



Getting Started & Action Planning

Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food, as well as local food producers, by initiating changes in food purchasing and education practices at schools and early childhood education sites. Students gain access to healthy local foods and educational opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons, and farm field trips.



Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices, while strengthening the local economy, and contributing to vibrant communities.

Farm to school implementation differs by location, but always includes one or more of the following:

- **School Gardens:** students engage in hands-on learning through gardening and farming;
- **Education:** students participate in educational activities related to agriculture, food, health, or nutrition; and
- **Procurement:** local foods are purchased, promoted, and served in the cafeteria, as a snack, or taste test.

Types of Schools

Farm to school activities are encouraged wherever there are children!

Early Childhood Education

Students aged 0-5

- Child Care Center
- Child Care Family Home
- Preschool
- Head Start Program
- School District PK program
- Other

K-12 School

Students aged 6-18

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- Junior High School
- High School
- Charter School
- Other

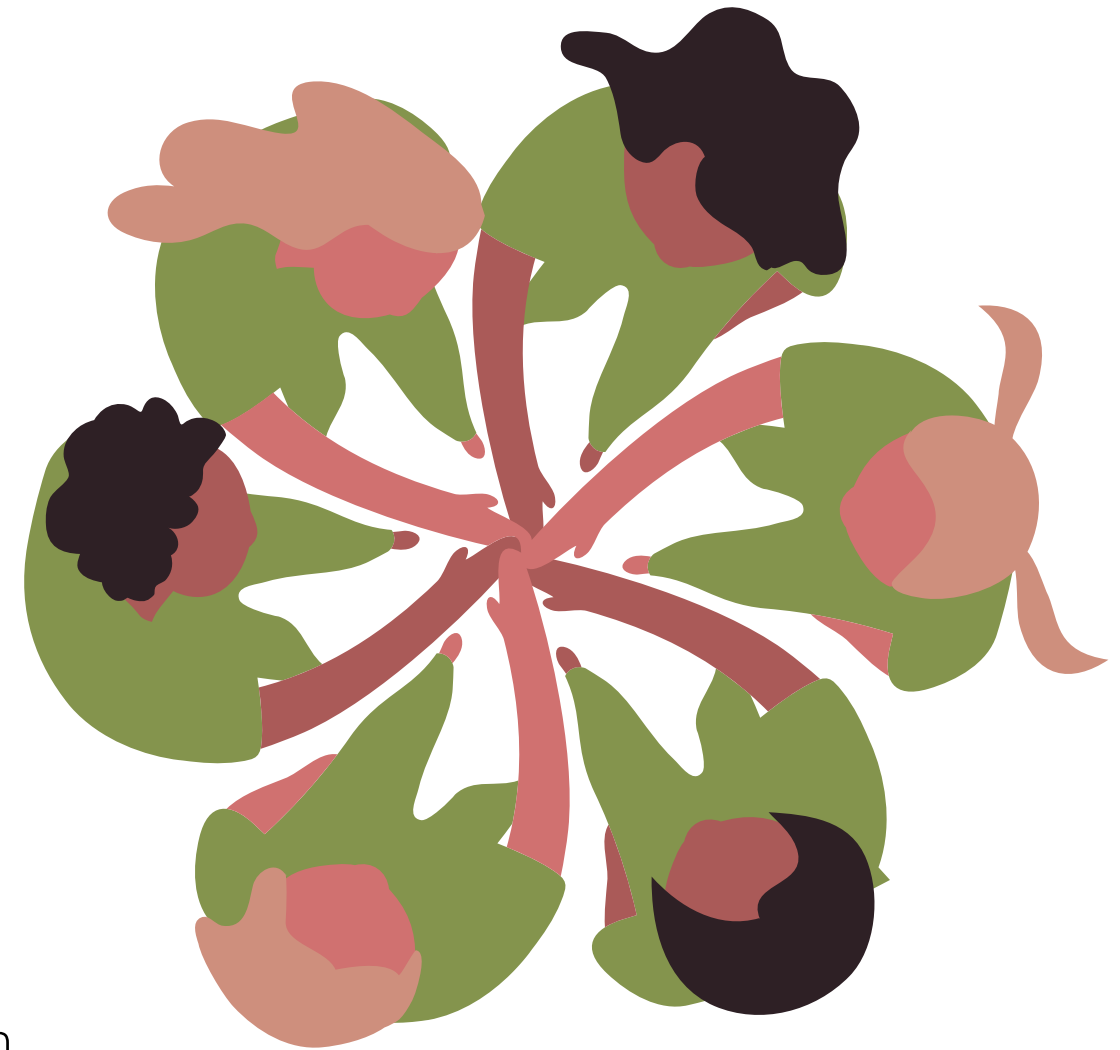
Alternative Learning Environment

Students aged 0-18

- Juvenile Detention Center
- Juvenile Treatment Center
- Health and Disability Facility
- Rehabilitation Center
- Homeschool
- Other

Gather Your Team

The first step on your farm to school journey is to create a farm to school team, or committee, to lead activities the school is interested in. Your school might already have a wellness committee or a school garden committee, which would be perfect places to include farm to school. If you have to build your team from scratch, we recommend getting started by reviewing this [farm to school committee handout](#).



Now that you have created your team, and there is interest in farm to school, the next steps are to create a value statement, assess your program, and set goals.

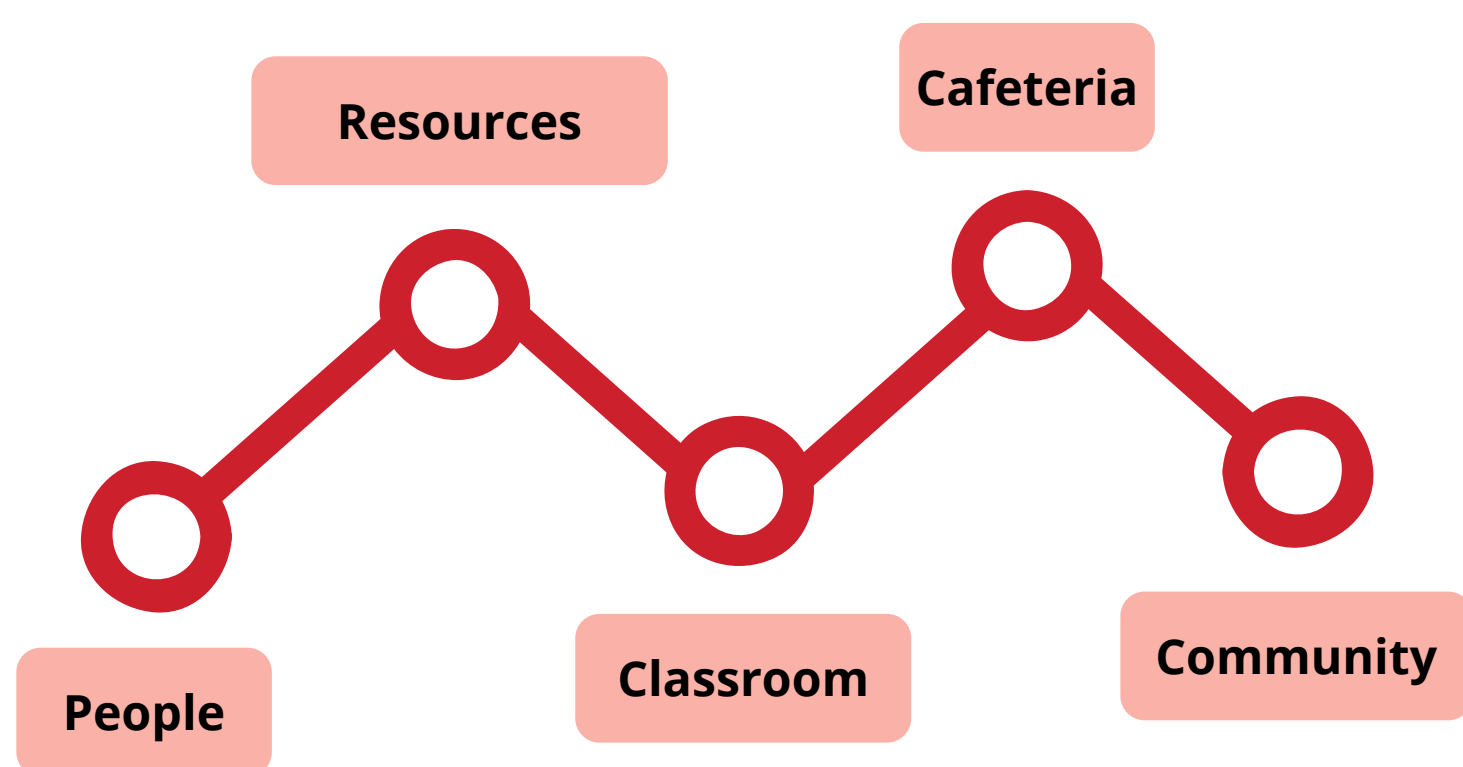
Value Statement

Similar to an organization's mission statement, a value statement is a way for groups of people to unite around a shared goal, in this case farm to school! Have each member of the team brainstorm what they value in the realm of food, education, and community. What words come to mind when you hear, "healthy kids, healthy schools, and healthy farms?" Another place to look is at the school's mission or vision statement, are there words or phrases that could be duplicated in your farm to school value statement?

Aim to craft a value statement that is no longer than two sentences, using combinations of the words the team brainstormed. For more information on crafting value statements and to see an example, [check out Vermont FEED's Action Planning guide](#).

Assess Your Program


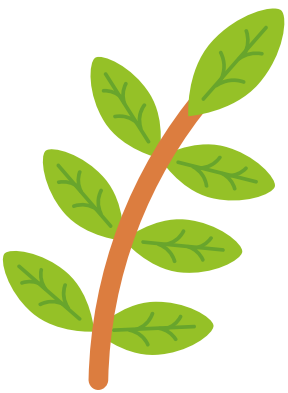
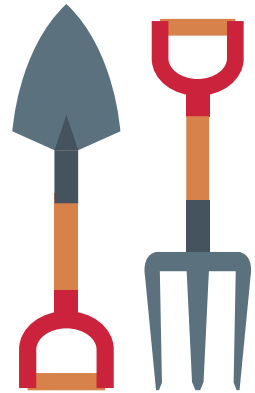







With your team in place and value statement developed, it is time to assess your program. The Farm to School Progression on the following page is designed to help your school assess the activities you currently offer, and illustrate where you can go.



To use the Progression, gather your team together and spend time thinking about each of the five categories: People, Resources, Classroom, Cafeteria, and Community. The team will select the level (seeding, sprouting, cultivating, blossoming, and harvesting) that best represents each category. The Progression is designed to be a starting place, and should be revisited often, at least once a year.

You may also find that your school moves up and down on the Progression as team members change, funding fluctuates, and your farm to school knowledge increases. Feel free to edit and adapt the Progression so it fits your school's culture and environment.

Farm to School Progression

	 Seeding	 Sprouting	 Cultivating	 Blossoming	 Harvesting
People 	A few leaders are interested in farm to school (F2S).	A F2S committee has developed, with a diverse representation of people from the school and community.	The committee has created a value statement, assessed their program, and created an action plan.	F2S activities are consistently communicated to students, families, and community. Administration supports staff-wide F2S professional learning.	Students, staff, and community members feel F2S is an integral part of school identity. School policies and staff job descriptions include F2S language.
Resources 	Resources and funding needs for F2S activities are identified.	Some resources and funding are available for F2S activities due to grants, school budget, or fundraisers.	More resources and funding are available for F2S because of PTO/PTA, school foundation, committee, or other supporting organizations.	Most resources and funding are available to successfully implement an annual F2S action plan. Some staff time is dedicated to coordinate F2S activities.	All resources and funding needed are available from a sustainable source. Sufficient staff time is dedicated to coordinate F2S activities and provide evaluation of the F2S program.
Classroom 	Indoor and outdoor classroom (school garden) F2S activities are identified.	Some staff have plans to teach hands-on F2S activities, such as gardening, cooking, and nutrition in an upcoming lesson.	More staff provides hands-on F2S activities in their instruction. A community partner has been identified to provide a learning opportunity for students.	Most of the staff provides regular hands-on F2S activities in their instruction. Partners are invited often to extend classroom F2S learning into the community.	The school has integrated F2S activities, and community partner opportunities, into the standards-based core curriculum and other guidelines.
Cafeteria 	Possibilities for incorporating local food into the cafeteria have been identified.	Local food definition and values have been defined and nearby farmers have been identified.	Some local food is offered, as a taste test or on the menu. Relationships with local farmers are strengthening.	More local food is incorporated into the menu. School nutrition staff design menus around the seasonality of local food.	Annual procurement contracts support purchasing from local farmers and producers. New local food sources are identified and evaluated regularly.
Community 	The school is becoming aware of community expertise and opportunities for partnership.	The F2S committee has identified some families, community members, and farmers as potential partners.	The F2S committee asks community partners for input and feedback on F2S activities.	The F2S committee collaborates regularly with community partners to provide F2S activities in the classroom and cafeteria.	The F2S committee has developed long-term relationships with many diverse community partners to provide frequent F2S connections.

Set Goals

Now that you have crafted your value statement and assessed your school on the Farm to School Progression, you are ready to set goals!

Brainstorm a list of activities and ideas you have for the upcoming year. If you are not sure where to begin, review the Farm to School Progression to see where there are areas to grow. Do you want to increase classroom opportunities? Do you want to involve more community members? Do you want to build a sustainable program, with ample funding and resources?

Arrange those items into statements that are measurable and timebound. It might be helpful to use the [SMART goal](#) framework to create your goals. It is recommended to create no more than three goals, to ensure what you are embarking upon is both reasonable and accomplishable within a school year.



After you have established your goals you should chart out: the action steps you need to take, the person responsible for leading the goal, the timeline of action, and what resources or assistance you need to accomplish the goal.

Steps for Success

Goal → Action Steps → Timeline → Resource Needs

Take Action!

Farm to school is a great strategy to combat childhood obesity. It provides innovative educational experiences and connects schools with local food systems.

With your school's team, value statement, goals, and a plan of action in place, you have taken the first step to ensuring your farm to school program is a long-term success. Document successes and challenges for your next planning session, and enjoy the journey!

For more information and to sign up for the newsletter, visit arfarmtoschool.org.

