



# Who's At the Table? School Meals Campaign



NATIONAL  
**FARM** to **SCHOOL**  
NETWORK

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## Farm to School: The Common Thread in Successful Universal Meals Campaigns

July 20, 2023

# Interpretation

Valentina Sarmiento Cruz, Community Language Co-op

Please click on the globe icon at the bottom and choose your language (English or Spanish)

Haga clic en el ícono del globo terráqueo en la parte inferior y elija su idioma (inglés o español)



# National Farm to School Network Speakers



**Cassandra Bull**

She/Her

Policy Intern



**Ryan Betz**

He/Him

Policy Specialist

# Panel Speakers

**Abby Halperin**  
Center for Ecoliteracy



**Betsy Rosenbluth**  
Vermont FEED/Shelburne Farms



**Ryan Parker**  
FoodCorps



# Agenda

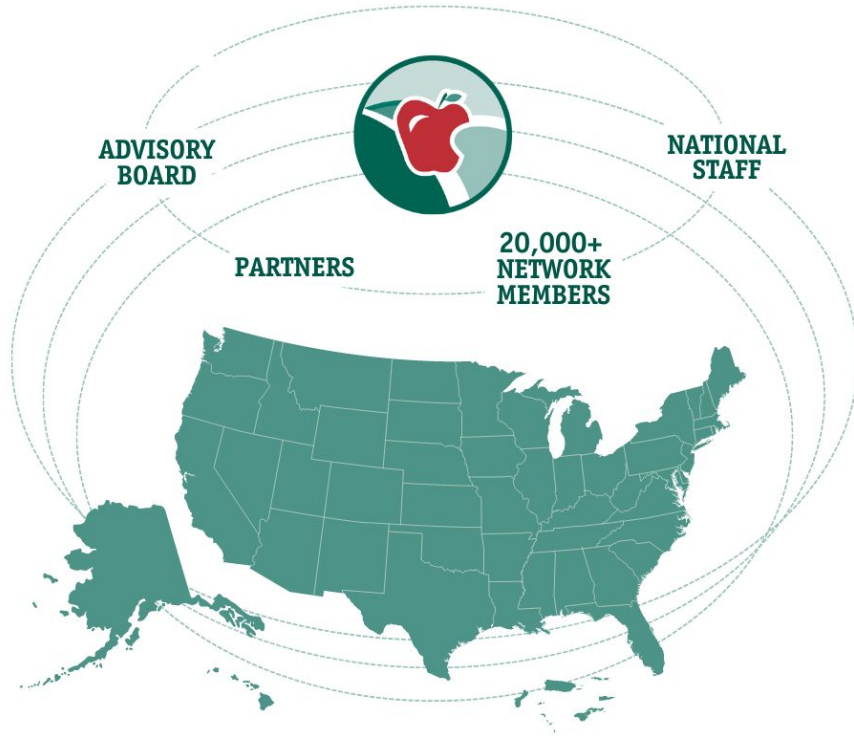
## I. Introduction

- National Farm to School Network and Who's At the Table? Campaign
- Landscape of State Universal Meals Policies
- Insights from four state case studies

## II. Advocate Panel Discussion

## III. Audience Q&A

# About The National Farm to School Network



## Our Mission

Increase access to local food and nutrition education to improve children's health, strengthen family farms, and cultivate vibrant communities.

# Our Core Functions

We are  
a hub for:



Information



Networking



Advocacy

Connecting  
people to:



Resources



People



Policy

**Our Call to Action**  
**100% of**  
**Communities**  
**Will Hold**  
**Power in a**  
**Racially Just**  
**Food System**



**Community Values**  
**Economic Justice**  
**Environmental Justice**  
**Health Impact**  
**Racial Equity**  
**Workers Rights**  
**& Animal Welfare**





# “Who’s at the Table?” School Meals Campaign

[Link: farmtoschool.com/universal-school-meals](https://farmtoschool.com/universal-school-meals)

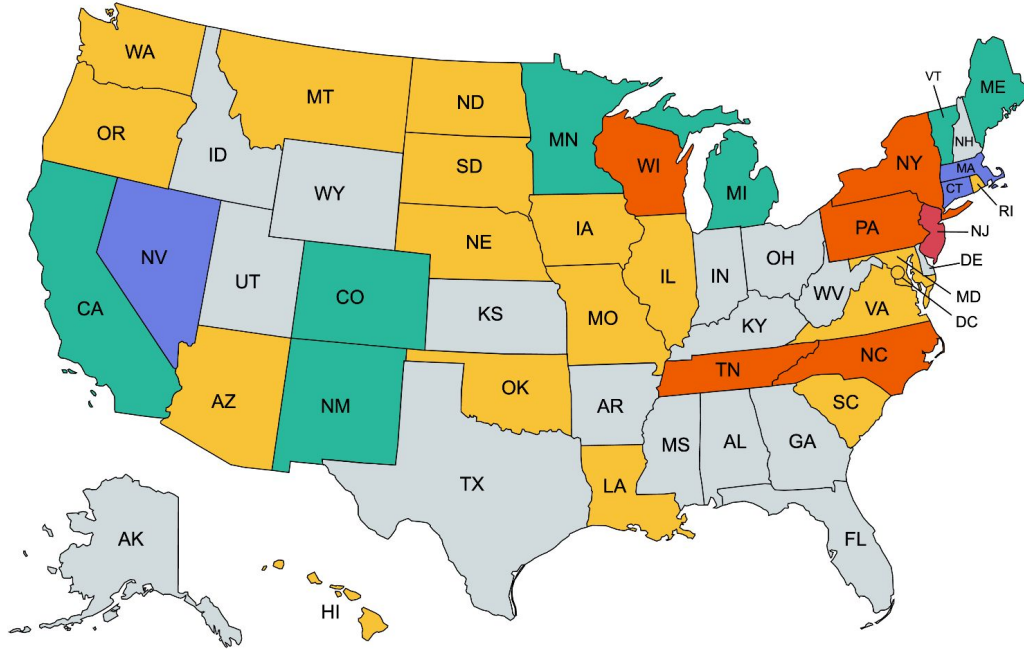


# Universal, Local, and Values-based School Food

## Connecting Universal Meals, Local Food, and Values-Based Purchasing Creates a Just and Resilient Food System



# National Landscape of Universal Meals Policies



**As of July 2023:**

- 31 states + DC Introduced
- 7 Permanent policies
- 3 Temporary policies

## Policy Status

Permanent Policy  
Temporary Policy

Introduced in 2022  
Introduced in 2023

Introduced in 2022,  
Reintroduced in 2023

# States with Permanent Universal Meals Policies

**California**



**Colorado**



**Maine**



**Michigan**



**Minnesota**



**New Mexico**



**Vermont**



As of July 2023

# National Landscape of Universal Meals Policies

## Permanent Universal Meals Represent...

**7**

States

**9.9**

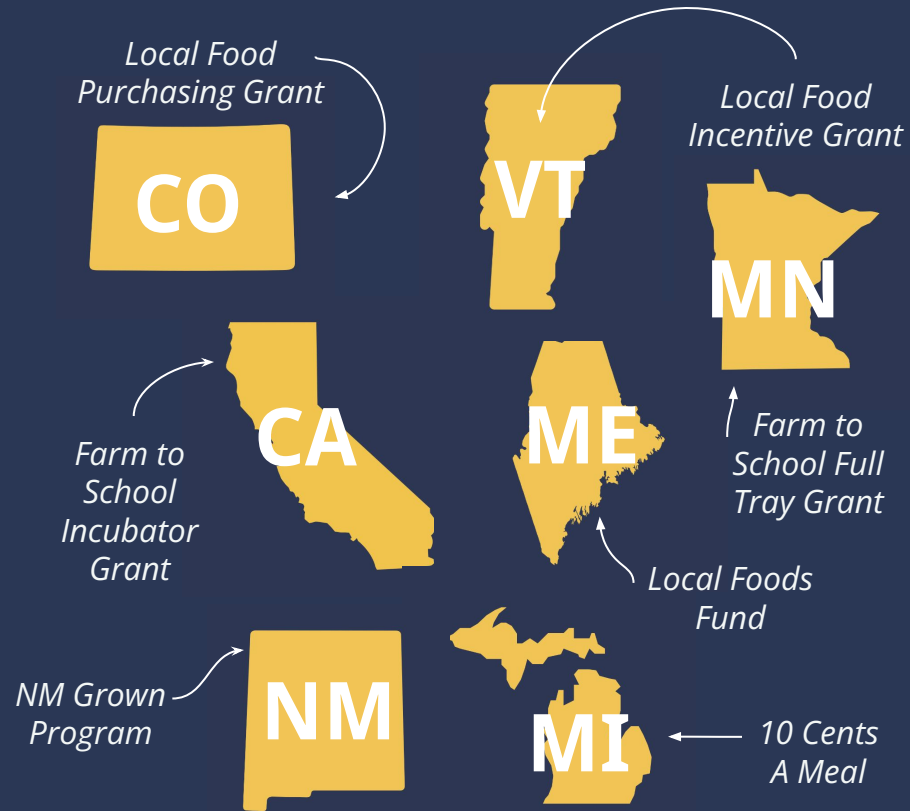
Million Students

**20%**

All U.S. Students

# Farm to School & Universal School Meals

All states with permanent universal meals policies **already had** strong policies in-place that support **local food purchasing.**



# The Case Studies

## Developing the Case Studies

January-August 2023

 **12**  
comprehensive  
interviews

 **4**  
states

 **21**  
total  
informants



## Case Study Structure:

- Policy overview
- Coalition overview
- Unique policy features
- Relevant farm to school policies
- Top tips from advocates
- Implementation insights

# The Case Studies

— Available Now —

— Coming Soon —



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Who's At the Table?

VERMONT

A Case Study of Act 151

Creating a Virtuous Cycle With  
Farm to School and Universal Meals

April 2023



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Who's At the Table?

MAINE

A Case Study of LD 1679

How Farm to School and  
Anti-Hunger Advocates Passed  
Healthy School Meals for All

May 2023



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Who's At the Table?

COLORADO

A Case Study of Proposition FF

Building Community Power through  
Healthy School Meals for All

July 2023



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Who's At the Table?

CALIFORNIA

A Case Study of AB 130

Transforming School Food through  
Healthy School Meals for All

July 2023



# Insights from Case Studies

**I. Each state had diverse universal meals policy features.**

**II. Each state had unique coalition and advocacy strategies, but many advocates shared similar advocacy tips and experiences during implementation.**

**III. Farm to school and/or policies that support values-aligned purchasing were crucial for universal meals advocacy.**

# I. Each state had diverse universal meals policy features.

## Establishing the programs:



Education  
Omnibus  
Budget Trailer  
Bill



Public Ballot  
(Prop FF)



Typical  
Legislation



# I. Each state had diverse universal meals policy features.

First introduction of universal meals was <b>not its final form</b>	CA	CO	ME	VT
First passed a <b>temporary policy</b> , then a permanent one	VT			
Requires schools to <b>maximize federal funding</b>	CA	CO	VT	<del>ME</del> ← encourages
<b>Mandates universal meals</b> if they participate in NSLP	CA	ME	VT	<del>CO</del>
Creates a <b>new tax structure</b> to fund the program		CO		
First <b>eliminated the reduced-price category</b> for school meals	CO	ME	VT	<del>CA</del>

# I. Each state had diverse universal meals policy features.

## Complementary Programs



### *In budget*

- Kitchen Infrastructure
- Food Service Staff Training
- Increased Per-Meal Reimbursement Rate
- Farm to School Incubator Grant (est. 1 year prior)
- Funding for universal meals evaluation
- + more



### *In main bill*

- Local Food Purchasing Grant
- Increased wages for food nutrition staff
- Local School Food Purchasing Technical Assistance and Education Grant Programs
- Student-parent advisory board for local food grant



None



None

\*Originally paired with local food incentive, passed on its own 1 year after incentive passed

## II. Each state had unique coalition and advocacy strategies, but many advocates shared similar advocacy tips and experiences during implementation.

### Coalition Structure

#### Shared by most/all:

- One main organizer
- Tiered coalition
- National partners
- Capacity building

#### Unique:

- Small v. broad
- Visioning process (VT)
- Funding (CO)
- Language justice (CO)

### Advocacy Tips

- Focus on youth / hunger
- Storytelling
- Broad coalition
- Clear messaging
- Targeted research
- Bipartisan support
- Work with lobbyists
- Legislative champions
- Use partners' strengths

### Implementation

- Increased meal participation
- Reduced stigma

#### Challenges

- Income form completion
- Long lunch lines / less meal time
- Staff capacity
- Infrastructure

### III. Farm to school and/or values-aligned purchasing were crucial for universal meals advocacy.



**All states had LFPI policies-in-place prior to UM**

*Well-poised with partnerships in place to then mobilize for UM*



**Farm to school advocates took on leadership roles in UM coalitions**



- Economy
- Workers
- Meal Quality

**Including these policies in messaging and/or strengthening within UM legislation supported advocacy**



*Bipartisan Public & Policymaker Support*



*Broadened Coalition Membership*

# Recommendations for Advocates

## I. Integrate farm to school and/or values-aligned purchases in advocacy and in legislation

- Local food purchasing incentive
  - Farm to school grants

## II. (If possible) Fund supports for implementation

- Equipment & infrastructure
  - Coordinator
  - Staff wages
  - Staff training
  - Evaluation
  - Partners for TA

## III. Learn from successful coalitions

- Case studies
- Communities of practice
- Coalition websites
- Conversations with advocates

# Panel Speakers

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Center for Ecoliteracy



**Betsy Rosenbluth**  
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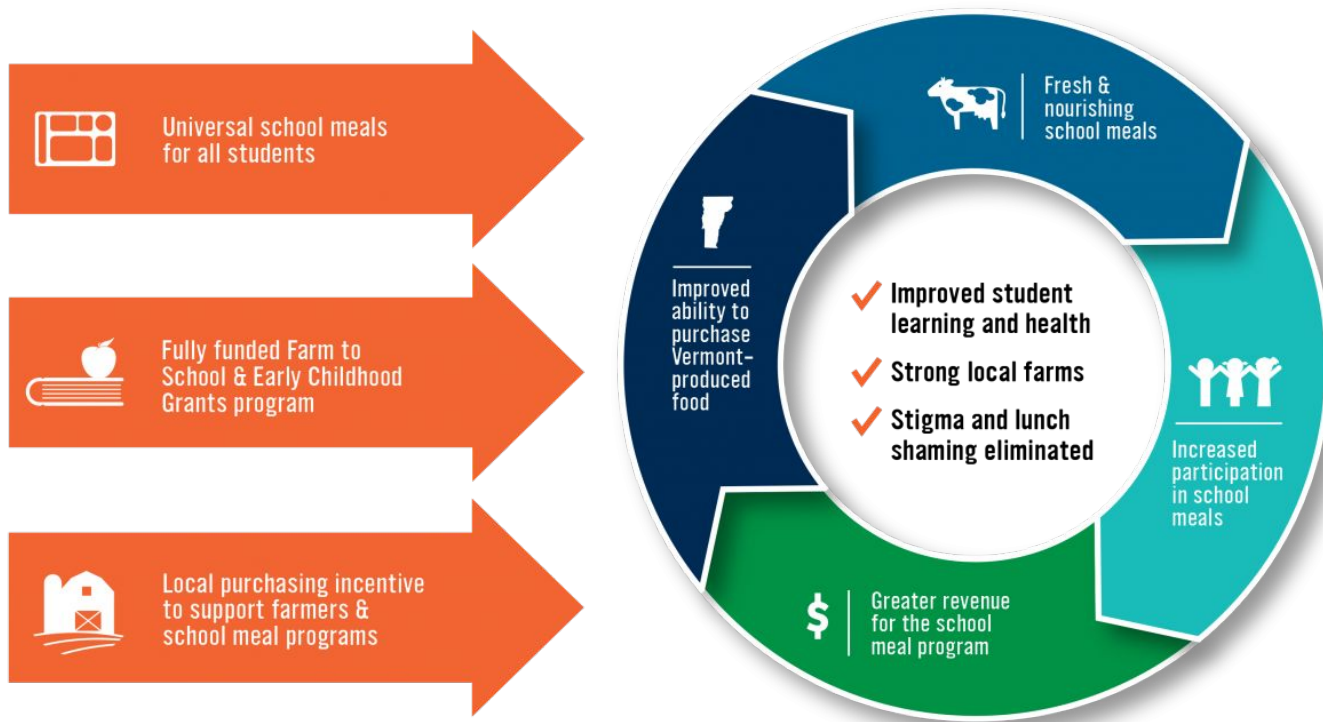


**Ryan Parker**  
FoodCorps





# Vermont's Virtuous Cycle



# Become a National Farm to School Network Partner Organization!

## Link:

<https://www.farmtoschool.org/our-network>



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## National Farm to School Network Partnership Commitment Form: 2021- 2025

National Farm to School Network (NFSN) is seeking partner organizations from across the country, including in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., the five U.S. Territories, and Sovereign Nations, to join us as partners in our Call to Action ([www.farmtoschool.org/calltoaction](http://www.farmtoschool.org/calltoaction)): By 2025, 100% of communities will hold power in a racially just food system. Read more about our Call to Action and NFSN's commitment [here](#).

We seek to build partnerships with organizations that are community owned, in which the voices of those most impacted are not only centered but deferred to and that align with our core values. Specifically, NFSN is dedicated to building more authentic partnerships with BIPOC-led organizations. We recognize that we must make changes to ensure those who are most impacted and do the work day in and day out to feed us all are the ones who drive decision-making. We know that if we don't there is no way we can begin to break down systemic racism in our food system. While NFSN is unapologetically and intentionally working to center the voices and leadership of BIPOC communities and organizations in our network, we recognize that everyone has a role to play and we welcome all organizations committed to this Call to Action to join us in partnership.



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# Thank You!

Does anyone have any questions?

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