering cans, rakes, and more, as long as the produce grown in the garden will be used as part of the reimbursable meal and for nutrition education activities.*

## Resources

### Local gardening expertise

[Growing Gardens: Virtual Garden Consulting](http://www.growing-gardens.org/virtual-garden-consultation/)

<http://www.growing-gardens.org/virtual-garden-consultation/>

[OSU Extension Master Gardeners](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg)

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg>

### Cornell Garden-Based Learning

[Organizing a Classroom Grow Station](https://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/lessons/activities/)

<https://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/lessons/activities/>

### USDA Office of Community Food Systems

[List of Community Food System Fact Sheets](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/fact-sheets)

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/fact-sheets>

[Gardens in Tribal Communities](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/gardens-tribal-communities) (2017)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/gardens-tribal-communities>

[School Gardens: Using Gardens to Grow Healthy Habits in Cafeterias, Classrooms, and Communities](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/school-gardens) (2017)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/school-gardens>

### USDA Team Nutrition: Grow it, Try it, Like it! Curriculum

Features guidance on tasting and more!

[For child care centers](https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it) (2013)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it>

[For family child care settings](https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-homes) (2019)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-homes>



## Natural Learning Initiative

[Growing Edibles in Containers](#) (2020)

<https://naturalearning.org/10-growing-edibles-in-containers>

[Gardening Activity Guide](#)

<https://naturalearning.org/gardening-series>

[Local Foods: Childcare Fruit & Vegetable Gardening Series](#)

<https://naturalearning.org/gardening-series>

## A Garden of Words/Un jardin de palabras, University of California Master Gardeners

[Spanish-English bilingual gardening dictionary for schools](#) (2013)

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/a-garden-of-words-un-jardin-de-palabras>

## Rodale Institute

[My First Garden, Head Start Healthy Start Curriculum](#)

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/myfirstgarden/>

Helps teachers integrate school gardens into their classroom curriculum. These five lessons each come with a video tutorial, activities, printable resources, books, crafts, and snacks to get all the senses involved in learning.

## Seed Resources

Kitazawa Seed Company—the oldest seed company in America specializing in Asian vegetable seeds: <https://www.kitazawaseed.com/>

List of Black-owned seed companies: <https://tequiaburt.com/2020/08/06/support-these-black-owned-seed-companies/>

## Food and agricultural education

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

- **cooking + food prep**
- **art + dramatic play**
- **sensory activities**
- **songs + stories**
- **care of the environment**
- **field trips + special visitors**
- **math, literacy, science + social studies**

Some CACFP centers are eligible for Oregon's Farm to School Education Grant funds. Find out more: [www.bit.ly/orh4s](http://www.bit.ly/orh4s). See "FAQ" and "Grant Guidelines" under "Education Grant." Contact the ODE Farm to School Team via email at **FarmtoCNP@state.or.us**.

## Harvest for Healthy Kids

<http://www.harvestforhealthykids.org>

Activity kits that connect young children with fresh food grown close to home

- **kits include activity plans, picture cards, recipes, family newsletter, and teacher newsletter**
- **developed and tested by teachers and childcare providers; aligned with early learning standards**
- **began as a collaboration between Portland State University and Mt. Hood Community College Head Start and Early Head Start**
- **resources available in Russian, Spanish, and English**

## Shelburne Farms

[Cultivating Joy & Wonder: Educating for Sustainability in Early Childhood Through Nature, Food, & Community](http://store.shelburnefarms.org/product/cultivatingjoy/education_resources)

[http://store.shelburnefarms.org/product/cultivatingjoy/education\\_resources](http://store.shelburnefarms.org/product/cultivatingjoy/education_resources)

\*\*available as a free download or for purchase\*\*

## National Farm to School Network

[Growing Head Start Success with Farm to Early Care & Education: Aligning Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Early Learning Outcomes Framework with Farm to Early Care and Education Opportunities](http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/growing-head-start-success-with-farm-to-early-care-and-education)

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/growing-head-start-success-with-farm-to-early-care-and-education>

[National Farm to School Network Resource Database](http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources)

[www.farmtoschool.org/resources](http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources)

Archived webinars, including Celebrating Cultural Diversity with Farm to ECE  
Search by setting "preschool/early care"

## National Black Child Development Institute

[Good for Me! Curriculum](https://www.nbcdi.org/what-we-do/health-and-wellness)

<https://www.nbcdi.org/what-we-do/health-and-wellness>

"The Good For Me! curriculum engages children three to five years old in healthy eating and physical activity by introducing them to a diverse range of fruits and vegetables, hands-on activities and active play. The ultimate goal is to improve children's nutrition and health outcomes by providing a research and evidence-based curriculum that connects to and is reflective of Black families, cultures and communities."

## Growing Minds

[Preschool Lesson Plans](https://growing-minds.org/preschool-lesson-plans/)

<https://growing-minds.org/preschool-lesson-plans/>

[Children's Literature Resource](https://growing-minds.org/childrens-literature/)

<https://growing-minds.org/childrens-literature/>

## Ready Set Grow

[Multicultural Collection of Farm to ECE Books](http://www.pareadysetgrow.org/book-list/)

<http://www.pareadysetgrow.org/book-list/>

## Video Resources:

A Safe Place Enrichment Center with Kim Shaw: <https://youtu.be/1YurSTzkEw8>

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

[Farm to Head Start Case Studies](https://www.iatp.org/farm-head-start-case-studies)

<https://www.iatp.org/farm-head-start-case-studies>

[Videos](#) (videos are indicated by this symbol: [Watch])

<https://www.iatp.org/farm-to-institution#farm-to-head-start>

Partnerships Yielding Healthy Food In Oregon Schools: Umi Organic, Camas Country

Mill, and Portland Public Schools: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsFYR9th7EY>

Land Witness Project | NM Climate Stories | Beata Tsosie-Peña | Santa Clara Pueblo, New

Mexico: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avqgbUAoJuM>

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The benefits of farm to ECE are many, as are the resources to incorporate the programming that works for your ECE setting. For more assistance, please contact **Farm2ECE@ecotrust.org**.