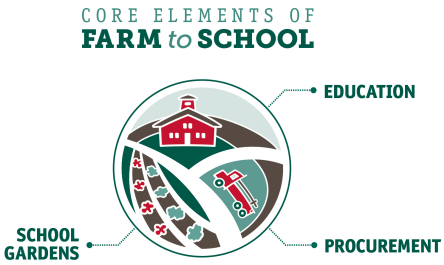
Celebrate Farm to School Month in Montana with

Farm to Preschool

What is Farm to Preschool?

Farm to preschool, a natural extension of the farm to school model, works to connect early care and education settings (preschools, Head Start, center-based programs, programs in K-12 school districts, and family child care programs) to local food producers with the objectives of serving locally-grown, healthy foods to young children, improving child nutrition, and providing related educational opportunities.

Farm to preschool includes the same core elements as farm to school:
Procurement: local foods are purchased, promoted and served at mealtime, snack, or as taste tests;
Education: Children participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health or nutrition; and
School Gardens: Children engage in hands-on learning through gardening.



Getting Started and Growing Stronger with Farm to Preschool

What better time to connect our littlest eaters to the excitement and delicious delights of Montana foods than National Farm to School Month. Whether a one-time apple taste test activity, a week of garden stories during story time, or the start of a long term purchasing relationship with a local farmer, October is a great time to get started with or expand farm to preschool activities in the early care and education setting.

A Taste of Montana for Farm to School Month

Delicious Montana foods like apples, squash, carrots, lentils, wheat, and beef still abound in October.

- Try a fruit or veggie taste test. Compare different varieties of apples, colors of cabbage or squash, or raw versus cooked carrots. Be sure to cut all fruits and vegetables into bite size pieces for little hands and mouths. ***Plan food activities for snack time and serve with a yummy dip to ensure a CACFP reimbursable snack.*
- Identify a food you already use in meals and snacks and try to find it locally. Spend time at meals and snacks talking about the farmer who grew the food and where the food came from. See the Montana Farm to School Month Guide for tips on connecting with local farmers. Be sure to highlight the local food on your menu so parents can get excited too!

- Try something new to highlight Montana foods this month with a recipe from the *Making It Balance and Kickin' It Up Took Kit – A Cycle Menu for Montana Child Care.* http://www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/OToolkits.html?gpm=1_2
- Invite parents and families for a special harvest dinner to celebrate Montana grown goodness. Ask each family to bring a favorite seasonal dish to share and have the little ones create harvest themed centerpieces and artwork.
- Participate in Montana Crunch Time by serving apples on October 26, 2015, at 2 p.m. Resources and registration at: opi.mt.gov/Farm2School

Experience Montana on the Farm and in the Garden

- Fall in Montana means opportunities for pumpkin patch visits, apple picking, and farm field trips. Use this guide from Ecotrust to help you plan a fun fall farm to preschool fieldtrip: http://www.farmtopreschool.org/pdf/states/or/State_OR_Howtohostapre-kfarmfieldtrip_v2.pdf
- There may be a chill in the air, but there is still fun to be had in the garden and outdoor learning spaces:
    - Hearty greens, like kale and collards, as well as root vegetables, like carrots and beets, can still be harvested and eaten from the garden.
    - Children can help prepare the garden beds for winter by pulling plants and covering beds with straw or mulch.

Bringing Farm to Preschool into the Classroom

Many farm to preschool activates align closely with Montana Early Learning Standards and promote age appropriate social, physical, cognitive, and communication development. Find books, lesson plans, and activities to incorporate during Farm to School Month and all year round in these great curricula:

- Harvest for Healthy Kids - http://www.harvestforhealthykids.org
- Growing Minds - http://growing-minds.org/preschool-lesson-plans/
- Grow It, Try It, Like it! - http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-try-it-it

For More Information on Farm to Preschool

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Or visit the National Farm to School Network's farm to preschool website - http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/about-preschool