



**VERMONT
FARM TO SCHOOL &
EARLY CHILDHOOD
NETWORK**

Farm to School is Growing Healthy Vermont Schools, Farms & Communities

The Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Grant Program was created in 2006. Since then, **339 grants** have been awarded, with **158 schools** and **160 early childhood programs funded**.

Each year, VAAFM awards grants totaling **\$500,000** to support agricultural education and local purchasing in schools and early childhood programs in every Vermont county.

Hands-on, engaged learning



"Every classroom in our district uses school gardens for hands-on learning. Students harvest kale for lunch in the cafeteria, eat cherry tomatoes straight off the vine, pick peppermint for tea to enjoy during reading time, and design pollinator gardens. This is hands-on learning; books are great, but farm to school adds a whole other element."

—**Aziza Malik**, teacher, Champlain Elementary, Burlington

Empowering youth through food



"Students run the crepe cart at the Capitol City Farmers' Market and source most ingredients from our school gardens and the market itself. We prepare the food, create a business plan and budget, and do all the marketing as part of a class. As manager, I met a lot of farmers and I know where all the ingredients are coming from. It's special meeting so many members of this community, and I feel more connected to it."

—**Veda Gahagan**, student, Montpelier High School

The Return on Investment

2 in 5 Vermonters are at risk of experiencing hunger. For many students, about half their daily calories come from school meals. Farm to school programs improve nutrition for all children and support farmers across the state.

Every dollar schools spend on local food contributes \$1.60 to Vermont's economy, and schools spend over approximately \$25M on food every year. Let's keep more of those dollars with Vermont farmers.

Over 100 Vermont farms feed our youth across the state through early childhood and school nutrition programs. More farms are interested in selling to schools each year.

"The pandemic brought food and schools back into focus. Now more than ever, it's important we all remain committed to a strong, vibrant food system."

— **Anson Tebbets**, VT Secretary of Agriculture

Learn more @ vermontfarmtoschool.org or email Dana Hudson at dhudson@shelburnefarms.org



Farm to Early Childhood is Taking Root in Vermont

Through the Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Grants program, early childhood programs are buying local, nutritious food; updating teaching materials; and building partnerships and networks with their local communities.

Of the 73 grants awarded in 2024, 55 were awarded to early childhood programs, primarily for purchasing CSA shares from 30 Vermont farms.

Farm to early childhood helps shape children's current & future eating habits.

Science directly links children's brain development to high quality nutrition. Farm to early childhood encourages trying new foods, family engagement with meals, and hands-on learning with fresh foods. All this helps to build healthy eating habits while a child's food preferences are forming.



Building relationships with local farmers

"Farmer Christine loves to interact with the kids, and makes them feel included and want to try the food more. And since Christine brings extras, I can share with the families so the parents are trying new foods, too."

—**Laura Butler**, Educator & Owner, Imagination Island Family Child Care. Former CSA grantee, Laura continues to purchase from Christine Bourque of Blue Heron Farm (Milton)

Farm to early childhood supports high-quality childcare.

About three quarters of children under six in Vermont live in households where parents are working and need high quality child care during the work week.



Strengthening early education programs

"Farm to early childhood has been a way for us to strengthen our program. It helps our educators instill sustainability into the curriculum, support healthy habits through nutrition activities and outdoor exploration, and create culturally relevant learning experiences for the children we serve."

—**Maggie Rubick**, Mentor Teacher, Northshire Day School (Manchester)

Farm to early childhood provides nutrition security & access to families.

To ensure children can access high quality early education, they must first be fed and nourished.



Making healthy food accessible & fun

"Whether we're talking about the home, a child care program, or preschool, it's important that children receive nutritious meals. Breakfast and lunch often account for more than half of a child's daily calories. Farm to early childhood programs bring local foods to children in child care programs, which may be their only opportunity to actually taste fresh fruits and vegetables."

—**Dr. Mark Levine**, Vermont Department of Health