



**Cheri Long**  
**Oklahoma Farm to School Coordinator**

# Outline

- History of Farm to School
- Where Do We Go From Here
- Goals – Short range & Long range
- Resources

# **History of Farm to School in Oklahoma**

Our state first began looking into the matter in 2002, when the Oklahoma Food Policy Council surveyed all 540 school food service directors in the state. The survey received a 69% response rate and of that number, over two-thirds of the respondents expressed interest in purchasing locally produced foods.

# **History of Farm to School in Oklahoma**

Following the encouraging survey results, the Food Policy Council helped implement pilot programs in 2004 and 2005, featuring seedless watermelons grown near Hinton, Oklahoma and served at 144 schools in six districts. Agency partnerships between the State Departments of Human Services; Education; and Agriculture, Food and Forestry and the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture were vital to the pilot's success. The USDA, the U.S. Department of Defense and Oklahoma State University also played important roles.

# History of Farm to School in Oklahoma

The successful pilot led to the introduction and passage in 2006 of state legislation titled the [“Oklahoma Farm to School Program Act”](#). The Act formally establishes the Oklahoma Farm to School Program, designating the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry as the lead agency. As such, it makes available a program administrator to provide program development, leadership, conduct workshops and offer technical assistance for farmers, food service directors, processors and distributors, emphasizing the purchase of locally and regionally produced

foods.

# **History of Farm to School in Oklahoma**

- Farmers and schools have several things in common. They both plant seeds and nurture growth, and with some patience and hard work, can reap bountiful harvests.
- The most successful ones are those able to adapt to changing environments, creating practical and innovative solutions as new problems and opportunities arise.

# History of Farm to School in Oklahoma

- In Oklahoma, approximately only 21% of our students eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.
- So how do we help students choose to eat more nutritious foods? A growing number of schools are finding that serving fresh from local farms and providing students with meaningful hands-on experiences can go a long way towards improving healthy food choices. These Farm-to-School initiatives are demonstrating that students will eat more nutritiously when offered a variety of fresh high quality foods.

# CORE ELEMENTS OF **FARM to SCHOOL**





# Why Farm to School?



## **Kids WIN**

Farm to school provides all kids access to nutritious, high quality, local food so they are ready to learn and grow.

Farm to school activities enhance classroom education through hands-on learning related to food, health, agriculture and nutrition.

# Why Farm to School?



## Farmers WIN

Farm to school can serve as a significant financial opportunity for farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors and food manufacturers by opening the doors to an institutional market worth billions of dollars.

# Why Farm to School?



## **Communities WIN**

Farm to school benefits everyone from students, teachers and administrators to parents and farmers, providing opportunities to build family and community engagement. Buying from local producers and processors creates new jobs and strengthens the local economy.

# Benefits of Farm to School

- Increased ADP due to better tasting produce
- Improved healthy eating behaviors
- Increase awareness of agriculture, food, gardening, local foods and seasonality
- Promotes an active lifestyle
- Enhanced overall academic achievement provides an understanding of agriculture and the environment, improves life skills, self-esteem, social skills and behavior
- Opportunity for culinary training to teach kids how to prepare local foods



# Getting Started

- 1) Start small, grow slowly
- 2) Build relationships and partnerships
- 3) Identify existing resources



# Start Small, Grow Slowly



Farm to school programs are most successful when they start small and expand as support, awareness and resources grow. Choose one action item to incorporate as you begin your programming.

Suggestions include:

- School Gardens
- Chef or Farmer Visits
- Nutrition Education
- Experiential Education

# Relationships & Communications

## In-School Partners

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Maintenance Staff
- School Nutrition Staff
- Wellness Committee
- PTA/PTO
- Students!

## Out-of-School Partners

- Local Non-Profits
- Extension
- Ag in the Classroom
- Master Gardener
- Local Businesses
- Neighbors
- Volunteers

# Use Existing Resources

Find what's already out there!

- Many excellent farm to school resources already exist to help you start or grow your program
- Learn from the resources and lessons of others as you move forward with farm to school
- Get to know others in your state or local area who are willing to share their experience

The Growing Classroom

Garden-Based Science

NEW EDITION

spring

Days are getting longer, the soil is warming, and new growth appears in the garden.

fall

Harvests abound, seeds are set, and nights are growing long.

winter

Living things are quiet, the ground lies dormant, and light is scarce.

Two-Foot Square Garden (A Three-



# Follow the 5 Steps to Success...

Combine these five tips for success with a few other helpful strategies and this will lead to a sustainable, impactful farm to school education program:

## 5 Tips for Getting Started:

- Start small
- Build relationships
- Assess strengths and limitations
- Use existing resources
- Make a plan

## Other Helpful Strategies:

- Celebrate your successes
- Promote projects
- Follow-up after trainings
- Engage students!

# Where Do We Go From Here

## Future Goals of Farm to School

- Discussions with legislators about farm to school. Getting support for the Farm to School Act 2019 and the Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization Act 2019
- Develop a Farm to School Statewide Network
- Develop/Create a statewide survey about farm to school
- Consistent on the ground visits with producers/child nutrition directors to build those relationships
- Develop/Create new resources for farm to school – Let's Get Growing guide to schools and a new cookbook for cafeterias, teachers and families.

# Final Thoughts...

- Farm to school is an avenue to improve children's health, well-being and academic performance
- Start small and celebrate your successes... and learn from your mistakes
- Take time to build a strong team to ensure your efforts can be sustained
- Many F2S resources already exist: don't reinvent the wheel
- Communication is key
- Reach out to me at anytime for assistance!



# Helpful Websites

- National Farm to School Network  
[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)
- Oklahoma Farm to School  
[www.okfarmtoschool.com](http://www.okfarmtoschool.com)
- Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom  
[www.agclassroom.org/ok](http://www.agclassroom.org/ok)
- USDA Farm to School  
[www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school)
- Growing Minds – Farm to ECE  
<https://growing-minds.org/>
- [kidsgardening.org](http://kidsgardening.org)



## Harvest of the Month TOMATOES

### Growing Tomatoes

Oklahoma's long, warm summers are ideal for growing tomatoes. Many tomato varieties are suitable for Oklahoma; consider growing Cherry tomatoes for fresh eating. Beefsteak tomatoes

## Harvest of the Month SPINACH



## THE BENEFITS OF FARM TO SCHOOL

### Stay Informed

Join our network:  
[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)  
Twitter  
@FarmToSchool

### Farm to School Benefits

Farm to School connects children (K-12) and early care education settings (often sub-categorized as Farm to Preschool) with local food producers with the objectives of serving local, healthy food in school cafeterias; improving student nutrition; providing agricultural, cultural, and nutrition education opportunities; and supporting local and regional farmers.

Schools and early care centers with Farm to School programs participate in activities such as purchasing locally and regionally grown food; featuring farm-fresh foods on their menus;



## GETTING STARTED WITH FARM TO SCHOOL

### Stay Informed

Join our network:  
[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)  
Twitter  
@FarmToSchool

### What is farm to school?

Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and preschools. Farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following: (1) Procurement: Local foods are purchased, prepared and served to the cafeteria or in a snack or lunch; (2) Education: Students participate in education activities

### Farm to School in Action



## FARM TO SCHOOL ADVOCACY

### Stay Informed

Join our network:  
[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)  
Twitter  
@FarmToSchool  
Facebook  
<http://on.fb.me/nfsnf2s>

There are several federal laws that impact the farm to school community including the Farm Bill, the Child Nutrition Act (or Child Nutrition Reauthorization) and the Food Safety Modernization Act. Many states have legislation to support farm to school efforts too. Each of us has an important voice that can help shape smart policy. This fact sheet offers ideas for how you can get involved in informing and advocating for policy that supports farm to school.

### Get involved and tell your story

Policy makers are looking for information from their constituents. Is a law being drafted or revised? Are your elected officials trying to decide what programs to fund? Throughout all stages of the policy process, elected officials need to know what's going on in the communities they represent. You are a constituent with an important story to tell and a vote.

Get the message? Start building a relationship with your elected officials.

Who represents you? Visit [www.votermat.org](http://www.votermat.org) for names and contact information for all



Google Custom Search

- Home
- About Farm to School
- Schools
- Growers
- Events/Workshops
- Resources
- Main Links
- Recipes
- Contact



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

MEMO CODE: SP 32-2009  
DATE: July 29, 2009

SUBJECT: School Garden Q&As

3101 Park  
Center Drive  
Alexandria, VA  
22304-4100

### School District Participating in Farm to School

Achille, Agra, Alva, Ardmore, Arnett-Elli Beggs, Bethany, Bel Bishop, Bishop McGa Bibby, Blanchard, Broken Arrow, Buffalo Valley, Carney, Cass, Cave Springs, Centerville, Cherokee, Chickasha, Clinton, Collinsville, Comand Copan, Coweta, Co Crutcho, Davenport, Creek, Dewey, Dicks Duncan, Edmond, El City, Elmore City, El Empire, Fairview, F Glenpool, Gore, Guthrie, Hennessey, Hinton, Jenks, Jones Kingfisher, Kingston Lawton, Liberty, Loc



## Food Safety Tips for School Gardens

Schools across the nation are using gardens to help children discover where food comes from and to develop healthy eating habits. Gardens provide a way for children to grow, harvest, prepare, and ultimately taste new fruits and vegetables. When appropriate precautions are taken fruits and vegetables from school gardens can be served safely to students. Before starting a school garden, check with your local health department about their policies on serving food grown in gardens in school meals.

Potential food safety risks should be taken seriously. Produce grown in gardens can be contaminated during growth, harvest, transportation, preparation, or service and result in foodborne illness. The practices addressed in this document will help program operators enhance the safety of fruits and vegetables grown in school gardens.

Produce grown in school gardens may also be served in classrooms. These food safety tips are also applicable for produce served in classrooms. For additional tips, see *Handling Fresh Produce in Classrooms*.

### Site Selection, Materials, and Water Use

- Locate gardens away from potential contamination sources (garbage, utilities, animals, water runoff, flooding, septic systems, etc.).
- Contact the utility companies or call 811, the national "Call Before You Dig" number, a few days before digging to ensure that you avoid gas or electric lines.
- Identify soil history from all sources. Have soil tested to determine levels of contaminants such as chemicals, pesticides, lead, etc., especially if located near high-traffic zones. Contact your local Cooperative Extension Office for information on soil testing services available in your area.
- Create reasonable barriers to keep wild animals away from the garden. Examples include fencing or cages over produce items such as strawberries, leafy greens, etc.
- Consider purchasing soil that has been commercially packaged and labeled for growing food crops. Soil purchased from a commercial source ensures traceability.
- Use non-toxic, non-leaching materials for raised-bed gardens, containers, stakes, or trellises. Do not use pressure-treated wood, used tires, single use plastics, old railroad ties, etc.
- Select non-allergenic and non-toxic plants. Check with your local Cooperative Extension office if you need assistance determining plant safety or toxicity.



# Resources



## STARTING AND MAINTAINING A SCHOOL GARDEN



### RESOURCES & EVENTS

UPDATED 6-20-2014

**Go! It's Out, but Fresh Foods are In!**  
This is **Your Summer!** We know that so of you are using the farm to school program to make summer meals more fun. Tell us about

and more...

is offering a great opportunity for local producers and farmers.

Learn more information...

Survey Results from the Farm to School Survey are now available online. Oklahoma Census Data is also available here

Grant opportunities

## Specialty Crop Ag Mag

Book

### Specialty Crops AG MAG

## HOW Would You Rather Eat VITAMIN C?

**Potato**

Serving Size: 1 medium, baked  
Calories: 161, Vit C: 16.6 mg

**Tomato**

Serving Size: 1 medium, red, raw  
Calories: 22, Vit C: 16.9 mg

**Cauliflower**

**Strawberry**

**Oklahoma  
FARM to SCHOOL  
HANDBOOK**

# Thank You!



Name: Cheri Long

Title: Oklahoma Farm to School Coordinator

Organization: Oklahoma Department of Agriculture

Phone: 405-249-9234

E-mail: [cheri.long@ag.ok.gov](mailto:cheri.long@ag.ok.gov)

Website: [www.okfarmtoschool.com](http://www.okfarmtoschool.com)