

Digging into Wisconsin Farm to Early Care & Education



What is Wisconsin Farm to Early Care and Education?

Wisconsin Farm to Early Care and Education (WI Farm to ECE) increases access to local foods and enhances the quality of education **in all ECE settings** through

- Facilitating *hands-on learning and play* in food, nutrition, and agriculture,
- Buying, preparing, and serving *local foods* in meals and snacks,
- Building on-site *gardens*, and
- Engaging *families* in health and wellness.

Who can participate in Farm to ECE?

Any and all sites like **group child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, Early Head Start, and 4K programs in K-12 school districts** can do Farm to ECE.

Why participate in Farm to ECE?

Farm to ECE is a natural fit for children ages birth - 6 years and offers extensive benefits for our youngest learners and eaters. Hands-on learning is a cornerstone of Farm to ECE and is perfect for the child exploring the world through his or her five senses.

Farm to ECE can also

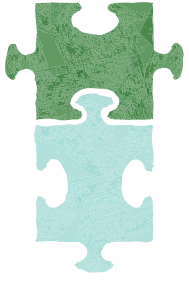
- Increase children's access to local, nutritious food.
- Develop the whole child.
- Offer children opportunities to practice fine and gross motor skills and be physically active.
- Highlight children's cultural backgrounds and support children as they build strong cultural identities.
- Provide professional development opportunities for staff.
- Support local farmers and healthy communities.

Did you know that Farm to ECE can help you meet site and nutrition standards?

- Host gardening nights with families and earn credit towards both **Health & Wellness** and **Family Engagement** points for YoungStar.
- Buy and serve local fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, and dairy in meals and snacks to meet both **CACFP requirements** and **USDA best practices**.

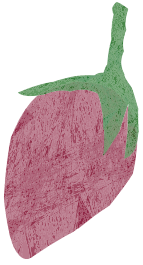


Sample Farm to ECE Activities



Hands-on Learning in Food, Nutrition, & Agriculture

- Teach children about where food comes from and how it is grown through books, dramatic play, or song.
- Take field trips to farms, farmers' markets, or gardens.
- Add a cooking sensory table to your rotation. Provide cooking tools such as measuring cups, sieves, and ladles for children to use in water or sand.
- Practice gross motor skills by pushing a wheelbarrow in the garden, and fine motor skills by using a magnifying glass to observe a seed sprout.



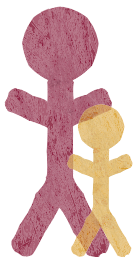
Buying, Preparing & Serving Local Foods

- Fill meals and snacks with a wide variety of Wisconsin-grown fruits, veggies, dairy, proteins, and whole grains.
- Buy local foods from local farmers, farm stands, farmers' markets, grocery stores, distributors, or a weekly produce box through a (CSA) share.
- Serve local foods in meals and snacks including child-tested favorites like butternut squash mac and cheese, kale chips, or local berry smoothies.
- Engage in seasonal food taste tests, a great way for children to try new foods.



On-site Edible Gardens

- Plan theme gardens that connect to children's diverse culinary histories.
- Plant and study seeds in the classroom.
- Grow outdoor gardens or windowsill plantings.
- Use gardens for snacking and sensory engagement.



Family Engagement

- Use garden signage that features native languages of parents.
- Share garden produce with families and caregivers to take home and try.
- Develop family newsletters with seasonal recipes, student menus, and activity ideas to encourage healthy habits at home.
- Host cooking classes.

Questions? Get in touch!

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