

## Education for sustainable farming and good living



- Producer Grants & Loans
- Mentorship opportunities for Producers
- Beginning Farmer Education
- Grants for Community Gardens

301 5th Ave SE, Medina, ND 58467  
701-486-3569 or [info@farrms.org](mailto:info@farrms.org)

**[www.farrms.org](http://www.farrms.org)**

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## Northern Plains Sustainable Ag



- Partner up with NPSAS to foster a local/ regional, secure and healthier food system in the Northern Plains.
- Partner with other like-minded people and become a member of NPSAS.
- All food consumers should know how our food is produced and where it comes from.

*Supporting local foods...*  
*Supporting local farmers!*

To become a member or for more info visit [www.npsas.org](http://www.npsas.org)  
NPSAS • PO Box 194 • LaMoure ND 58458 • 701-883-4304 • e-mail: [npsas@drtel.net](mailto:npsas@drtel.net)

# What is Farm to School?

- Launched in 2007 to support state and national efforts for laws and regulations addressing policy barriers and develop new opportunities for farm to school programs.
- To increase visibility and momentum about farm to school programs.
- To network and share information and to train and assist.



## Recent accomplishments

- Created a National Farm to School Network, with regional lead agency staff in 8 regions and 4 national staff, to meet state and region specific needs related to farm to school tied in with national efforts.

Sue Balcom represents North Dakota on this regional committee. You can contact her at [sbalcom@farms.org](mailto:sbalcom@farms.org) or call 701-667-0122.

- Successfully advocated and passed farm bill legislation allowing food service directors to give preference to local products.
- Worked with regions to draft priorities around the 2009 Child Nutrition Reauthorization. Assisted with developing comments for all USDA Listening Sessions.
- Produced information resources in response to hundreds of requests from community members working to make local healthy foods and a connection to farms a priority for children.
- Published Evaluation Report, Bearing Fruit: Farm to School Evaluation Resources & Recommendations.
- Held Congressional briefings on farm to school initiatives in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization in the U.S. House and Senate with over 100 attendees.
- Organized the 4th Farm to Cafeteria Conference in Portland, Oregon, with more than 550 attendees.
- Participation in over 100 national and regional events, training and conferences to represent farm to

school, including those hosted by the School Nutrition Association, Society for Nutrition Education, American Public Health Association, Slow Food, American School Health Association, Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE), North American Association for Environmental Education and many more.

Find a multitude of resources at the National Farm to School website!

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

## What can you do?

Everyone can get involved in Farm to School. Parents, teachers, cooks, administrators and students can work together to:

- Serve and eat more locally grown food in schools, hospitals, nursing homes and other institutions
- Learn to grow food
- Learn to cook new foods
- Learn to preserve foods – can, dry and freeze
- Learn to eat seasonally
- Learn to enjoy new tastes

In 2000, the USDA began supporting the farm to school movement with a substantial grant.

The 2002 Farm Bill allows school food service officials to buy locally whenever possible.

# Did You Know?

Only **2 percent** of America's children meet all the recommendations of the USDA's Food Guide Pyramid (*USDA, Eat Smart, Play Hard*).

**Less than 20 percent** eat the recommended servings of vegetables and less than 15 percent eat the recommended serving of fruit (*USDA, Eat Smart, Play Hard*).

In the U.S. at least **one child in five** is overweight. Over the last 20 years the number of overweight children has increased by more than 50 percent (*USDA, Childhood Obesity: Causes and Prevention*).

According to the CDC, **one in three** U.S. children born in 2000 will become diabetic unless children start making serious changes to their lifestyles and eating habits.

# I'm in – where do we begin?

## Get organized

Plan a "get to know you" meeting. As much as possible, make personal contacts. But don't forget to put the word out into the community. You never know who might be interested in volunteering for farm to school.

**START** planning **EARLY!!!**



Farmers plan their crops long before spring. February or October are good months to begin planning for the next school year.

**NOW** is also a good time to plan farm to school educational programs for next semester.

## Invite

- Reporters
- Farmers, farmer market managers, growers
- Teachers, principals and students
- PTOs, church groups and homemakers
- Nurses
- Extension agents
- School board members
- County Commissioners and City Commissioners
- Park Board members
- County health departments
- Community and civic-minded organizations like Lions or Kiwanis

## Meet

- In the school
- At the library
- At city hall or the courthouse
- Any community space

## Sample Agenda

(Detailed information for each of these items can be found on the following pages.)

1. Introductions
2. Why start a farm to school project?
3. Assessing your current situation.
4. Who is interested?
5. What are the farmer/producer challenges?
6. What are the food service challenges?
7. Who can help?
8. Who is the lead organization?
9. How can we fund a program?
10. What are our next steps?
11. Set a date for the next meeting

There is no one-size-fits-all Farm to School Program.





# Stick to your agenda

People will be more willing to commit if you stay on task and they know how long the meeting will last.

## 1. Introductions

Simply have everyone stand up and tell everyone who they are and why they are interested in local foods.

## 3. Assessing Your Current Situation

Discuss what you have to offer? Who are the farmers, producers, ranchers and local businesses that grow, process or sell local foods? List farmers names and contact information here:

## 4. Who is interested?

List farmers interested in growing for food service?

Name:	Phone:	Product(s)
1. _____		
2. _____		
3. _____		
4. _____		
5. _____		
6. _____		

List food service directors and cooks interested in serving more local food?

Name:	Phone:	Interests
1. _____		
2. _____		
3. _____		
4. _____		
5. _____		
6. _____		

## 2. Why Farm to School?

Bring in a speaker to help you make your case for farm to school. Contact your regional farm to school state lead, Sue Balcom at [sbalcom@farrms.org](mailto:sbalcom@farrms.org), or use the resources listed at the end of this publication.

Many examples of successful Farm to School Projects in Across the U.S. can be found at [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org).

## 5. Producer challenges

What are farmer/producer challenges? Crops, seasonality, marketing, distribution, value-added processing, transportation and delivery?

Does a grower have the ability to meet demand? If not, what can they do to increase productivity?

Have the producers in the room sit together and start a list of concerns here:

## 6. Food service challenges

What are the challenges food service faces? Buying practices, storage, equipment, prep areas, labor, food budget and parent support.

Have the food service directors sit together and start a list here:

 Take small steps!

## 7. Who can help?

Everyone can. Parents and students can support farm to school programs by volunteering to help in lunch lines, encourage children to make wise choices and try new foods and help the kitchen staff.

Other activities include education day trips to farms, nutrition education and school gardens. These activities can be planned in conjunction with Farm to School day, week or month in your school.

List partners and contact information here:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Phone:</b>	<b>Interests</b>
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____

## 8. Who can serve as the lead organization/ contact person?

For a successful farm to school or cafeteria program, your community or school will need a lead organization.

Who could that lead organization be? (PTO, student group, nonprofit, extension or can we form a new farm to school committee?)

## 9. Do we need to find funding?

**How can we pay for additional items like equipment, staff, food or delivery?**

**How can we pay for seeds, tools, water and land for a school garden?**

**Is there money for a junior master gardener's program in our county?**

**Can we hold fund raisers or ask for donations from other organizations?**

**Is there someone who can find and write grants for us?**

**10. What is our first project? List next steps here:**

**What can we do first?**

**Who can help?**

**11. Set the next meeting date:**

**When can we meet again. How will we inform the community?**



**Don't be discouraged!**

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## Applying Geographic Preference

**Q: Does USDA define the geographic area that is considered to be local?**

A: No, USDA does not define the geographic area that is considered to be local; the decision is left to the person authorized to make purchases on behalf of the agency. In other words, schools, child care institutions and Summer Food Service Program sponsors, may specifically identify the geographic area for unprocessed locally raised and locally grown agricultural products. Local may not be defined in a manner that restricts free and open competition.

**Q: Does the geographic preference option apply to all Federal Child Nutrition Programs?**

A: The Federal Child Nutrition Programs including the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Special Milk Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program may use the optional geographic preference when purchasing unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products.

**Q: Can you solicit local products with this statement - “We will only accept locally grown agricultural products from North Dakota?”**

A: No, you may apply a geographic preference, but you cannot exclude non-locally grown products. When you REQUIRE the bidder to provide only local products it becomes overly restrictive to competition.

**Q: If you define “local” as all of North Dakota when issuing a bid, can a bidder qualify for geographic preference points if the business is located in another state.**

A: Yes, geographic preference does not prevent a bidder from outside the area to compete for and be awarded the contract.

Geographic preference applies to unprocessed locally grown and locally raised agricultural products; it is irrelevant whether the bidder’s business is incorporated or has a principal place of business in the state.

**Q: What is the difference between a IFB and a RFP?**

A: A Request for Proposal (RFP) is issued when factors other than price (e.g., technical expertise) will be considered. An Invitation for Bid (IFB) is issued when the contract will be awarded to the responsive bidder offering the lowest price.

**Q: How do you use geographic preference points when writing a IFB (invitation for bid proposal)?**

A: An IFB does not usually include information about preference points. (Preference points are explained in another question.)

The agency representative reviews the bids and awards the contract to the lowest bidder. It may not be feasible to use points for a bid in the same way that points are used in a more formal request for proposal. An IFB could include specifications instead; for example - an apple must have been picked within one day of delivery or must have been harvested within a certain time period.

The solicitation document must clearly outline how all bids will be evaluated, including the application of geographic preference in the scoring criteria. Here is an example of how to write geographic preference into a bid:

Geographic preference points in an IFB would be applied after the agency representative determined the three bidders with the lowest price. The three bidders with the lowest price would be given a total of ten geographic preference points if those bidders met the geographic preference. In order to determine the winning bidder, the scoring criteria would clearly state that one point would equal one cent; in other words, ten points would translate into ten cents. If one or more of the responsive bidders with the lowest price met the geographic preference, ten cents would be taken off of their respective prices and that bidder could potentially win the bid. Note: **Deducting ten cents from the prices of responsive bidders that met the geographic preference *only applies to determining the winning bidder and would not affect the actual price paid to a bidder.***

In the following example, Bidder 2 meets the geographic preference and is given ten points which translates into deducting ten cents from Bidder 2’s price. In this example, Bidder 2 still doesn’t win the bid because Bidder 1 has a lower price.

	Bidder 1	Bidder 2	Bidder 3
PRICE	\$1.97	\$2.10	\$2.03
MEETS GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE?	No	Yes = 10 points	No
PRICE W/PREFERENCE POINTS	\$1.97	\$2.00	\$2.03

**Bidder 1 has the winning bid in this example.**

**Q: Can geographic preference be written into a bid as a percentage instead of a point system?**

A: Yes. Geographic preference can be used in terms of points or percentages. The solicitation document must clearly outline the scoring criteria and the method in which the criteria will be evaluated.

**Q: How many geographic preference points can be used for geographic preference? What is the maximum price percentage that can be used for geographic preference?**

A: Federal regulations do not dictate the number of preference points or maximum price percentage that can be assigned to geographic preference. Generally speaking, any price preference impacts free and open competition. However, geographic preference may have a greater or lesser impact on free and open competition depending on the characteristics of the market. The geographic preference option must encompass an appropriate number of qualified firms to compete for the contract. It is imperative that the agency does not unnecessarily restrict free and open competition.

**Q: Can large purchases be split into smaller amounts to qualify for the small purchase threshold?**

A: Not intentionally. However, there may be some instances in which the food service director needs to purchase items separately because of the nature of the product. For example, milk and bread are commonly purchased in smaller amounts because of shorter shelf-life. Fresh produce may also be considered a separate market given that it needs to be consumed as soon as possible after purchase to maintain the quality.

**Q: Can a food service director purchase unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products directly from a local farmer under the guidelines of a small purchase?**

A: Yes. North Dakota’s small purchase threshold is \$25,000. The invitation to bid must be written to maximize full and open competition. The bid should

include the number, quality and type of goods in writing. When using the small purchase threshold it is recommend that you contact at least three sources who are eligible, able and willing to provide the unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural product. Contacting a minimum of three sources ensures that anyone interested in providing fresh produce to the school will be given the opportunity to respond to the solicitation.

**Q: Can school buy locally grown or raised products directly from a teacher that works in the school district?**

A: No. It may give the appearance of a conflict of interest and it is not advised.

**Q: May geographic preference be given to farmers in a neighboring country such as Mexico or Canada?**

A: Only if the Buy American Clause cannot be met. The Buy American clause requires purchases to be made domestically to the maximum extent possible. If these two rare exceptions are met: (1) the product is not produced or manufactured in the U.S. in sufficient and reasonable available quantities of a satisfactory quality; and (2) competitive bids reveal the costs of a U.S. product is significantly higher than the foreign product can preference be given to another country.

**Q: Is a school required to follow the state’s regulation on geographic preference?**

A: No. While North Dakota has the right to create a geographic preference regulation it would not apply to Federal Child Nutrition Programs. States cannot mandate through law or policy that institutions apply a geographic preference when conducting procurements for the Federal Child Nutrition Programs, because the National School Lunch Act grants this authority directly to the purchasing institution.

**Q: Does USDA have examples to assist the school with writing of bids and solicitations for geographic preference?**

A: The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction can assist in developing bid sheets. USDA is in the process of creating tools that will assist in this area. USDA has created an online training titled *State Agency Guidance on Procurement*, that can be found at <http://www.nfsmi.org>.

Additionally, the USDA Farm to School website (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/>) provides information on the procurement requirements, as well as Q&As directly related to local food purchases.

**Q: Can we purchase ground beef under geographic preference laws?**

A: Yes. A policy memo dated Nov. 13, 2009, amended the previous guidelines regarding what is to be considered to be unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products. Since grinding beef does not change the character of the meat, geographic preference may be applied to the purchase of ground beef if *no other items such as additives or preservatives are added*.

**Q: The Farm Bill legislation states that “de minimis handling and preparation” can be done by the farmer/grower and then delivered to a school. What does that mean?**

A: Washing vegetables, bagging greens, butchering livestock and poultry, pasteurizing milk and putting eggs in a carton are acceptable safe handling of foods delivered to schools. However, geographic preference may only be applied to the purchase of unprocessed agricultural products which are locally grown and locally raised that have not been cooked, seasoned, frozen, canned, or combined with any other products.

**Q: Does produce that has been chopped or cut fall into the category of “minimal handling and preparation necessary to present in a usable form?”**

A: Unprocessed agricultural products that have been chopped, cut, sliced, diced or shucked meet the restrictions of unprocessed as used in the Farm Bill. You may use a geographic preference when purchasing those agricultural products.

**Q: Can geographic preference be given to a frozen bag of combination local vegetables (e.g., broccoli, cauliflower and carrots)?**

A: Yes, the vegetables are not changed by freezing or combining in a bag.

**Q: Do portion sized or single serving bags of vegetables qualify too?**

A: Yes, again the size of the package does not change the quality of the vegetable.

**Q: How does this law apply to purchasing canned local vegetables?**

A: Because the heating process involved in canning changes the agricultural product into a product of a different kind or character canned vegetables cannot be given geographic preference for locally grown purchases.

SOURCE: CYNTHIA LONG, Director Child Nutrition Programs  
United States Department of Agriculture

Ask for help! 

**Q: Who can I ask to help our school when making local purchases under the geographic preference rules?**

A: The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction can help. Please contact:

Deb Egeland [degeland@nd.gov](mailto:degeland@nd.gov)

Becky King [rking@nd.gov](mailto:rking@nd.gov)

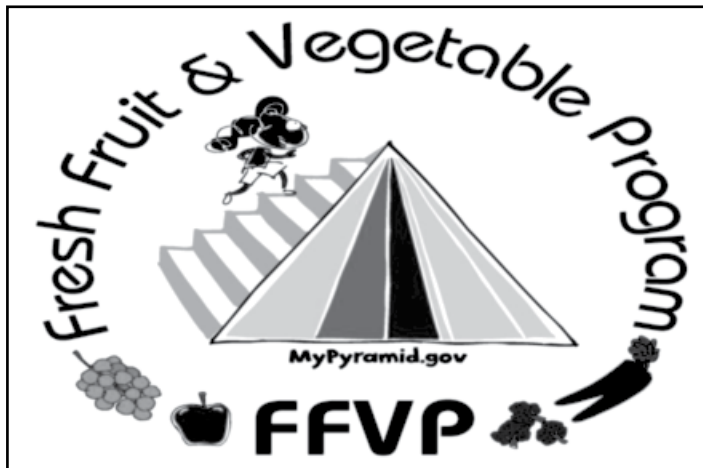
Stacie Morowski [smorowski@nd.gov](mailto:smorowski@nd.gov) (East)

1-888-788-8901

NDDPI 1-888-338-3663



## Another option for local fruit and vegetables



The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is a federally assisted program providing free fresh fruits and vegetables to students in participating elementary schools during the school day.

It is administered by the same folks that work with the school lunch program. Legislation in 2008 expanded the program to schools not previously authorized to participate in the program.

The program is geared toward elementary schools with the highest proportion of free and reduced lunch enrollment, especially those at 50 percent and higher. The program provides \$50 to \$75 per student for the school year.

A total of \$1,153,440 has been allocated to 111 North Dakota Schools for the 2010-2011 school year providing fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to 19,796 students.

The goal of the program is to improve children's overall diet and create healthier eating habits to impact their present and future health. The FFVP will help schools create healthier school environments by providing healthier food choices, expanding the variety of fruits and vegetables children experience, and increasing children's fruit and vegetable consumption.

The program runs from July 1 to June 30 each year. Applications to participate in the program must be completed yearly. Applications for the 2011-2012 school year will be available around late March.

Locally grown vegetables can be served to students under the guidelines of this program.

For more information about the FFVP, email [ksknudson@nd.gov](mailto:ksknudson@nd.gov) or call the North Dakota office toll free at 888-338-3663. In Bismarck call 701-328-2294.

## Tips for Success

**TAKE BABY STEPS** – what is one food you could introduce that is grown locally this year. Can we introduce a farmer to our students or take a tour of a garden? Can we begin nutrition education with free coloring sheets or tokens from national vegetable and fruit organizations?

Does our school qualify for the Fruits and Vegetables grant from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction?

**BUILD RELATIONSHIPS** – There is not one-size-fits-all farm to school program. Each community needs to make their efforts work in their communities. Ask other cooks, principals, teachers, food service directors and parents what works for them. Taking the time to understand each other's perspectives and abilities will help ensure that you create an effective, sustainable project.

Here are some schools and contact information for people who have made farm to school work in their community.

**Julie Tunseth, Child Nutrition Director**  
Grand Forks Public School,  
2115 6th Ave N, Grand Forks 58203-2983  
Phone: 701-746-2292  
Email: [julie.tunseth@gfschools.org](mailto:julie.tunseth@gfschools.org)

**Sue Milender, Valley City Public Schools**  
460 N Central Ave, Valley City 58072-2997  
Phone: 701-845-0483  
Email: [sue.milender@sendit.nodak.edu](mailto:sue.milender@sendit.nodak.edu)

**Karla Thompson and Wanda Bachmeier,**  
TGU Granville Public School  
210 6th St SW, Granville, ND 58741-4103  
Phone: 701-728-6641  
Email: [Wanda.Bachmeier@sendit.nodak.edu](mailto:Wanda.Bachmeier@sendit.nodak.edu)  
or [karla.thompson@sendit.nodak.edu](mailto:karla.thompson@sendit.nodak.edu)

**Monica Cox, food service**  
Lenore Kuntz, Family and Consumer Science  
Youth Correctional Center,  
701 16th Ave SW, Mandan  
Phone: 667-1400  
Email: [lenkuntz@nd.gov](mailto:lenkuntz@nd.gov)

# Great resources on the web

## FARM TO SCHOOL

Farm to School connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers.

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/>

## THE LUNCH BOX

The Lunch Box is a web-based portal that enables all schools and school districts to make a healthy difference for all children in America by providing relevant information and the pragmatic tools necessary to make good food available for all kids.

<http://www.thelunchbox.org/>

## HOW TO START A FARM TO SCHOOL CHAPTER

This packet will assist you in establishing a Farm to School Chapter in your area. Please review the resource materials in this packet. The "Steps for Starting a Chapter" page provides you with step-by-step instructions for initiating your chapter. If you are currently involved in another group working on local food systems initiatives, your group may consider also becoming a Farm to School Chapter. It is not necessary to recreate the wheel.

<http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/AgDiversification/farmToSchoolPacket.asp>

## SELLING STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL PRODUCERS

For many farmers, marketing and selling their products are challenging parts of the farm enterprise, especially when selling directly to consumers. People around the country are looking to buy tasty, healthy food directly from farmers - farmers with whom they can talk, ask questions and build relationships.

However, these new market opportunities, particularly in farmers' markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), roadside stands, restaurants and cooperatives, require expertise in selling as well as marketing, production and financial management.

<http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=G6222>

## FOOD RESOURCE AND ACTION CENTER (FRAC)

Food Resource and Action Center (FRAC) has a number of publications designed to help groups start and develop their after school and summer programs. All of the documents below are in pdf format.

<http://www.frac.org/afterschool/pubs.htm>

**Strategies in Tough Economic Times: Increasing Access to Summer Meals (PDF, May 2009)**

[http://www.frac.org/pdf/strategies\\_toughtimes\\_summermeals0509.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/strategies_toughtimes_summermeals0509.pdf)



## Curricular Resources

### NATIONAL

#### The Healthy School Meals Resource System Website

The Healthy School Meals Resource System's website serves as a farm to school resource, including information on educational activities such as school garden materials.

[http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal\\_display/index.php?info\\_center=14&tax\\_level=1#FarmtoSchool](http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=14&tax_level=1#FarmtoSchool)

#### Fresh from the Farm - TIME for Kids Magazine Teachers Guide on Farm to School

[http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/class/pdfs/2008s/080425\\_bp\\_all.pdf](http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/class/pdfs/2008s/080425_bp_all.pdf)

**“All About farmer’s markets: A Teaching Guide for Classrooms, Camps, and Community Programs,”  
Peggy Sissel-Phelan, Ed.D.**

A useful resource to help children make the connection between the land, the food we eat, and our health and well-being. The guide is 116 pages of original games, songs, and activities for PreK - 2nd grade classrooms, and includes ideas for field trips and parent involvement.

<http://www.brainchildpress.com/FarmersMarket.html>

## CATCH

CATCH was the largest school based health promotion program ever done in the US - as a coordinated nutrition education - employing Go, SLOW, WHOA diet concepts to help children choose healthier foods and now utilized as part of CATCH along with the CATCH - EAT SMART Guide for school nutrition service providers and also CATCH physical Education K-8. CATCH builds alliance with school staff, parents, community and administrators to focus on health, nutrition and physical activity.

Certified CATCH Trainers also help schools and districts to build their coordinated school health efforts. And, most importantly, CATCH makes nutrition learning and physical activity FUN!

<http://www.catchinfo.org/index.asp>

## KIDSGARDENING.ORG

Helping Young Minds Grow

<http://www.kidsgardening.org/>

## Farm to School: Minnesota Toolkit for Food Service University of Minnesota

The Willmar School District in western Minnesota has gradually incorporated locally purchased food into its cafeteria menu over the last four years. In response to requests to share their information, Annette Hendrick Derouin (Willmar’s Director of Food and Nutrition Services) and Lynn Mader (U of M Extension, Family Development) have been working with the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and an advisory team to develop an online toolkit for Minnesota school nutrition programs. The toolkit contains information and materials to assist in planning a farm to school program; sourcing, preparing, and serving local foods; and promoting the food to students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Ready-to-use items include cafeteria menus and

recipes complete with nutritional information, sample newsletter and announcement pieces, posters, and tested methods for young students to sample the food.

While most of this website toolkit is intended specifically for food service, it also provides links to resources to learn more about farm to school programs.

Check out the website, [www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu](http://www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu). For more information, contact Lynn Mader, [made0036@umn.edu](mailto:made0036@umn.edu), 612-708-8635.

<http://www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu/>

## FARMERS

**Know your Farmer, Know your Food -**

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/knownyourfarmer?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER>

**Marketing Local Foods -**

[http://www.misa.umn.edu/Marketing\\_Local\\_Food2](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Marketing_Local_Food2)

**Food Safety Plan (templates) -**

<http://safety.cfans.umn.edu/>

**National GAPS Program, Cornell University -**

<http://www.gaps.cornell.edu/>

**USDA audit checklists and score sheets –**

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp>

**Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture -**

<http://www.dakotacollege.edu/brain/index.html#-1>

**Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society -**

<http://www.npsas.org/>

**FARRMS - the foundation for sustainability**

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



# We want a school garden!

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## Why build a school garden?

A school garden brings nature and agriculture to life for students of all ages. In addition it can provide fresh vegetables for school lunch programs. Students with an active role in growing their food are more likely to try new varieties and types of vegetables.

School gardens can also be used to teach science, math and nutrition lessons. Creative skills and physical fitness can also be a part of learning about gardens.

The disconnect between children and the source of their food shows a need for agriculture education for all students. Students need to know where their food comes from and the relationship between farmers and food.

A school garden encourages a sense of responsibility and belonging to one's community. Senior citizens, parents, students and community members can work together on designing, building and maintaining the garden. Information that passes between the generations is invaluable.

Documentation shows that children involved in gardening at an early age have better math and science scores.

North Dakota has nearly 50 school gardens as of 2011. You should consider growing a garden of your own.

Here are some frequently asked questions about gardens and some great resources to get started.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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**Q: Can the school food service use funds from the nonprofit school food service account to purchase seeds for a school garden?**

A: Yes, with the understanding that the garden is used within the context of the program, i.e. selling the food or providing food in the classroom as part of an educational lesson.

**Q: Can funds received through the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program be used to purchase seeds/tools/equipment for a school garden?**

A: No. FFVP funds may not be used for the purchase of any materials for school gardens.

**Q: Can the school food service use funds from the nonprofit school food service account to purchase items for the school garden such as fertilizer, watering cans, rakes, etc.?**

A: Yes, as long as the items are used for the purpose of starting and maintaining the garden.

**Q: Can the school food service purchase produce from another school organization that is maintaining and managing the garden, such as Future Farmers of America?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Can a school sell food grown in their school garden that was funded using the nonprofit school food service account?**

A: Yes, as long as the revenue from the sale of the food goes back to the food service account. Schools can serve the produce as part of a reimbursable meal or sell it a la carte, to parents, to PTA members, at a roadside stand, etc.

**Q: Are there health/safety issues involved with school gardens?**

A: Yes. School employees need to familiarize themselves with the federal, state and local requirements regarding health and sanitation issues.

**Q: What if there is excess produce from the garden left over at the end of the school year?**

A: The school should first see if the excess food can be used to benefit another program. If that is not possible, they could try selling the food or donate it in accordance with state and local health/safety regulations.

Freezing vegetables, making salsa and spaghetti sauce and refrigerator pickles are acceptable in North Dakota. Please check with your local health unit.

# School Garden Checklist

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This checklist comes courtesy of Dorothy Mullen of The Suppers Program and is available in its entirety at <http://kitchengardeners.org/school-garden-checklist>.

## 1. Stakeholders

School gardens rise and fall on the relationships of the people who make them happen.

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Students
- The coordinator
- Team
- Parents
- Cafeteria staff or food service
- Local Farmers
- Community Volunteers
- Custodian
- School and community gardeners in neighboring schools and other towns.

## 2. Purpose

Decide what purpose your garden will serve and write it down. What are priorities? What does each of the stakeholders want out of the process?

What values drive the garden. For example, will it be organic, will commercial fertilizers be allowed.

## 3. Location

You need to find a space with good drainage, in the sun and away from animals. Do you need a fence? Is there water? Can we build beds or use containers? Can it be seen by the public? Is it close enough to the school so the teachers can use it for a classroom?

What size should and design should we use? Do we need to test the soil?

Sometimes it is a good thing to start small and have a plan for expansion. Make sure you have the funds for the size of garden you are planning.

What could enhance the garden? Things like a place to sit, paths, composting area, tool shed, signs and instructional materials are important.

## 5. Money

If you spend less money, you'll spend more time on your garden. If you spend more money, you may miss out on certain ecology lessons, like growing your own compost. Every site is different, but be sure to cover the basic elements when making up the budget:

- Expenses related to locating it (making water reach the garden, clearing land, tilling the first year)
- Soil test kit and amendments
- Organic material to improve soil, compost
- Tools
- Means of watering
- Materials for raised beds, if using
- Seeds, starts, plants
- Supports
- Protections, fencing, row covers
- Fertilizers & pest controls, if using
- Instructional materials, field guides, books
- Expertise, if the volunteers are beginners
- Material for walkways
- Cold frames, green house
- Mulch
- Containers
- Labor

## 6. Horticultural Needs

Decisions will have to be made that you'll have to live with for a while. You may want a few raised beds the first year while you start composting and working your own soil. Attention to the soil is the most important point of starting a garden, unless you are purchasing perfect soil for raised beds. You will want to add lots of organic material (compost) and you will want to start with a soil test to guide your decisions. Rototilling may be necessary the first year. Soil preparation is beyond the scope of this checklist; take it seriously.

In addition to the obvious sun, water, and space needs, each plant has specific requirements.

Did you do a soil test? It will inform you about toxic materials in the soil and deficiencies. If not, do one,

unless you are purchasing perfect soil for raised beds in which case you will still need to fertilize. The extension office for your county has kits.

In most counties, Master Gardeners and NDSU Extension agents can provide valuable assistance.

## 7. Curriculum Needs

Is this garden a setting for learning? Do you have supporting curriculum?

## 8. Types of Gardens

For elementary schools, the biggest bang for the curriculum buck is an herb garden. You can combine many elements into one garden.

- Science Lab.
- Setting for spontaneous learning.
- Food production, “snack” destination, source for food service.
- History gardens (Shakespeare, colonial, Three Sisters).
- Herb Garden.
- Shade plants.
- Native grasses and plants.
- Butterfly or pollinator gardens.
- Ecosystem.
- Heirloom.
- Nutrition and Health.
- Flowers.
- Math gardens, perhaps raised beds.

## 9. Safety Rules

Set up the rules that protect the people. Be aware of poisonous plants and leaves and also allergies.

Instruct students in the proper use of tools and do not allow bare feet in the garden.

Set up rules that protect the plants too.

## 10. Community Outreach and Involvement

Consider what funds, goods, expertise, and services do not come from within the school community and whether you want the donation of a thing (for ex-

ample, tools or machinery) or the service (for example, rototilling).

Reach out to the greater community to help meet these needs. Local green business love the PR value of supporting these projects generously.

Consider who will take photographs and write press releases or letters to the editor. Be sure to follow school policy about parental permission to use images.

Consider how you will inform parents and the school community about garden activity.

Identify the talent in the community, garden clubs, Master Gardeners, environmental groups, environmental groups at the other schools in the district, 4-H, parents and friends with gifts for carpentry or other services.

Plan seasonal events, scripted tours for the public, tomato tastings, pesto day, colonial day fair, tea harvest and drying, harvest dinner, poetry readings, garden cycle tours and fund raisers like plant sales.

## 11. Challenges

- If the garden is dependent on the good will of too few people, the principal may be left with a weed patch when those folks move on.
- Bad Soil
- Summer care
- Receiving grants
- Curriculum. Different stakeholders may have different ideas about how much the garden must be driven by curriculum and how much it should provide opportunities for spontaneous, seasonal learning, or food. This needs to be discussed
- Space limitations

## 12. Resources

There are many resources available, as well as grants to get your school garden growing. Here are just a few.

<http://www.edibleschoolyard.org/publications>

<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/>

<http://kitchengardeners.org/school-garden-checklist>

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE  
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