



CITY & SCHOOL DISTRICT FARM TO SCHOOL POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

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**NATIONAL
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GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER

The National Farm to School Network is an information, advocacy and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing, school gardens and food and agriculture education into school systems and early and education settings.

As farm to school efforts expand across the country, from small towns to large cities, from rural schools to large urban districts, there are many different types of policy that support these initiatives. Keep in mind, these efforts do not always - and in fact often do not - include lobbying. From the federal [USDA Farm to School Grant Program](#) to [state policies supporting farm to school efforts](#), there are many different policy interventions that support farm to school. Local school wellness policies and city purchasing policies that support and prioritize farm to school are policy interventions that have been successful in ensuring farm to school activities.

Local School Wellness Policies (School Districts)

Any school district that receives federal funding for implementing school meal and/or other child nutrition programs must have a wellness policy in place. As part of the WIC Reauthorization Act passed in 2004, Local Education Agencies that participated in the National School Lunch Program or other child nutrition programs were required to author school wellness policies by School Year 2006. The [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010](#) (Sec. 204 of [Public Law 111-296](#)) modified these requirements, specifying implementation, evaluation, and reporting requirements. After soliciting public comments, a final rule governing Local School Wellness Policies was developed in 2016. These are the minimum requirements that a local school wellness policy must include:

- “Specific goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness. Local Educational Agencies are required to review and consider evidence-based strategies in determining these goals.
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages available or for sale on the school campus during the school day that are consistent with Federal regulations for:
 - School meal nutrition standards, and
 - Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.
- Policies for other foods and beverages available on the school campus during the school day.
- Policies for food and beverage marketing that allow marketing and advertising of only those foods and beverages that meet the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.
- Description of public involvement, public updates, policy leadership, and evaluation plan.”¹

[Farm to school is a proven strategy](#) to advance wellness and to provide nutrition education. Therefore, there is opportunity for these local school wellness policies to include farm to school. According to the Food and Nutrition Service, and especially relevant to farm to school, “local school wellness policies also may include the development and/or promotion of farm to school activities, such as school gardens, nutrition, culinary, and agriculture education, and use of local foods in child nutrition programs.”²

Additional Resources

The San Diego County Child Obesity Initiative has a [wellness policy repository](#), which includes specific examples of [garden](#) and [local food language](#) for Local School Wellness Policies.

The [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#) has developed a [Model Wellness Policy](#) and additional resources to support strong local wellness policies that include provisions for farm to school.

The [University of Connecticut Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity](#) has developed a [Wellness School Assessment Tool](#) to assess strength of local school wellness policies, and suggests areas for improvement for specific wellness policy goals.

The [Public Health Law Center at Hamline University](#) developed [sample school wellness policies](#) that fit in the Minnesota School Boards Association's model school wellness policy. These model school wellness policies contain specific resources about farm to school and school garden policies.

The [Center for Good Food Purchasing](#) is a national organization supporting adoption and implementation of the Good Food Purchasing Program.

The National Farm to School Network has compiled resources on this topic and others. Find more information and join our network: [farmtoschool.org](#)

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Examples of farm to school efforts through local school wellness policies

- The Local Wellness Policy at the STAR school in Arizona was originally driven by public health goals and a desire to reduce the prevalence of diabetes in the community. As the school began to assess the drivers of diabetes - diet and exercise regimens - they realized that encouraging indigenous foods in schools would be a great way to target diet and health outcomes. From this goal, the school decided to implement a policy of purchasing food from Native growers when possible. The school's Local Wellness Policy from 2016 states, "farm to school practices will be encouraged, such as establishing relationship with local farms, locally grown food will be included in the school breakfast and lunch program whenever possible."³
- Lopez Island School District in Washington has included farm to school in their local wellness policies. In Lopez county, the Wellness Policy states, "an instructional food garden and a farm to school program will be developed on school grounds and/or access provided to such, of sufficient size to provide students with experiences in food preparation from tilling, sowing and growing to harvesting, preparation, and consumption."⁴
- In 2011, Julian Union Elementary School District (JUESD) in California revised their Local Wellness Policy, and they worked with farm to school partners to incorporate farm to school elements into the policy. For example, the policy requires that the district "include whole, fresh, unprocessed foods and ingredients in meals and when possible incorporate locally produced food for meals and snacks."⁵ As a result of this work, "the district purchases more produce per school lunch program enrollee than almost any other school district in San Diego County (ranked 3rd out of 42 districts)."⁶

Good Food Purchasing Policies (City Policies)

[Good Food Purchasing Policies](#) provide a "metric based, flexible framework that encourages large institutions to direct their buying power toward five core values: local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutrition."⁷ Many of the provisions in these standards also support farm to school initiatives. As many institutions and communities around the country adopt these standards, farm to school programs are strengthened.

- The city of Chicago adopted a Good Food Purchasing Policy in 2017 and has used \$80 million to improve the food system, impacting 380,000 students.⁸ This investment has been used to source food in public schools that is "sustainable, local, humane, fair and healthy."⁹
- On May 25, 2016 the San Francisco Board of Education voted unanimously to adopt the Good Food Purchasing Program, impacting 6 million meals per year and \$11 million in food purchasing spending annually.¹⁰
- The City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles Unified School District adopted a Good Food Purchasing Policy in 2011. As a result of this policy, the school district sources 50 to 72 percent of its produce from within 200 miles of the district.¹¹ Gold Star Foods, one of LAUSD's main vendors, has even "changed its bread recipe and now sources its wheat flour from California farms."¹²

Learn more about farm to school supportive policies at [farmtoschool.org/policy](#).

References

- 1 <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy>
- 2 <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/07/29/2016-17230/local-school-wellness-policy-implementation-under-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act-of-2010>
- 3 <http://www.starschool.org/wellness-policy/>
- 4 <http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/Page/69/lopez-island-school-district>
- 5 <https://sdcoi.org/resources/policy-clearinghouse/>
- 6 <http://www.cafarmtoschool.org/rewriting-julian-union-elementary-school-districts-wellness-policy/>
- 7 <https://goodfoodpurchasing.org/program-overview/>
- 8 <https://goodfoodcities.org/portfolio/chicago/>
- 9 <https://goodfoodcities.org/cps-announcement/>
- 10 <https://goodfoodcities.org/portfolio/san-francisco/>
- 11 <https://goodfoodcities.org/portfolio/los-angeles/>
- 12 Ibid.