

Cafeteria Chronicles: Farm to School Best Practices

Connecting farms with schools is a win-win situation; watch this [video](#).

Serving your students farm fresh food is not just a way to provide great tasting, nutritious food, but also supports farmers and your local economy. Schools are typically a reliable and consistent customer for farmers, and the school community appreciates the familiarity of seeing local farmers featured in your school meals.

Farm to school efforts strengthen community ties while providing opportunities for nutrition education. At **Marcola School District 79J** in Marcola, OR, the district is fortunate to have its own school farm on campus, where students receive hands-on education about growing and harvesting food. At their “Veducation Station” community members can visit the student farm and participate in nutrition activities which foster a stronger sense of community and support for the school farm.

Switching to scratch-made meals is another way to support farm to school efforts. When scratch-made meals feature farm fresh produce or proteins, you have more control over sodium and added sugars in your recipes. At **York School District** in York, ME, a shift from processed beef, chicken and fish to fresh proteins from Maine farmers allowed the district to decrease sodium while supporting local farmers. Their fish tacos featuring local haddock is now a favorite menu item for students and staff.

If the growing season is short in your area, don’t forget about dairy and proteins from local farmers, often available year-round. Another option is to purchase a surplus of fresh produce at harvest time and freeze it for later use. At **New Richmond School District** in Richmond, WI, a local farmer’s tomato harvests every fall is processed and frozen by the team at New Richmond, so students can enjoy scratch-made marinara sauce all year round!

To show your support of farm to school, be sure to include any local farmers you have partnered with in your cafeteria for students to see. For the broader school community, include this information in school newsletters, your website and social media and at any in-person events your district hosts. By showing the school community your support of farm to school, you can demonstrate the quality of your meal program as well.

Hats off to these districts supporting Farm to School and leading the way in school nutrition!

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