



Farm to School Tips

FOR FAMILY CHILDCARE PROVIDERS IN PORTLAND

What is farm to school?

The term “farm to school” generally refers to connecting schools or childcare providers and local farms, with the objectives of serving healthy meals to children, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers.

The preschool years represent a critical time in life for developing lifelong eating habits yet very few preschoolers meet all of the dietary recommendations.



Farm to school programs have the potential of making a long-lasting, profound impact on the health of preschoolers and decreasing their risk of obesity and other obesity-related chronic diseases. How? Farm to school and complementary food and garden-based education in childcare facilities influence children’s knowledge of and preferences for foods, their fruit and vegetable consumption, and the amount and types of calories they consume. Farm to school and garden programs in childcare settings represent a viable solution to the obesity epidemic and a tremendous opportunity to improve child wellness.

INSIDE:

- What is farm to school?** 1
- How to get started** 1
- Purchase local foods** 2
- Garden with preschoolers** 3
- Other resources** 3

How can I get started?

There is no one model for doing farm to school and programs may take many different forms. As family childcare providers there are many ways to incorporate the principles of farm to school programs into your setting. In the next two pages you will find some tips and ideas on how to get started. In general, remember to start small! Pick one local fruit or vegetable to try with your kids, take a field trip to a farm, or try sprouting some seeds on a windowsill.

Purchasing local foods and supporting local and regional farmers



Talk to your children about where the foods you serve them were grown

FoodHub is an online directory and marketplace for buyers and sellers of local foods: www.food-hub.org



Buying and serving more local foods for your children doesn't have to be expensive or time-consuming. In fact, buying local foods when they are in season ensures that they are fresh, and is often more affordable. Use these tips to help get you started:

1. When you purchase foods to serve to your children, consider purchasing products from your state or region whenever possible (local grocery stores or co-operatives generally identify where products come from). Talk to your children about where the foods you serve them were grown.
2. Take your kids on a field trip to a local farmer's market! Buy local foods, taste them, and encourage your kids to talk to the farmers and food producers about their products. Find a complete list of farmer's markets in the Portland Metro area here: <http://oregonfarmersmarkets.org/directory/directory.html#PM>
3. Join FoodHub (www.food-hub.org), a new online directory and marketplace for buyers and sellers of local foods. You can easily search for the local products you want to buy or find farms to visit with your kids. Contact FoodHub's School Services Specialist; Stacey Sobell, ssobell@ecotrust.org | 503-467-0751 with questions.
4. Start a buying cooperative with other family childcare providers to increase your purchasing power. Or join one that already exists, such as Portland Green Parenting: <http://www.portlandgreenparenting.com/>

Portland Green Parenting 



FARM TO SCHOOL TIPS

Gardening with Preschoolers



**Start small:
try planting
a few seeds
in a pot!**

Gardening with kids doesn't have to be complicated or time-consuming. Gardens are a great way to get kids outside and provide opportunities for physical activity and learning. Use these tips to help get you started:

1. Build a fruit and vegetable garden at your residence or simply sprout some seeds on a windowsill. Some excellent resources for getting started include:
 - National Gardening Association's Kids Gardening webpage: <http://www.kidsgardening.com/>
 - School Garden Wizard: www.schoolgardenwizard.org

2. Some great resources for gardening with preschoolers include:
 - *Growing Minds Farm to School Program* (free)
A program of the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, the lesson plan webpage includes many activities for preschoolers: <http://growing-minds.org/gradelevel.php>.
There is also a great list of storybooks for preschoolers: <http://growing-minds.org/prekbooks.php>.
 - *Early Sprouts: Gardening and Nutrition for Young Children* (for purchase)
This program (<http://www.earllysprouts.org/>) addresses young children's inherent fear of new foods through multiple exposures to target fruits and vegetables. The model engages preschoolers in all aspects of planting, preparing, and eating organically grown produce. The *Early Sprouts* book, available for purchase (\$24.95) on the website or through Amazon, provides directions for designing and caring for gardens, recipes children can help prepare, and ways to involve the whole family in making healthy food choices. The activities used in this program can be tailored to fit any early childhood program, climate, or geographical region.

**Don't forget
that gardens
provide great
learning
opportunities**

Other helpful resources

1. Stacey Sobell is the Farm to School Program Manager at Ecotrust in Portland, OR and acts as the lead for the western region of the National Farm to School Network. Contact her with any questions you have: ssobell@ecotrust.org, 503-467-0751.
2. The Oregon Environmental Council's *Eco-Healthy Childcare Program* is a great resource for ensuring that your childcare setting is as environmentally healthy as possible: <http://www.oeconline.org/our-work/kidshealth/ehcc>.
3. National Farm to School Network website: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/>.



**Ecotrust is the lead agency for
the western region of the
National Farm to School
Network.**