

Take your place at the table



**and join us
as we reimagine the future.**

You already know the facts—with healthy, accessible, **universal school meals**, kids learn better, stay in school longer, and pay closer attention in class. Fresh, farm-to-school meals for all helps level the playing field on child hunger. Many child nutrition providers, caregivers, and students agree. Now, it's time to take action.

As an integral member of the school community, you may have noticed how the current explosion in locally sourced foods hasn't exactly filtered down to your school or its most precious community members, the kids. Thankfully, this isn't just about catch phrases or foodie trends. It's about getting our students interested early in solid nutrition choices, their health, the joy of delicious food, and encouraging a lifelong curiosity around the food they eat. The dedicated work of professionals like you can also ensure that the entire system that delivers wholesome food to students is just and equitable—to everyone and everything it touches.

The early days of the pandemic highlighted the urgency of moving toward a more resilient local food supply that builds racial and social equity. What if the food you served your kids came from the surrounding area: delicious in season fruits and vegetables, and an array of locally sourced proteins hand-delivered with love and care by locals who reflect the cultures and food heritages of your students? What if we could just focus on nourishing kids without the administrative burden that comes with having to verify each student for free or reduced-priced meals?

These don't have to be "what ifs". We believe an equitable food system that promotes the health of all school children should also include, strengthen and empower the producers, workers, educators, parents and their communities who make up that system. By supporting just communities, we empower our children to flourish as the future leaders they are.

It's time to reimagine the system that feeds our students—but we need everyone's help. So pull up a chair, and let's get started.



NATIONAL
FARM to SCHOOL
NETWORK

www.farmtoschool.org



Take action today for a better tomorrow

Action 1: Learn more

- **NFSN has a vision of a strong and just food system for all, and we seek deep transformation toward this vision through farm to school**—the ways kids eat, grow, and learn about food in schools and early care and education settings. Farm to school is **a win for kids** when they eat nourishing food in meals and snacks, participate in hands-on activities and learn about the importance of where our food comes from; **a win for farmers** when school market opportunities provide reliable and consistent sales and fair pay; and **a win for communities** when food is grown, distributed, prepared and consumed for the benefit of every community member. Read all about the systems, values and people that make everything work, and **see how you can get involved**.
- **Attend professional development training** on incorporating freshly prepared local foods onto your menus and advocate for others on your staff to do the same.
- **Connect to other schools** who are leading on this currently—they love talking shop!
- If they have CEP (or their state offers students universal meals), **talk to others** about it & aligning with values. You could also ask your current food distributor if their practices reflect the school's values.
- Take the opportunity also **engage your colleagues** to fill them in on values aligned school meals via a grassroots school-level connection.
- **Learn how to host a legislator**, to get them to your table to talk about the issues. Invite caregivers, students, farmers, teachers, principals to the cafeteria table.



Action 2: Stay in the loop

Things are changing in school meals—sign up for our newsletter to stay in the loop.

Sign Up!





Resources

Feeding Kids Is Common Sense



When schools have the funding to be able to serve meals to all kids, studies show that schools can maintain nutrition quality while actually *reducing* costs per meal.

[Read more here.](#)

In schools without universal meal service, students who do not have paperwork to verify their income are often singled out for unpaid meal debt or skip meals due to stigma. [Read more here.](#)



"Cafeterias should be positive experiences for all kids."

-Crystal FitzSimons, FRAC

Check out this [report](#) from The Rockefeller Foundation and the Center for Good Food Purchasing which shows an analysis of school meal programs in the U.S., finding that the programs provide \$40 billion in health and economic benefits to over 30 million students daily.





Resources

Leverage the Power of School Food Purchasing

Child nutrition programs across the country exercise collective purchasing power on a massive scale. Pre-pandemic, the National School Lunch Program alone served 29.6 million lunches every school day. K-12 school meals, early care and education (ECE) nutrition, after-school snacks, and summer meals are an opportunity for every community to express their values through purchasing priorities and to shift power in the food system as a whole—and that opportunity becomes even more powerful when we fully invest in meals for all kids. During our NFSN Community Gathering: Shifting Power, Cultivating Justice in June 2021, we hosted a panel of experts and practitioners to discuss the opportunities and power in values-aligned procurement—check out the full session [here](#).



Real Food, Real Ingredients, Real Careers



When nutrition professionals have the resources they need to cook from scratch, they can provide nourishing meals with more fresh, unprocessed ingredients. Universal meal programs eliminate the need for child nutrition providers to check paperwork and let them focus on feeding kids.

Being able to cook from scratch gives school food programs more choice to source from producers and vendors that fit their local community needs rather than relying on heat-and-serve products—resulting in more power to support local

farmers, ranchers, and fishers, or find products with certifications such as fair-labor standards that support their values. Quality scratch cooking depends on a skilled food service workforce. Scratch cooking training and fair compensation invest in careers for food service professionals. Find out more about all the [benefits of scratch cooking](#) from The Lunch Box, from the Chef Ann Foundation.

"Student health, academic achievement, career development, planetary health—all those things could come from healthy school meals for all if it's paired with scratch cooking and it's really healthy."

[-Chef Ann Cooper](#)

