



**VERMONT
FARM TO SCHOOL &
EARLY CHILDHOOD
NETWORK**

Growing Healthy Vermont Schools, Farms & Communities

The Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Grant Program was created in 2006 with the passage by the Vermont legislature of the **Rozo McLaughlin Farm to School Act (6 V.S.A. § 4721)**.

Each year, the Agency awards grants totaling \$500,000 to support agricultural education and local purchasing in schools and early childhood programs in every county in the state.



Fresh, local food for all Vermont kids!

“When we serve local food in our schools, all students, regardless of their home economic situation, are getting fresh, wholesome, nutritious food in the regular meals.”

– Jen Kravitz, Cornwall School Principal

“Within weeks [of eating school-grown produce], it was getting easier for me to walk up the hill, my mental health skyrocketed, I was happy, and I enjoyed what I was doing every day. I know exactly where my food comes from, and it makes me feel good. It makes me feel like I’m involved in it: I’ve touched it, planted it, and I know where it’s going.”

–Student, Green Mountain Technical & Career Center, Lamoille North School District



Empowering youth through food

The Return on Investment

- 2 in 5 Vermonters are at risk of experiencing hunger. For many students, about half their daily calories come from school meals. Farm to school programs improve nutrition for all children and support farmers across the state.
- Every dollar schools spend on local food contributes \$1.60 to Vermont’s economy, and schools spend \$15.5M on food every year. Let’s send more of those dollars to Vermont farmers!
- Over 100 Vermont farms feed our youth across the state through early childhood programs and school nutrition programs. Let’s grow that number even higher!

“The pandemic brought food and schools back into focus. Now more than ever, it’s important we all remain committed to a strong, vibrant food system.”

– Anson Tebbets, VT Secretary of Agriculture



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Farm to Early Childhood is Taking Root in Vermont!

Farm to early childhood supports high-quality childcare.

266 Vermont farm to school and early childhood grants have been awarded since 2007, with 143 early childhood programs funded.

From 2021 to 2023, 101 early childhood educators and after school programs received VAAF Community Supported Agriculture grants to purchase and utilize local, nutritious food directly from farmers. Demand is growing!

Building relationships with local farmers



“Farmer Christine loves to interact with the kids, and makes them feel included and want to try the food more. And since Christine brings extras, I can share with the families so the parents are trying new foods, too.”

—Laura Butler, Educator & Owner, Imagination Island Family Child Care. A former CSA grantee, Laura continues to purchase from Christine Bourque of Blue Heron Farm (Milton)

“The Essex Westford School District supported our long-term partners at Little One’s University, a local childcare center, to install learning gardens and a composting program. They engage students in the gardens to encourage them to eat healthier, increase their self-regulation techniques through the tactile and sensory experiences of gardening, and help them work independently as they learn to plant seeds and pick produce.”

—Scott Fay, School Nutrition Association of VT President & Essex Westford School District Child Nutrition Program Senior Manager



Hands-on learning for healthy lifelong habits

Programs encourage children and families to develop lifelong, healthy habits through hands-on experiences with nutritious food and exposure to local farms.

90% of our brain is developed by age five. Nutritious food is vital to healthy brain development in young children. Farm to early childhood encourages trying new foods, family engagement with meals, farm visits, and hands-on learning with fresh foods. All this helps to build healthy eating habits while a child’s food preferences are forming.

“Really, when you enroll a child, you enroll the whole family.”

—Director Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, Bennington County Head Start & Early Start