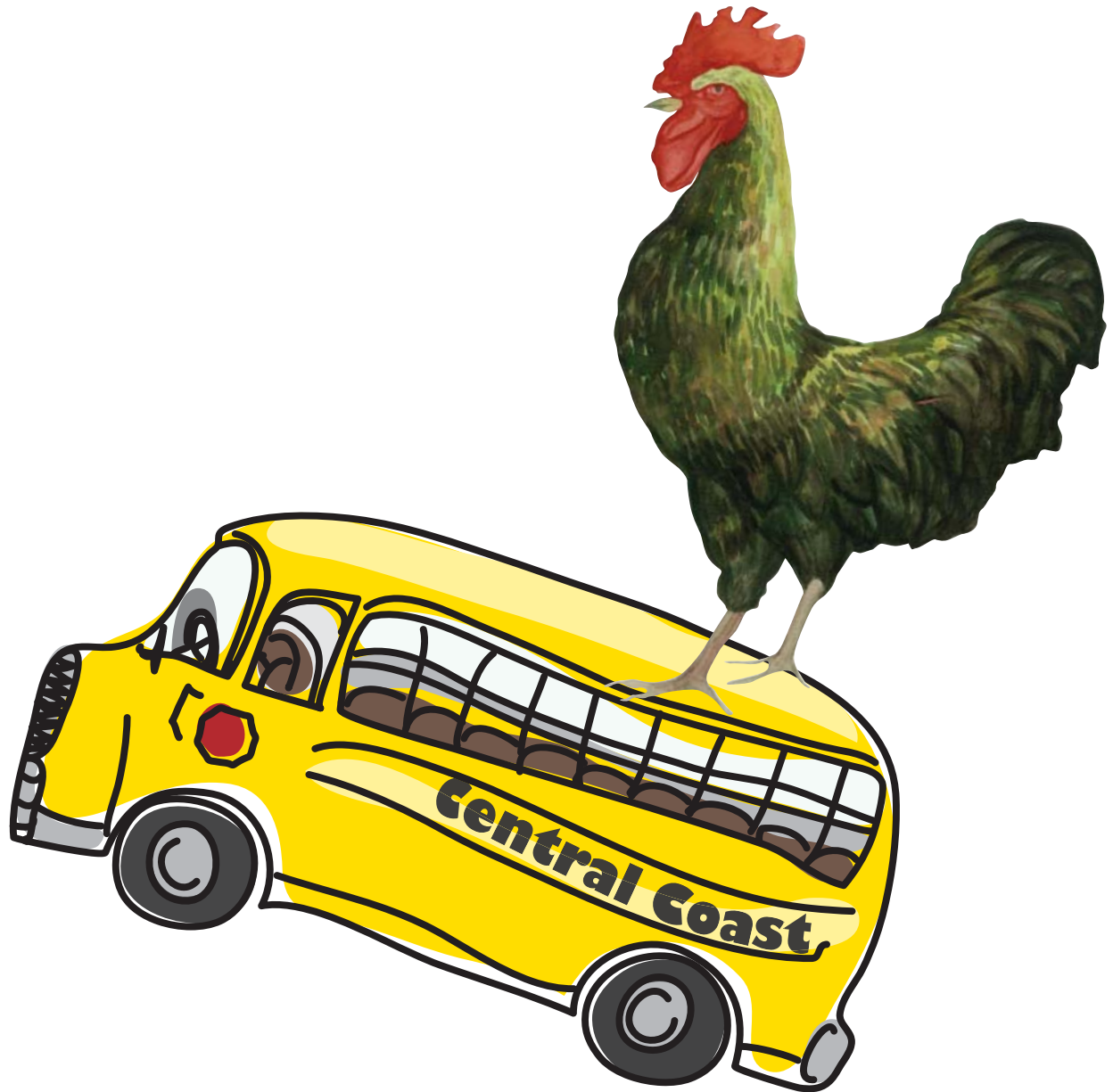


# FARM *to* SCHOOL FIELD GUIDE

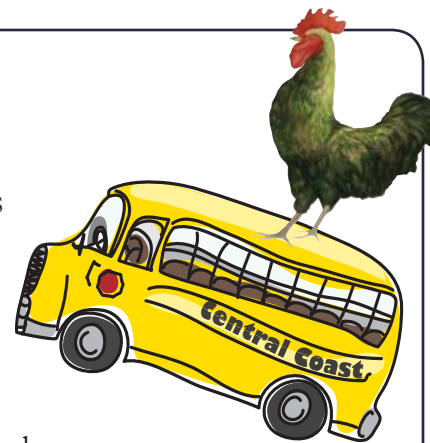
FOR FOOD SERVICE



A publication of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers' *Farm-to-School Program* [www.caff.org](http://www.caff.org)

# WHAT IS FARM *to* SCHOOL?

Farm to School Programs connect farms with school cafeterias and classrooms. These programs can include everything from farm field trips to nutrition education in the school garden to farm-fresh salad bars. The programs come in all shapes and sizes, but they fall into two main categories: **Farm to School Education programs** and **Farm to School Produce Distribution programs**.



A comprehensive Farm to School program puts both elements together: Fresh, locally-grown produce appears on the school menu, while students learn about local agriculture. Farm to School programs are sprouting up across the country!

## HOW CAN FOOD SERVICE DIRECTORS JOIN THE FARM *to* SCHOOL MOVEMENT?

**Food Service Directors have a key role to play in making farm to school happen.** Purchasing fresh, locally-grown foods for your school meals can increase participation rates, expand fresh food offerings, excite students, staff & parents about school food and support your local farming economy.

Although the idea of Farm to School programs appeal to many food service directors, the implementation of these programs can be quite challenging. With tight budgets and strict USDA regulations, producing school meals that keep budgets in the black and that kids will eat everyday can be more than a full time job.

However, many food service directors across the country are finding ways to bring local foods into their cafeterias and are reaping tremendous rewards for this effort. We hope that this guide give you a place to start and answers some basic questions you might have about Farm to School. To get specific advice about how to make Farm to School work for your school, we recommend you get in touch with Farm to School Champions who can help!



### Local organizations that specialize in this stuff:

#### Community Alliance with Family Farmers

Ildi Carlisle-Cummins  
Farm to School Director  
831-761-8507  
[farmtoschool@caff.org](mailto:farmtoschool@caff.org)  
[www.caff.org](http://www.caff.org)

Kathryn Spencer  
Farm to School Program Coordinator  
831-582-5115  
[kathryn@caff.org](mailto:kathryn@caff.org)  
[www.caff.org](http://www.caff.org)

#### Check out these website for more information about Farm to School:

Community Alliance with Family Farmers—[www.caff.org](http://www.caff.org)  
National Farm to School—[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)  
California Farm to School—[www.cafarmtoschool.org](http://www.cafarmtoschool.org)

# BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL LOCAL FOOD MODEL: TIPS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT BUYERS



**Start with the Seasonal Low-Hanging Fruit.** And that's fruit. Whole fruit requires no extra processing, is easily added as a side dish or healthy dessert without having to change the main menu, and the enhanced taste is instantly enjoyed.

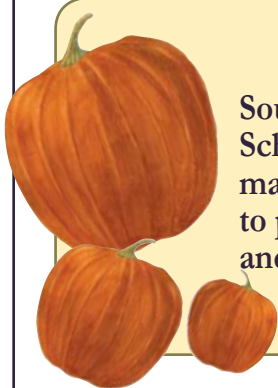
**Shortlist of Seasonal Swap Out Options.** Pick a handful of items you're regularly buying and have a local farmer or distributor identify which are regionally available. Swap those handful of items for locally-grown goods while they're in season. As you look to expand your local sourcing program, you can adjust dishes to incorporate more seasonality and explore unique local varieties. But you can start implementing local sourcing with a focused and manageable short list of produce with any menu.

**Highlight One Component of the Menu.** Choose one component of your menu to feature local produce. For instance, you can create a Seasonal Salad Bar, Local Fruit Bar, or Local Lunch of the Week.

**Engage Your Distributor.** Tell your distributor of your interest in purchasing local and regional food. Ask them to label items that are already in their catalogue that are local and then consider if you would like to ask them to expand these options. If your distributor won't work with you, consider renegotiating your distribution contract to include this availability.

**Leverage Off-Contract Flexibility.** Regardless of the availability with you main distributor, make sure to utilize your off-contract flexibility to support local farmers and local distributors that specialize in local goods. The off-contract ratio is often times about 20% of your total produce purchase, so you can use this margin to start working with local farms and distributors.

**Commit To Communicate with Farmers.** Local farmers may not be used to the conventions that your conventional distributor employs. If the produce arrives over-ripe or too varied in size – communicate your expectations to the farmer who can then consider adjusting their practices. If they can't make it work for this year, a demonstrated commitment from the buyer may encourage the grower to plant a different variety that might work better next season.



Sound like a lot to organize? Don't be overwhelmed! The strongest Farm to School programs start small and grow like pumpkin plants, extending vines in many directions and producing fruit that slowly ripens! If you're inspired to plant the seeds of a Farm to School program, start with a manageable project and have fun.

## SPOTLIGHT ON HARVEST OF THE MONTH:

One simple way to introduce food and farming lessons to kids is through a Harvest of the Month program. CAFF offers Harvest of the Month Tasting Kits that feature a fresh, local fruit or vegetable each month—and include suggestions for easy classroom activities, recipes, and a parent newsletter. These lessons gear kids up for the fresh local fruits & veggies they'll find in their cafeteria. Food service can feature these items and see how kids will devour the fruits & veggies they've learned about in class. Contact CAFF for more information on tasting kits, and visit [www.harvestofthemonth.com](http://www.harvestofthemonth.com).

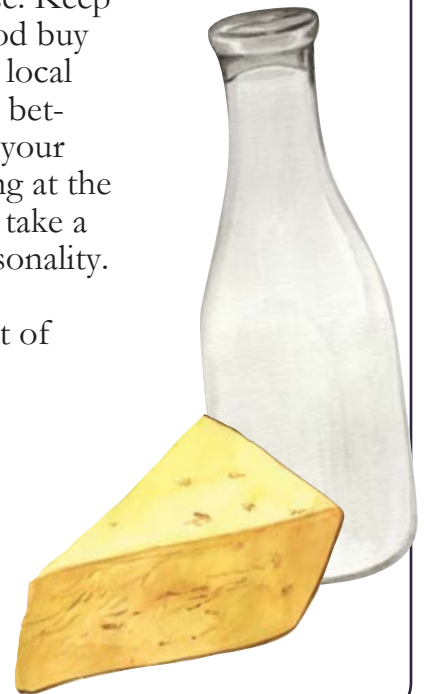


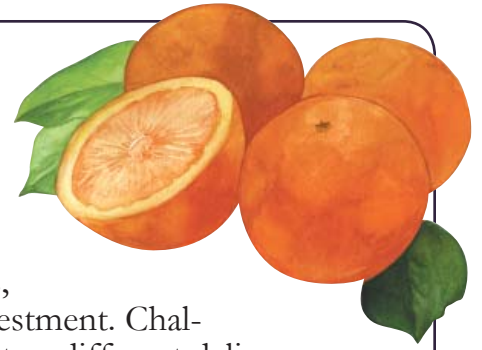
**Be Flexible. This is Different.** While communicating your essential expectations is recommended, it is also important to consider which conventions you can live without. For instance, while you may be used to having all your peaches the same exact size, is that really necessary for all your recipes? Many small farms don't have the machines, yields, time, or pesticide-intensity that are used to create that uniformity of size & color. So remaining flexible with sizing and coloring can be a huge help to working with local farmers.

**Develop Annual Goals.** As with many institutional goals, if you don't measure it, it doesn't matter. Decide where you want to be in one year's time and then created monthly & weekly purchasing targets to get you there. Annual goals can be set as a ratio of your total food buy. The metric can be number of boxes, weight, sales amount or food mile reduction. The easiest to measure is boxes and dollar amount. Our experience shows that a solid goal for the first year is 5 percent of produce purchases, with the aim of increasing by 5 percent each year.

**Set Financial Guidelines.** To alleviate the anxiety, confusion, and possible disconnect of interest amongst different employees – establish budgetary guidelines. Consider setting a maximum dollar amount, a maximum additional cost per serving or year, or approve the cost for a short-list of items. There is no simple answer to how much more it is going to 'go local' –but a rough estimate for a basket of items is 20% increase. Keep in mind that your local produce buy is only one fraction of your food buy which is a fraction of your food service budget. Spending more on local food is about investing in a healthier, more sustainable, equitable & better tasting food system—and can increase the participation rates in your program, which brings in more revenue. Also remember that buying at the height of the season reduces the cost of purchase, so you'll want to take a careful look at your menu and make sure it's aligned with local seasonality.

**Use Your Wellness Council to Get Buy-In.** To reach a broad set of resources for local food procurement and to institutionalize the commitment to buying locally, make sure you involve your School Wellness Committee. Such committees are most effective when they consist of people with a wide background – including district administrators (someone from finance or purchasing), teachers and parents. A network of supporters facilitates a broad commitment and range of support services that your program will need as it makes changes.





**Communicate the Challenges & Benefits to Staff.** There are challenges to local sourcing, and it's important to anticipate and communicate expectations around these challenges to the procurement and kitchen staff. This new model requires some extra effort, so make sure to communicate to all staff and management that we all understand the extra challenges, and in light of the host of benefits – consider it a worthwhile investment. Challenges may include: additional time to work with another distributor, different delivery schedule, less consistent sizing, varying colors, processing time, and additional communication time with local growers. Benefits of local sourcing include: increased student and teacher participation and satisfaction, healthier and tastier meals, community investment in small family farms, and even sometimes district or media attention.

**Educate!** Build the tangible connection between local farmers and your school community by taking the opportunity to educate your student body. Often as food service makes changes students and staff need to know the reasons why. Coupling your menu changes with a nutrition and food education program greatly increases the chances of success. Consider posting farmer profiles next to their crops on the menu or on cafeteria posters, as well as reaching out to teachers and parents. Pictures of the farm and farmers – along with the mileage from the farm to your facility - create powerful connections.

### **AND REMEMBER: IT'S NOT ALL ON YOUR SHOULDERS!**

The single biggest piece of advice we can give you is to build a Farm to School team. Farm to School programs have the potential to grow and effect changes that involve a lot of people, from students to teachers to custodians to parents. To create a sustainable project, you'll need to invite participation (and help!) from a diverse group of school staff and community members:

**Teachers:** Educate their students about healthy eating through garden based & nutrition education, working in school gardens, and taking students on farm field trips.

**Parents:** Can be great allies and volunteer their time to help prep salad bars, run healthy fundraisers, and volunteer to lead nutrition education lessons in classrooms.

**School Board and Wellness Committees:** Hold the power of shaping policies that support your Farm to School efforts, and fulfill requirements of your district's Wellness Policy.

**Community Organizations & Farm to School Programs:** We are here to help with the logistics of fresh produce purchasing, and to provide education to students about healthy eating and their local farming community.

# CAFF IS HERE TO HELP YOUR FARM *to* SCHOOL PROGRAM ALONG



## WE WORK WITH FARMERS & DISTRIBUTORS:

CAFF is working in partnership with the following Central Coast distributors to provide school districts with locally-grown produce. Please contact Farm to School Program Director, Ildi Carlisle-Cummins for more information at [ildi@caff.org](mailto:ildi@caff.org) or 831-761-8507.

### **ALBA Organics**

ALBA Organics sells local, organic, and farm-fresh produce at competitive prices. ALBA Organics is a project of the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association, which generates opportunities for farm workers and limited-resource, aspiring farmers to grow and sell crops from two organic farms in Monterey County.

Contact: Tony Serrano, General Manager, at 831-758-5958 or [tony@albafarmers.org](mailto:tony@albafarmers.org).

### **America Fresh Inc.**

America Fresh is a small produce distribution company located in Aromas that pools produce from 7 small, organic farmers for sale to institutions. They pride themselves on the quality and consistency of their product and their ability to work to meet customer needs.

Contact: Juan Medina, President, at 831-722-8185 or [juanamericafresh@sbcglobal.net](mailto:juanamericafresh@sbcglobal.net).

### **Watsonville Coast Produce**

Watsonville Coast Produce is a full-line distributor of both conventionally grown and certified organically grown fruits and vegetables from many of your favorite shippers. Started in 1974, Coast Produce's business philosophy is based on mutual trust and respect between Watsonville Coast Produce and their customers.

Contact: Sales at (800) 966-8547 or [wcpa@coastpro.com](mailto:wcpa@coastpro.com).



## WE WORK WITH TEACHERS AND KIDS:

**Think kids won't eat broccoli?** Studies have shown after going through Farm to School education programs, visiting farms, and working in school garden, kids will eat more fruits and vegetables than before. CAFF's Farm to School program has been working in schools and entire school districts in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties for the past 6 years teaching students about healthy foods with an emphasis on the local farms that grow that food.

We teach students about food and farming through our school based farmers market program, farmer visits to classrooms, building and maintaining school gardens, leading local food system and cooking lessons, and taking kids out on farm field trips. Our Harvest of the Month Program has reached xxx classes with fresh local produce tastings and nutrition lessons. Farm to School programs have reached thousands of Central Coast kids since 2002. Please be in touch if you're interested in bringing any of our education programs to your schools or districts.



# WHAT'S IN SEASON?



	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Apples												
Apricots												
Artichokes												
Asparagus												
Asian Pears												
Broccoli												
Cabbage												
Carrots												
Cauliflower												
Cherries												
Celery												
Corn												
Cucumber												
Kale												
Kiwi												
Lettuces												
Mandrins												
Nectarines												
Oranges												
Peaches												
Peas												
Persimmons												
Radish												
Strawberries												
Tangerines												
Tomatoes												

Community Alliance with Family Farmers is building a movement of rural and urban people to foster family-scale agriculture that cares for the land, sustains local economies, and promotes social justice.



COMMUNITY ALLIANCE WITH FAMILY FARMERS

The **Farm to School Program** is part of CAFF's

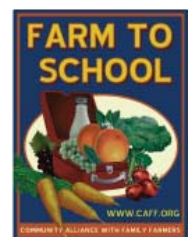
Community Food Systems Program. The

Community Food Systems Program also includes the **Buy Fresh Buy Local** Campaign, which helps consumers find and choose local products while building relationships between growers, food artisans, farmers' markets retailers, restaurants, and institutions. CAFF's **Farm to Institution** Program connects institutions with local foods.



CAFF also operates the **Growers' Collaborative**, a produce distribution company that sells product from family farms to schools, colleges, hospitals, corporate cafeterias and other institutions.

CAFF works across the state, with offices in Davis, Watsonville, Oakland, Ventura, Humboldt, and Fresno. For more information about CAFF's programs please visit [www.caff.org](http://www.caff.org).



# FARM *to* SCHOOL CONTACTS:

Who you need to get on your team  
and how to contact them.....



## District Wellness Policy Coordinator

Name:

Contact:

## School Garden Coordinators

Names/Grades:

Contact:

## Champion Teachers

Names:

Contact:

## PTA/PTO Allies

Name:

Contact:

## Other Fired Up Parents and Community Members

Name:

Contact:

## Community Alliance with Family Farmers

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