



Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program



March 2021

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program is committed to providing equitable and just programming, resources, funding, and technical assistance to schools, farmers, and partners in the local food system.

Webinars and Trainings

Local Conversations

March 12, 2021 from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.



The Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Branding Programs and Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas are hosting an event for farmers to learn about COVID-19 alternative selling methods, farmer social media marketing, e-commerce support, and a post-harvest calculator.

[Register Here](#)

Farm to School Connection

March 18, 2021 from 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture and University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service are excited to offer an opportunity for schools and farmers to connect to create more opportunities for local food in schools.

Join us to learn how to buy local food, how to sell your local produce to schools, and connect in a regional

breakout session.

Register Here



March 18 | 2-3 pm
Zoom Meeting

FEATURING

Randy Arnold and Ally Mrachek

Arnold Family Farm

Fayetteville Public
Schools

Finding the perfect partner can be tough, so we're here to help build lasting relationships between local farms and schools. Join us to learn more about buying and selling local foods and to find potential partners.

Register at www.uaex.uada.edu/localfoods



Opportunities

Farm to Early Childhood Education Survey



Do you work with students aged 0-5? We want to hear from you!

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, along with several collaborative partners, has created an online **farm to early childhood education (ECE) survey**. The survey will allow child care providers to share information on support and resources needed to implement food and agriculture education

activities in the classroom, to grow fruits and vegetables in on-site gardens, and to purchase Arkansas grown produce.

The responses we receive from this survey will help to develop targeted training presentations, webinars, and resources to answer questions and tackle challenges ECE providers face when implementing farm to ECE activities.

We will be accepting survey responses until March 19, 2021.

Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. As a thank you for participating, we will be sending a **farm to school gift** to every respondent.

Survey Link

Apply to Serve with FoodCorps

We are so excited to share that applications to serve with FoodCorps Arkansas are now open! Since 2011, members in Arkansas have served their community, helped get kids excited about healthy food, learned new skills, and joined a network of changemakers. If you are interested in applying, the application to #ServeUpChange with FoodCorps is open through April 1!



[Apply Here](#)

Resources

The Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program and the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative have recently created NEW farm to school resources to support the growth of farm to school around the state.

Check out the first two resources if you are building a team or looking to find funding for projects, and the last two resources if you want to learn more about the statewide farm to school efforts in Arkansas.

School Garden Grants

ARKANSAS Farm to School

School Garden Grants

Grants listed below help start or expand school gardens. The grants vary in amount and are arranged by the season in which the application is due. Arkansas specific grants are listed with a .

For additional help and support in school garden development, you may contact Hanna Davis, State School Garden Manager, at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, hanna.davis@agriculture.arkansas.gov, (501) 295-8856.

SPRING/SUMMER (March - August)

Action for Healthy Kids Game On Grants \$1,000 or \$2,500
Action for Healthy Kids provides schools the resources for students to eat better, stay physically active, and be better prepared to learn. Their grant program, Game On Grants, supports physical activity and/or nutrition initiatives at schools.

Arkansas Department of Agriculture - Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest \$500-\$1,000
The Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest is sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture with funding provided by Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas. Applicants may be public and private K-12 schools, early care and education facilities, or alternative learning environments that had a school garden open during the previous school year, or any schools planning to start a garden in the following school year.

Blue & You Foundation Grant \$5,000 and up
Blue & You Foundation's mission is to work together with others to create a state of better health for all Arkansans. They strategically focus grant funding on community-based solutions in the hopes it will nurture community health leadership, foster collaboration and innovation, and leverage financial, human, and community resources to produce measurable, positive impacts. Any program or project that positively affects the health of Arkansans can apply to receive funding.

[View Resource Here](#)

Arkansas Farm to School

School Garden Committees

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School Garden Committees

If you want to start a garden program at your school, the best place to start is by forming a school garden committee. School gardeners take a lot of planning and hard work, so it's important to enlist a team to help your program succeed. Pooling resources, ideas, and labor will help ensure that your garden will continue growing for many years to come!

For additional help and support in school garden development, contact Hanna Davis, State School Garden Manager at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, hanna.davis@agriculture.arkansas.gov, (501) 295-8856.

Gather Interest

Start by building your network and reaching out to potential supporters for an initial brainstorming meeting. Send emails to the school community, post fliers, and talk to the school administration. School administration can help find resources and funding, coordinate with teachers, and promote the garden program in general.

If possible, invite the principal, school board members, superintendent, or other administrators to participate in the committee. In addition to school administration, consider involving the following people in the garden committee:

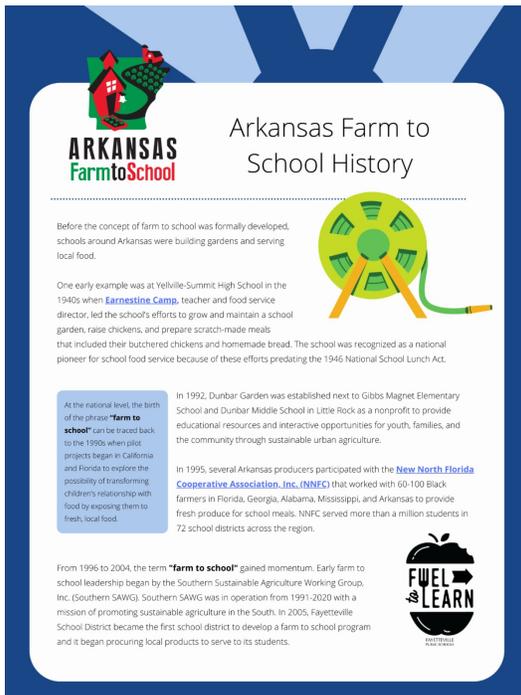
- Teachers/Educators
- Students
- Maintenance staff
- Farmers/Master Gardeners
- Food service staff
- County Extension Agents
- Family members
- Community members

Hold an initial interest meeting (in person or virtual), to present a vision for the school garden, what the committee's role will be, and create a list of people interested in joining.

[View Resource Here](#)

Arkansas Farm to School

History



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Arkansas Farm to School History

Before the concept of farm to school was formally developed, schools around Arkansas were building gardens and serving local food.

One early example was at Yellville-Summit High School in the 1940s when **Ernestine Camp**, teacher and food service director, led the school's efforts to grow and maintain a school garden, raise chickens, and prepare scratch-made meals that included their butchered chickens and homemade bread. The school was recognized as a national pioneer for school food service because of these efforts predating the 1946 National School Lunch Act.

At the national level, the birth of the phrase "farm to school" can be traced back to the 1950s when pilot projects began in California and Florida to explore the possibility of transferring children's relationship with food by exposing them to fresh, local food.

In 1992, Dunbar Garden was established next to Gibbs Magnet Elementary School and Dunbar Middle School in Little Rock as a nonprofit to provide educational resources and interactive opportunities for youth, families, and the community through sustainable urban agriculture.

In 1995, several Arkansas producers participated with the **New North Florida Cooperative Association, Inc. (NNFCA)** that worked with 60-100 Black farmers in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas to provide fresh produce for school meals. NNFCA served more than a million students in 72 school districts across the region.

From 1996 to 2004, the term "farm to school" gained momentum. Early farm to school leadership began by the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, Inc. (Southern SAWG). Southern SAWG was in operation from 1991-2020 with a mission of promoting sustainable agriculture in the South. In 2005, Fayetteville School District became the first school district to develop a farm to school program and it began procuring local products to serve to its students.



[View Resource Here](#)

Collaborative



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Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative

In September 2017, a small group of state agencies and organizations convened for the first time at Arkansas Children's Research Institute to discuss collaborating and moving farm to school forward in the state. This group became known as the Arkansas Farm to School Collaborative in 2018. In late 2019, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture became the facilitator of the Collaborative and in 2020 the Collaborative launched the Arkansas Farm to School Network Conversations as a peer-to-peer learning opportunity for teachers, farmers, and farm to school partners. The Collaborative members meet bi-monthly to share updates and work together on projects that increase the opportunity for engagement in farm to school in the state.

Vision
The Collaborative envisions a future for Arkansas in which every school and community provides a healthy environment for every child. It foresees leaders at every level who have developed supportive policies and programs, effective marketing, and streamlined communication and procurement processes to make farm to school an integrated cultural norm. As a result, Arkansas children no longer struggle with obesity, schools and school gardens are seen as community assets, Arkansas growers are sustainable, supported, and more abundant, and every Arkansan has greater access to good health, a vibrant community, economic prosperity, a clean environment, and social justice.

Long Term Goal
100 percent of schools in Arkansas will have the opportunity to participate in farm to school by 2025.

- Schools: K-12 schools, early care and education facilities, and alternative learning environments.
- Participants: provide programming/activity one time per year.

Guiding Principles
Trust and Transparency
Continuous Evolution
Appreciative Collaboration
Justice & Equity
Sustainable Resource Stewardship



[View Resource Here](#)

Upcoming Grant Opportunities



Whole Kids Foundation Garden Grant

Deadline: March 31, 2021

Funding: \$3,000

Through the Garden Grant program, schools and non-profit organizations turn outdoor spaces into powerful hands-on learning gardens that connect kids with food, spark their curiosity, and support classroom curriculum. The program provides funding to support a new or existing edible educational garden at K-12 schools and non-profit organizations. [Apply here.](#)

Cox Charities

Deadline: March 31, 2021

Funding: Varies

Cox's primary focus area is youth and education. All opportunities that further their goal of strengthening the social, economic, and educational infrastructure of the community will be considered for sponsorship. [Apply here.](#)



[Visit Our Website](#)





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