

Garden to the Cafeteria

A school garden is a core component of a comprehensive farm to school program. While there is no one-size-fits-all model, a comprehensive farm to school model often involves procurement of locally grown foods within the cafeteria, hands-on food and nutrition education, and student engagement in a school garden. The USDA Farm to School Census also helps track the impact of farm to school programming across the nation. For example, the 2015 Census reported that 99,447 DC students participated in farm to school activities. DC farm to school activities include time in the more than 100 gardens across the District, participating in events like [Growing Healthy Schools Month](#) or [Berries & Greens Day](#), serving locally grown products in the cafeteria and farm field trips.

This section highlights how a school garden can be an integral component of child nutrition programs like the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program. The term Garden to Cafeteria is used to describe programs that make connections between the child nutrition program to the activities in the school garden. When this is successful, kids demonstrate more willingness to try new foods and healthier options (Pew Charitable Trusts and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2016). Many schools in DC and across the country have found ways to increase meal participation, quality, and satisfaction by bringing garden produce into the cafeteria. With proper procedures in place, students can safely enjoy garden produce as a taste test, on a salad bar, or as a part of the reimbursable meal. Below are some resources to assist school garden programs with garden to cafeteria initiatives:

1. Review the [Garden to Cafeteria Toolkit](#) designed to help school district food services safely bring school garden produce onto the lunch line. Created in partnership between Slow Food USA with Whole Kids Foundation, this toolkit builds off the successes and safety protocols of five school districts across the United States to provide templates and a step-by-step process to help school districts develop their own protocols.
2. Browse the [National Farm to School Network](#) websites for resources to support farm to school programs.
3. Apply for a [Whole Foods Salad Bar Grant](#).
4. Learn about funding, trainings, and tools that promote scratch cooking at the [Chef Ann Foundation](#).
5. Get involved in [Growing Healthy Schools Month](#), and [Berries & Greens Day](#).