



A Coaching Guide for Farm to School & Early Childhood Action Planning

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Welcome!

If you are a new or returning coach in the Northeast Farm to School Institute, this guide will help you to navigate the coaching process, access tools and techniques, and understand the impact of coaching for developing robust, long-lasting, integrated farm to school and early childhood programs.

Farm to school connects **classrooms, cafeterias, and communities** in pursuit of a healthier, more just food system. These programs and/or initiatives build relationships between schools and local farms and bring locally grown foods to cafeterias and classrooms. Through hands-on learning, students can connect the dots of where their food comes from and the impacts of their choices on their bodies, the environment, and the local food system and farming community.

Developed by Vermont FEED in 2000, this **3C model of change** has taken root across the country as a successful model to achieve robust and sustainable farm to school programs. We've found that the most successful programs are not "add ons" to school policies and curricula, but integrated throughout the school priorities and culture. This requires collaboration among administrators, school nutrition professionals, students, families, and educators.

Founded in 2010, the Northeast Farm to School Institute is a unique, whole-system professional learning model that builds capacity in communities to create and sustain integrated FTS&EC programs. Using a proven model of team-building, action planning, and coaching, we work with school teams to unite individuals from across a school's community to leverage and accelerate change. Change in one area of the school, such as a classroom, is reinforced through change in other areas, like the cafeteria. The Northeast Farm to School Institute builds school leadership, skills, and capacity to tie isolated activities into robust, sustainable programs. What may start as one individual's passion is shaped into a system to support an enduring program.

Working with past participants, we at Vermont FEED have evaluated Institute outcomes since its beginning. We have seen evidence that change lasts and the more we build capacity in systems, the more that change is sustained. Institute teams report that the program leaves them with stronger relationships, more skills, and a clear roadmap for action.

Institute Evaluation Findings

- **100% of participating administrators report they plan to integrate farm to school into the curriculum and have more confidence doing so.**
- **84% of child nutrition staff have committed to expanding farm to school programming.**
- **90% of participants report progress in creating a culture of farm to school.**
- **90% of participants say they now have the capacity to solve problems and connect with resources.**

PEER Associates, Ren, Q., Powers, A. L., & Powers, A. A. (2019). Summary of Survey Findings: Shelburne Farms Professional Learning Retrospective. Downloaded from PEERassociates.net.

What Participants Are Saying

“Spending time with my team has been incredible. It’s bringing us together, helping us discover each other’s strengths, and bonding us into a committed team.”

“The focus on agriculture, local food, and nutrition is paying off in the classroom. Kids are interested, and teachers are given more diversity in the curriculum.”

“Sometimes this work can get discouraging but the energy of the other schools keeps me motivated!”

Coaching Matters: A Coaching Model for Farm to School Programming in Early Childhood & PK-12 Schools

Broadly, in educational settings, coaching is a strategy that nurtures and supports individuals or teams to reach professional and personal goals. These goals are often tied to youth outcomes and learning community goals and can be defined by internal and external vision and values. Used in adult learning (or professional learning), coaching can help specifically with implementing new practices or applying values across a system.

“Coaching is an essential component of an effective professional development program. Coaching can build will, skill, knowledge, and capacity because it can go where no other professional development has gone before: into the intellect, behaviors, practices, beliefs, values, and feelings of an educator.” – Elena Aguilar

Why do we use a coaching model for the Northeast Farm to School Institute? Simply put, coaching works! When we began the Institute, we knew we needed to prepare teams to develop, implement, evaluate, adapt, and sustain their FTS&EC programs. We had already seen the power of coaches working with schools, early childhood centers, and individuals to support and sustain change in the school community.

Within the Northeast Farm to School Institute, the coach guides a team's discussion and planning process, working to maximize their effort and effect. Your role as a coach is to help the team achieve its goals in a way that includes everyone's perspective. You will work explicitly to engage all team members, ensure equity of voice, and hold space for vibrant sharing of ideas.

According to the National Gender & Equity Campaign, “A good facilitator [coach] excels in four key areas:

- Communication skills, such as the ability to stimulate thinking, manage a group dynamic, listen, and summarize,
- Familiarity with techniques or activities to enhance participation, creativity, and trust within the group,
- Analytical skills to be able to reframe, capture essence, identify interests, or separate content work from process work,
- Cultural competence to adopt sensitivity and a multi-lens approach in order to work effectively with a given community.”

Learn More

Read the National Gender & Equity Campaign’s [Facilitation Guide](#) and check out [Racial Equity Tools](#) and [National Equity Project](#) for more on coaching that centers equity.

Evaluation Confirms Value of Coaching Model

Since 2012, we have been evaluating coaching’s role in supporting teams who participate in the Northeast Farm to School Institute. Participant surveys and feedback confirm the many pivotal roles that you, as a coach, will play. We highlight some here:

- Develop and deepen relationships across a variety of stakeholders.
- Motivate and support the team in communication and effective meetings.
- Build internal capacity to continue a capable and functioning FTS team.
- Work collaboratively to articulate a shared values statement.
- Develop an integrative FTS action plan by aligning goals and prioritizing ideas, site planning, and assessing assets and needs.
- Build understanding of a school food system, make connections to food sources, and support local procurement.

- Adapt goals, strategies, and action steps to address opportunities and challenges in real time.
- Connect team members, key collaborators, and community resources.
- Build the capacity to implement a FTS action plan and to sustain efforts beyond the Institute or any one champion.

What Participants Are Saying

“Knowing that someone truly believes in what you are doing and is there to guide you is a beautiful thing.”

“Our coach has been a great resource and ally. She helps ground our thinking and keeps us focused on the task at hand. We couldn’t have asked for a better partner.”

Coaching a Team for the Northeast Farm to School Institute



One of the key activities you will engage in as a coach for the Northeast Farm to School Institute is action planning. Action planning is a step-by-step process that begins with assembling a team, identifying shared values and goals, and then planning and conducting strategic activities. This process gives teams the experience of setting and achieving goals, setting

priorities, and working through disagreements, all of which build their capacity to continue this cycle beyond the Institute. A robust, long-lasting, and integrated program should be able to:

- Maximize equitable youth access to fresh, nutritious, locally grown foods.
- Educate youth about food systems, food justice, and healthy eating habits through hands-on and community-based experiences.
- Support and grow market opportunities for local producers and processors.

In the context of the four phases of Vermont FEED's FTS action planning model (see diagram), your role as a coach is to be a facilitator, guide, cheerleader, and sounding board. You may provide technical support based on your expertise or connect teams with resource experts in the community. However, it is not your role to take the lead. (refer to [Coach-Team Roles](#), which describes the coach role versus the team role in ensuring the staying power of FTS programs). A coach builds the capacity of their team to engage in the FTS action planning cycle without them in the future.

During the BUILD phase, the coach supports the team by:

- Communicating and building relationships and trust between the coach and the team and among team members.
- Working with the team to ensure there is diverse representation among collaborators and develop relationships with community partners who hold multiple perspectives and identities.
- Engaging with the [FTS Rubric](#) to assess the school's FTS program development, understand assets, and determine where the team would like to build capacities.
- Listening to and learning from the team to discover where they are in their FTS journey. This includes reviewing the team application and individual pre-survey responses and holding a preliminary team meeting.

See the ACTION PLANNING: Step 1 in [Connecting Classrooms, Cafeterias, Communities: A Guide to Building Integrated Farm to School Programs](#)

During the PLAN phase, the coach and team collaborate to:

- Create a FTS values statement that reflects the school community's values related to their FTS program and integrates the wider community's values, priorities, and identities. Some sample values statements:

Through relevant, hands-on, student-driven educational experiences, the Williamstown Schools Farm to School program seeks to build relationships, foster empathy, honor diversity, improve community engagement and intensify connection to place, while simultaneously providing job and life-skills training which contributes to a sustainable local food economy.

The Beacon City School District is committed to Farm to School programming so that students will be able to make healthy choices and understand the impacts of those choices on themselves, their community, and the natural environment. Rombout Middle School is building a culture of food systems engagement and investing long term in a more just, vibrant, local food system

At Harwood Union High School, we support a meal program that is fun and motivates kids to try new foods and learn about healthy new foods by offering a variety of nutritious, appealing, yummy foods that come from local farms when possible. We want our kids to know where food comes from and the many ways it can be prepared, teaching kids to make healthy choices for years to come. We celebrate our cafeteria's commitment to locally sourced, "from-scratch" meals and work hard to help students understand the importance of environmental sustainability, civic engagement, and personal wellbeing through cross-curricular explorations of our regional food system.

Addison County FTEC Collaborative values relationships...

- ❖ *built between local businesses, farms, and us;*
- ❖ *focused on ensuring the accessibility of local healthy foods for all community members;*
- ❖ *that create hands on learning experiences for children and families;*

- ❖ *that expand awareness and inspire change in the way we look at food and nutrition;*
 - ❖ *that share resources and support community building*
- Center equity in the team action plan with specific actions or strategies and hold equity as a central tenant throughout the planning process.
 - Develop a year-long action plan with goals in four key areas: cafeteria, community, classroom, and integration and staying power.
 - Document longer-term goals and activities (beyond one year).
 - Prioritize goals and activities to move the FTS program forward based on the rubric, assets, values statement, and the broader context (e.g., funding, leadership priorities, team interest and energy).
 - Plan communications efforts to ensure broad and diverse community engagement with FTS efforts (see [FTS Communications & Outreach Planning](#) and [FTS Institute Communications Planning Template](#)).

See ACTION PLANNING: Step 2 in [Connecting Classrooms, Cafeterias, Communities: A Guide to Building Integrated Farm to School Programs](#)

During the ACT phase, the coach supports the team to:

- Engage the broader community in understanding how FTS fits within their culture and values and how it integrates with other initiatives.
- Seek allies for FTS programming by engaging a broader audience, including youth, families, and community partners.
- Communicate with their community about their FTS plans and successes and seek input to adapt the plan and goals as needed (see [Media Kit](#)).
- Implement their action plan and keep equity centered in implementation.
- Establish team meetings, adapt plans, and connect with resources.
- Celebrate successes, appreciate team members, and plan for next steps.

See ACTION PLANNING: Step 3 in [Connecting Classrooms, Cafeterias, Communities: A Guide to Building Integrated Farm to School Programs](#)

In the **ADAPT** phase, the coach and team:

- Reflect on the action plan. Consider successes and what worked, and revisit challenges and how the team overcame them.
- Review and update the FTS rubric. Discuss what progress has been made to further the FTS program, who else might get involved (or play a role), and how the team might go deeper in the next year.
- Assess who is benefiting from the FTS program. Strategize ways to reach more diverse participants (e.g., if your team has been successful in purchasing local products, support them to develop a preferential purchasing policy for BIPOC and veteran-owned farms).

See ACTION PLANNING: Step 4 in [Connecting Classrooms, Cafeterias, Communities: A Guide to Building Integrated Farm to School Programs](#)

Northeast Farm to School Institute Coaching Documents

- [Coach-Team Roles](#)
- [Vermont FEED FTS Rubric](#)
- [Action Planning Template](#)
- [Vermont FEED Impact & Feasibility Analysis Tool](#)
- [FTS Communications & Outreach Planning](#)
- [FTS Institute Communications Planning Template](#)
- [Media Kit Information & Examples](#)
- *Resources for centering equity in coaching are found in the next section.*

Coach Community of Practice

Just as we support school teams using a coaching model, we support coaches using a community of practice (CoP) model. Within this coaches CoP, you'll reflect with other coaches to deepen everyone's practice. This also helps spread promising FTS practices to other education communities. A Vermont FEED staff member experienced in adult professional learning and whole-systems coaching facilitates the CoP, providing year-long support to coaches and helping you adapt your efforts based on evaluations and feedback.

How to Center Social & Racial Justice with Your Team

What Do We Mean by Equity?

Centering equity involves a fluid set of reflective questions, principles, and processes that can be used by any program to make it more equitable. Within the Northeast Farm to School Institute, the effort of centering equity is made in all phases: building a team, action planning, communication, decision making, prioritizing goals, procurement, and engaging the community. The purpose of centering equity in coaching for the Institute is to be deliberately anti-racist and create an inclusive space that values all voices and promotes social equity.

Susan Santone, educator and author of *Changing the Story: Rewriting Our Collective Social Narrative*, offers a provocative question:

“Does the way we obtain our food, design our community, and run our economy provide opportunities **for all** while simultaneously sustaining the shared environmental and social systems our well-being depends upon?”

“... ask for the decision makers to consider equity dimensions of involvement, process, values and assumptions, and outcomes, from a perspective that highlights how practices hold potential to shift power toward inclusion and equity.” – Santa Cruz County's Youth Violence Prevention Network

The staff and partners in the Northeast Farm to School Institute are continually learning about and advancing equity efforts within FTS&EC. The coaching model is a key area for centering equity to strengthen programs. [Read more from the National Farm to School Network on racial and social equity in FTS.](#)

Centering Equity in Coaching

“It isn’t an option for coaches to be neutral on issues of justice — and there are injustices occurring in almost every school, every day. It’s our moral and professional obligation to lead and coach in a way that surfaces and interrupts these inequities.” – Elena Aguilar

As a coach in the Northeast Farm to School Institute, you can support your team to ensure a more just, sustainable, and inclusive FTS&EC program. Here are some examples of what that support can look like:

- Help your team identify who is missing and support them in reaching out to more diverse members who reflect their student body.
- Take time to build relationships among and across your team. Start with deepening relationships to build trust.
- Actively seek out and lift up voices that are often unheard and ensure diverse perspectives are included in all phases of the FTS action planning process.
- Attend to and address power differentials in your FTS decision-making process. Explore [Maine Farm to School Institute's Decision Making Guide](#) for more information.
- Consider unheard voices and counternarratives in the food system and meaningfully engage them throughout the process. Don't forget youth and families!
- Check your assumptions about cultural norms, especially in regard to health, food traditions, and values.
- Value each team member's unique contributions and perspectives and leverage them to improve the FTS program.
- Attend to emotions. As Elena Aguilar says, “Conversations about equity will raise emotions in you and in [your] coaches.” And let's remember that people have emotional connections with food and food systems as well. Food can be celebratory and joyful, but it can also bring up other emotions related to food insecurity or access to culturally sustaining foods. We often remind youth, “Don't yuck my yum!” In the same way, we must

support each team member by learning about and attending to their emotions around food and nutrition.

- Help teammates deeply listen to each other. [The School Reform Initiative](#) has many useful protocols that can help school community members build their listening muscles.

Three practical strategies that coaches can use to address equity in their team's planning:

1. Reflect on implicit and explicit biases that you and others hold toward different groups of people and communities and find ways to mitigate those biases.
2. Include opportunities to build better relationships.
3. Include ways to shift power by creating more equitable structures, practices, and policies.

Questions that coaches can reflect on and use to center equity during the action planning process include:

- Where and how do personal biases show up in the FTS process and program?
- What are the impacts of these biases when making decisions?
- What practices, policies, and structures in the FTS program can potentially perpetuate inequity?
- What are ways to reinvent or reimagine for more equitable and inclusive practices, policies, and structures?
- How can we be in respectful and reciprocal relationships with the communities we serve?

Credit: Tina Wong, Greenprint Ethos

To learn more about centering equity in coaching, read [Elena Aguilar's article](#) in the *Learning Professional: The Learning Forward Journal*.

Centering Equity in Facilitated Discussions

As a coach, you will often find yourself in the role of a facilitator, assisting in the sharing and planning process. As team members test their ideas and bounce them off each other, they will refine and develop those ideas. An idea that started out plain and simple may become vibrant and creative with discussion and input from the entire team. Seek and welcome multiple and divergent perspectives. Some of the best ideas come when two seemingly opposite concepts come together to form a new idea. Being clear ahead of time on how decisions will get made can head off potential tension in the team. The [Impact and Feasibility Analysis tool](#) can be a good framework for weighing options.

As a facilitator, let the team know your job is to moderate and guide the discussion, not to lead them to any pre-established conclusion. Avoid referring to concepts as belonging to the person who suggested them. Keep the focus on the exchange of ideas and not on individuals. Make sure that all conclusions truly reflect the team's values around equity. As a reminder, consider which voices are missing and be sure to address this as a team.

Creating the Conditions for Open Dialogue

The coach creates the conditions for all to contribute and watches team energy, reading non-verbal cues to determine how to guide and moderate discussion. Here are some helpful suggestions for encouraging open dialogue:

- Create a sense of belonging.
- Act with respect toward all team members.
- Actively listen with genuine interest and openness to others' ideas while keeping in mind your role of standing against injustice.
- Be curious if you find a team member is struggling to participate.
- Only speak as much as is necessary. A facilitator is not a performer or a team member, but acts in service to the team.
- Enjoy the people and the process.

The Facilitator as a Role Model

One of the implicit ways in which the facilitator works is by serving as a role model. When you are relaxed, enthusiastic, respectful, and dedicated to the process (not the outcome), you are modeling what participants should expect from each other.

Be sure you come to the role prepared. Familiarize yourself with the material in advance, read and reflect on the team's pre-evaluations, review their rubric and applications and/or websites, and review the [Vermont FEED Farm to School Institute Toolkit](#) and Vermont FEED's [Connecting Classrooms, Cafeterias, Communities: A Guide to Building Integrated Farm to School Programs](#). This will help you have a greater understanding and context of the discussion and action planning process.

Coach & Institute Practices

An essential outcome of the Northeast Farm to School Institute is that every team has an action plan that nurtures and sustains a thriving FTS program. This requires a strong FTS team! As a coach, you play a vital role in guiding your team and building its capacity to continue the work without a coach in the future. Elena Aguilar offers practical suggestions and reminders on how to build a resilient team, many of which are applied at the Institute. Here are some of Aguilar's points, and how they show up in our coach and Institute practices:

- "Get outside of the usual haunts and get around tables."
- "Create structures for connection."
- "Organize opportunities for vulnerability."
- "Offer community agreements" to "Communicate and hold expectations."
- "Give people something meaningful to chew on."
- "Your emotions as a coach are contagious."

Learn More

Read [How to Build Resilient Teams by Elena Aguilar](#). Created by [Bright Morning Consulting](#).

Practices

The Retreat: “Get outside of the usual haunts and get around tables”

Vermont FEED developed the Northeast Farm to School Institute to engage, build, and strengthen healthy FTS teams. We typically start the Institute with a retreat away from the school and the team's usual work space. We share meals, learn, reflect, and enjoy some informal time together around tables and in a unique landscape. Team members have commented that the retreat-like nature of the gathering allows them to more deeply connect with others and be creative and open to new ideas. When they return to their schools or centers, these relationships allow them to better adapt to and address challenges.

Protocols and Purposeful Activities: “Create structures for connection”

One of the unique aspects of the Institute's retreat is that it brings together teams from around the region. We gather as individuals, teams, and partners with unique perspectives on the food system, amazing assets and prior experiences, and a desire to build FTS programs. This network is an essential component of the FTS movement and an outcome of the entire Institute.

Throughout the Institute, we have created purposeful moments for connection using a variety of practices. One that we almost always use is called [MicroLabs](#) from the School Reform Initiative. We create FTS-specific questions that are sequenced to build an individual's thinking. This protocol allows everyone to begin networking as individuals within and across teams, and reveals many different perspectives as each person personally reflects on the meaning of our shared FTS work.

During the workshops, we engage participants in purposeful hands-on activities that connect them to each other, the content, and their practice. We break out by role, by team, and by area of interest during the retreat. Finding time throughout the experience for connection and reflection is essential to professional learning. We facilitate reflection on experiences by using a “plus/delta” process (plus: what worked, delta: what would I change) or other reflection prompts like, “One thing I’m taking away,” “One thing I’m still wondering,” and “One thing I want to take action on.”

Determine Your Decision-Making Process: “Create structures for connection”

Are you coming to consensus, modified consensus, consent-based decision-making, or majority rules? When you are working with a team on their action plan, it's helpful to have this conversation before you begin. The team may already have a decision-making process in place that you will want to use. If nothing exists or the team would like to identify a process together, it can be helpful to explore a consensus-based or modified consensus process.

[Consensus-Based Decision Making Process](#) is a helpful resource by the School Reform Initiative.

Roles and Co-Created Process: “Create structures for connection”

Sometimes, to be open and creative, people find it helpful to know the plan or to be part of creating the plan. We share the outcomes and agenda with participants in advance of the Institute. As a coach, you can likewise support your team by sharing or co-creating an agenda and process for team meetings at the retreat and throughout the year-long Institute. It also can be useful for individual participants to have distinct roles each time the team meets, such as note-taker, process-watcher, and resource-tracker.

When issues arise that are off track from the present discussion or concern something that can be addressed later, you might want to use a “parking lot” or “bike rack” to hold those ideas or topics. At the end of the meeting, address how and when the team will revisit these items.

Team feedback tells us that the most powerful elements of the Institute are working together to complete the rubric and leaving the retreat with a draft action plan. These elements also promote staying power for FTS programs. As such, we have created a [Coach Agenda and Planning Tool](#) to help coaches

stay focused and on track with action planning. After the retreat, begin to transition facilitation and planning roles to team members to build team capacity.

Storytelling: “Organize opportunities for vulnerability”

Elena Aguillar talks about the power of storytelling to create connections. Coaches can tap into this power by encouraging team members to share personal and professional stories, especially at the start of each team meeting. Throughout the Institute, experienced coaches can nurture informal times for storytelling. Here are a few ideas for sharing stories:

- Lead your team in the [What's in a name?](#) activity from the School Reform Initiative.
- Have each team member introduce themselves as they want the team to know them (name, role, pronouns, and more) and by answering a fun question like, “If you were a fruit, vegetable, or recipe, what would you be and why?”
- Have each team member introduce themselves by sharing an important cultural or family meal.
- Create a geographic map of community assets together. Individuals can add FTS assets such as local producers or farms to the map.
- While reviewing the FTS rubric, have team members “brag” about each other's work. For instance, when reviewing the cafeteria section of the rubric, team members might offer something that the child nutrition staff are doing to support local procurement.
- Perform a team check-in or survey to see how folks are feeling. Elena Aguillar offers a [team temperature checklist](#).
- Another way we can honor individuals and the team is to review and reflect on their Institute pre-surveys, team applications, and evaluations.

Establish Community Agreements: “Offer community agreements” to “Communicate and hold expectations” [or intentions]

While you may have prepared in advance to support your team through the Northeast Farm to School Institute, many on your team will be encountering ideas and concepts for the first time. Remember this and let it help you to be patient. Give the time that is necessary to build understanding.

Start by ensuring that everyone is clear and in agreement about the tasks you are hoping to accomplish, the agenda, and the priorities. This will help make everyone feel that they are working toward common ground.

It's also your responsibility as a coach to ensure an equitable process is in place for team discussions and decision-making. Community agreements or intentions can help you do this. You can create a set of community agreements from scratch, with your team's input, or start with some agreements that your team may already use as part of their culture. If you use established agreements, it's always helpful to review them to make sure all participants understand and agree with them.

Once you have agreements in place, it can be helpful to revisit and revise them from time to time to ensure they still work for the team. Revisiting these agreements will be essential as new members join the team.

Here are some helpful tools and examples for developing agreements/intentions:

Developing and learning more about agreements

- [School Reform Initiative "Forming Ground Rules \(Agreements\)"](#)
- [ASCD The Power of Team Norms](#)
- [Seeds for Change Group Agreements](#)

Sample agreements

- [Northeast Farm to School Institute proposed group agreements](#)
- [National Farm to School Network Community Agreements](#)
- [School Reform Initiative "Community Agreements"](#)
- [Glenn Singleton's Courageous Conversations on Race Agreements](#)

FTS Values Statement and Action Planning: "Give people something meaningful to chew on"

The process of creating the values statement and action plan is a lot of work and can be meaningful to the team in a variety of ways. When people work on something that is connected to their passions and identity and is deeply embedded in their roles, they can find purpose or deeper meaning in their work. Sometimes, if a team is stuck or needs a boost in this effort, it's helpful to return to the "why" or purpose of your work, both as individuals and as a team. Start by

watching [Simon Sinek's Start with Why](#), then do some individual reflective journaling or drawing, and follow up with a conversation.

Show Up: “Your emotions as a coach are contagious”

A team will often look to their coach as a leader. Because building their capacity and confidence is your goal, show up ready to work alongside team members. Offer suggestions and guidance, nurture caring relationships, affirm and accept them, and “believe in the capacity of team members” (Aguilar).

Getting the Team Back on Track

Sometimes teams can get off track or have difficulty functioning. These are two different issues. Let's start with a team that needs support getting back on track.

Depending on the situation, there are a few different “coach moves” that can be helpful to move a team forward:

Team issue:	Coach move:
The team is stuck trying to co-create a values statement.	Pause, have the team members take five minutes to journal “What is important to you about FTS?” or “What values come up for you with FTS programming?” Then have team members share out loud.
The team is having a hard time finding a regular meeting schedule.	Try short (30-minute), focused meetings more regularly. Offer virtual meetings in lieu of in-person meetings.
It's hard to get a diversity of perspectives from team members.	Notice and help to ensure all voices are being heard. Have a structured process in your back pocket if the conversation is dominated by a few. You can also change up the dynamic by asking everyone to reflect silently for a few minutes and then share across the team. Sometimes allowing the team to be creative and use a visual or an arts-based approach can

	result in more diverse perspectives. Give time after meetings for folks to share on a team notes document. These notes may help those who are not able to attend or who are not comfortable sharing in a large group.
The team is looking to you to be the leader (e.g., note taker, decision maker, idea generator).	Coaches can use a gradual release model: I do, you watch; we do together; you do, I support; you do on your own!
Team dynamics are tense.	Start team meetings with a ritual: maybe related to food, grounding, or try a breathing bubble . Establish team meeting agreements and post them during the meeting. It can be helpful to surface tensions in the moment. Depending on the team, this may be done collectively or individually.
The team says, "The cafeteria won't engage," "Administration doesn't support us," or "Teachers won't do FTS."	Suggest that the team take time to respectfully and genuinely ask seemingly reluctant participants about how the FTS program can help them reach their goals related to student nutrition, learning, or engagement. If possible, ensure that team meetings are representative of all roles and perspectives in a school or center.

When teams are having difficulty working together, it can be helpful to take a pause and consider what is causing the issue. Elena Aguilar has several strategies to help restore healthy relationships within a team and get it back to functioning at a high level. Check out her resource on [Stages of Team Development](#), which offers indicators for how a team is functioning, along with suggested activities and leadership moves to lift a team to the next level. School Reform Initiative also has compiled [Considerations for Responsive Facilitators](#) which has helpful suggestions for coaches.

Additional Tools that Support Farm to School & Early Childhood Coaching

- [Connecting Classrooms, Cafeterias, Communities: A Guide to Building Integrated Farm to School Programs](#)
- [Coach-Team Roles](#)
- [Sample Group Agreements](#)
- [FTS Rubric](#)
- [Action Planning Template](#)
- [Impact and Feasibility Analysis Tool](#)
- Communications Tools
 - [Sample Media Kit](#)
 - [FTS Communications & Outreach Planning](#)
 - [FTS Institute Communications Planning Template](#)
- Videos: Hear from Northeast Farm to School Institute Coaches
 - [Conor Floyd, Food Connects](#)
 - [Aimee Østensen, Shelburne Farms Institute for Sustainable Schools](#)
 - [Ryan Morra, Professional Learning Affiliate, Shelburne Farms Institute for Sustainable Schools](#)

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