

Farm To School Education Project

What's Farm to School All About?

Farm to School programs bring local food and farms into school cafeterias, classrooms, and communities. The programs are based on the premise that students will choose to eat more healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, if they have positive experiences and relationships with the source of their food. Participating in school gardens, farm field trips, and cooking with local food are important teaching tools that engage students while building connections to agricultural heritage and rural communities. Farm to School is place-based strategy to benefit children's health and education, while simultaneously providing market opportunities for local farms.



What's going to happen in the Jackson County Farm to School Education Project?

EDUCATION SYSTEM: Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) will partner with professors at Western Carolina University and area community colleges to integrate Farm to School in course of study for pre-service teachers, early childhood educators, and health science students. We will work with the Jackson County school system and Head Start to establish one elementary school and one Head Start Center as "Learning Lab sites" where university and college students can see Farm to School in practice. At the Learning Labs, ASAP will provide teachers with Farm to School training, give the schools educational resources, and train parents to be effective advocates. By working with teachers and parents in this way, we will create an environment where university and community college students can be immersed in a successful and dynamic Farm to School settings. All Jackson County teachers will be invited to ASAP's Farm to School trainings.

SCHOOL FOOD SYSTEM: ASAP's registered dietitian hopes to work with food service staff throughout Jackson County to increase locally grown served in school meals. ASAP will offer the staff local food and farm-based experiences and will provide them with support to menu locally grown food more frequently, conduct Farm to School activities in the school cafeteria, and to generally be more engaged in the overall learning process of the children they serve.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT SYSTEM: ASAP believes that sustaining Farm to School programs in Jackson County will require community support. To develop a support network, we will engage Cooperative Extension agents, chefs, farmers, parents, and other community members in Farm to School activities.

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Benefits for Schools and Teachers

Through the Farm to School Education Project, ASAP will connect children, teachers, cafeteria staff and parents to farmers and the region's agriculture. We will provide them with the resources to go on farm field trips, cook with chefs, participate in school gardens, enjoy local food meals, and integrate these activities into the classroom and cafeteria. This hands-on place-based strategy is key to developing healthy relationships with food while enriching children's overall educational experience.

ASAP will provide Learning Labs with:

- children's literature
- classroom cooking supplies
- funds and support for farm field trips
- school garden supplies
- resource manuals
- local food and farm activities
- connections to and programs from chefs, volunteers, and WCU students
- local food and farm promotional materials

To build Farm to School programs in Jackson County, ASAP will offer training to:

- chefs and community volunteers, to conduct classroom cooking classes
- parents, to learn to become effective advocates
- teachers, to integrate Farm to School into their classroom instruction
- farmers, to conduct effective farm field trips and meet institutional market demand
- university and community college professors, to integrate Farm to School into teacher and dietitian training



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