



# Farm to School & Early Childhood Rubric

**Team Name:**

**Date:**

**FTS Members Completing Rubric:**

The rubric on the following pages is designed to help Farm to School (FTS) and Early Childhood (FTEC) teams get a systems-wide view of their farm to school program. This will inform action planning and identify what next steps might be taken to deepen the program and give it greater staying power. It can also be used to identify readiness for farm to school grants and needs for technical assistance. **A collaborative, multi-stakeholder review will lead to the most accurate picture of current practices, and can encourage more strategic action planning.**

The rubric is broken into four sections: Cafeteria, Classroom, Community, and Staying Power, and Integration. The rubric is designed as a continuum with progression from left to right. To use the rubric, go through each criteria (left hand column) and identify the indicator description that best matches the **current state** of your farm to school program. Descriptions with an asterisk \* and in *italics* are specific to early childhood settings. In some cases, part of the description might apply to your program and part of it might not, or you might feel that your program falls somewhere between two descriptions. In that case, choose the one description that **most fully** describes your program, but also highlight any parts of the adjacent description that may apply to your program. Please use the notes column to further describe, clarify, or elaborate on any responses.

While this rubric is designed as a general tool for all farm to school programs, there will certainly be aspects of your program that may not show up in the indicators or descriptions. Feel free to add language in the appropriate section or “notes” column that more fully describes your program. This rubric is simply a starting point for you to create a quick snapshot of your farm to school program, so please adapt it to be useful for your needs. Additionally, it is helpful to return to the rubric to assess progress, if the team is feeling stuck, or to build on your FTS Action Plan.

We define Farm to School and Early Childhood as a comprehensive strategy that connects learning and experiences in the Classroom, Cafeteria, and the Community. The goal is to help learners establish a lifelong positive relationship with food while supporting a more just food system. The strategies used to achieve this shift are: serving healthy local food, improving nutrition, providing hands-on food systems based learning opportunities, and developing meaningful relationships between community partners, educational settings and youth. Farm to school and early childhood supports youth in connecting the dots of where their food comes from and how their food choices impact their bodies, the environment, and their communities at large.

For more information on the 3Cs, a model for whole school change, visit [Vermont FEED's website](#). [Connecting Classrooms, Cafeteria and Community: A Guide to Building Integrated Farm to School Programs](#) is a helpful resource for FTS action planning, including a description of many terms used in this rubric.

# Cafeteria

INDICATOR	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	DEEPENING	THRIVING	NOTES
<b>School Nutrition Staff Leadership</b>	School nutrition staff are interested in the creation of a farm to school program.	<p>School nutrition staff engage students and families to provide feedback on menu items and/or to support a culture of trying new foods.</p> <p>School nutrition staff play an active role in developing the farm to school program.</p>	<p>School nutrition staff work with community partners, students and families to create a student-centered cafeteria experience (e.g. student voice impacts meals, cafeteria environment, communication /website)</p> <p>Menu items are culturally responsive to the needs &amp; demographics of the students.</p>	<p>The director or manager and/or several school nutrition staff work with educators, administration, and community members to coordinate farm to school efforts and programming.</p> <p>School nutrition staff gather input from students and families on a regular basis to create a culturally sustaining meal program and a welcoming dining space.</p>	
<b>Values-Based Local Procurement</b>	School nutrition staff Identify possibilities for incorporating local food into the menu and/or resources to help source local food.	<p>Food purchasing values have collaboratively been defined for the program.</p> <p>School nutrition staff understand proper procurement practices and have identified and are purchasing local food.</p>	<p>Local food is regularly incorporated into the menu.</p> <p>School nutrition staff can adapt to fluctuating sources and seasonal availability of local food, as well as differing needs of producers/vendors.</p>	<p>Annual procurement contracts support purchasing from local farmers, BIPOC farmers, and other producers.</p> <p>Systems in place to sustain purchasing of values-based local food; new local food sources evaluated regularly.</p>	
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Professional Learning</b>	School nutrition staff has begun to identify infrastructure, professional learning needs, and necessary changes to be made to incorporate values-based local food into the meal program.	<p>Infrastructure changes initiated or being planned, waste reduction strategies are explored.</p> <p>Professional learning opportunities provided for some staff.</p>	<p>Infrastructure can sustain storing, processing, cooking, and serving local foods over the long term.</p> <p>Waste reduction strategies and infrastructure are in place.</p> <p>All school nutrition and support staff who regularly support meal service have opportunities for professional learning.</p>	<p>Plan in place for ongoing evaluations of infrastructure and professional learning needs as local food purchasing increases.</p>	
<b>Classroom &amp; Community Connections</b>	School nutrition staff interested in conducting taste tests and/or can identify possibilities for engaging colleagues and youth in nutrition education and the farm to school program.	School nutrition staff works with the farm to school committee to support classroom and community connections in the cafeteria (i.e. nutrition education).	School nutrition staff work with the farm to school committee and students on taste tests, sustainable food practices (compost, waste reduction), and community farm to school events.	Community members, students, families, and school staff see the school food program as an integral part of the school, community, and educational programming.	

# Classroom

INDICATOR	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	DEEPENING	THRIVING	NOTES
<b>Student, Educators, &amp; Staff Leadership</b>	Students, educators, and staff interested in creation of farm to school programs.	A diverse representation of students, educators, and staff regularly attend farm to school committee meetings or lead regular farm to school activities.	<p>A diverse representation of students, educators, and staff help to plan and implement farm to school activities beyond their own classroom.</p> <p>Student leadership and decision making is developing.</p>	<p>A diverse representation of students, educators, and staff work with school nutrition staff, administration, and community members to coordinate farm to school efforts.</p> <p>Students share responsibility in decision making for farm to school efforts.</p>	
<b>Integrating FTS into Curriculum</b>	Educators, students, and staff have identified possibilities for integration of farm to school activities into standards-based core curriculum, licensing and other guidelines.	<p>Some educators and staff teach lessons or units integrating food system themes.</p> <p>Some student projects integrate place-based food system topics.</p> <p><i>*Early educators explore emergent curriculum opportunities to include FTEC activities, nutrition education and wellness themes</i></p>	<p>Most educators and staff facilitate learning experiences integrating food systems.</p> <p>Learning is student-centered and projects are created based on student curiosity and place-based opportunities in the food system.</p> <p>FTS activities are culturally responsive, experiential, and place-based.</p> <p><i>*Early educators facilitate emergent curriculum which integrates nutrition, food-system and wellness concepts</i></p>	<p>School has a coordinated approach to integrating food systems into curriculum across all grades and in multiple disciplines.</p> <p>Time and professional learning resources are available to support staff to integrate FTS.</p> <p>FTS is part of a comprehensive curriculum including student wellness (nutrition, social-emotional learning)</p>	
<b>Campus and Community-based Learning Opportunities</b>	educators and students can identify possibilities for campus (gardens, greenhouse, compost, etc) and community based (community gardens, farms, producers, families etc) learning experiences.	<p>Some educators and staff provide campus or community-based learning opportunities for students to engage in hands-on learning experiences related to food systems.</p> <p>Some grade levels have experiences with localized food production (field trips, guest presenters, virtual experiences, etc).</p>	<p>Most educators and staff provide hands-on learning experiences that are embedded within larger units of study, support established goals for learning, and students apply learning on campus and/or in the community.</p> <p>Student voice shapes learning opportunities, campus and community-based projects, etc</p>	<p>School has a coordinated approach to providing student-centered FTS learning experiences; each grade provides opportunities for scaffolded experiences that build developmentally.</p> <p>Students analyze, lead, and engage with community partners and campus leaders on food systems projects and learning opportunities.</p>	
<b>Cafeteria as a Classroom</b>	Staff have an interest in connecting their classroom to the cafeteria (kitchen, dining spaces, communication channels, etc).	Some staff have intentionally connected classroom learning with the cafeteria (e.g. Harvest of Month, FFA programs).	<p>Educators and staff utilize the meal program as a place for deepening student learning across multiple classrooms or grade levels.</p> <p>Students have learning experiences connected with school nutrition staff, resources, and apply learning in the cafeteria context.</p>	There is a coordinated and collaborative approach to connecting cafeteria with classroom learning where students and school nutrition staff are leading and learning together.	

# Community

INDICATOR	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	DEEPENING	THRIVING	NOTES
<p><b>Family Engagement</b></p>	<p>Families are invited to participate in the FTS program and/or are aware of the farm to school program.</p>	<p>Families have several opportunities and a clear role in getting involved in farm to school efforts (taste tests, gardening, farm to school committee, etc).</p> <p>Family input and feedback is sought in a variety of ways (including informally where families gather) to ensure a diversity of voices and perspectives.</p>	<p>Families actively participate in a range of FTS/FTEC efforts (school meal program, taste tests, field trips, classroom activities, fundraising, cafeteria connections, committee work, etc).</p> <p>FTS/FTEC program centers food justice and equity at all levels; family members, liaisons, or organizations provide input on farm to school programming.</p>	<p>A system is in place for ongoing family engagement and feedback to support FTS/FTEC efforts.</p> <p>FTS/FTEC program uses a food justice and equity lens informed and evaluated by families.</p>	
<p><b>Community Engagement</b> (businesses, non-profits, government agencies, civic groups, organizations, etc)</p>	<p>FTS committee has identified opportunities for community members and/or groups to partner on the creation of a farm to school program.</p>	<p>FTS committee supports community members' active engagement in farm to school activities.</p> <p>Community members and organizations are a resource for school educational opportunities (field trips, farm visits, class speakers, etc).</p>	<p>Community members actively participate on the farm to school committee.</p> <p>The farm to school program is linked to or embedded in community events.</p>	<p>A diverse representation of community members has been established to provide sustained support of FTS programming.</p> <p>Engaging a diversity of community members creates a reciprocal partnership in community wellness, food systems education, and food access and justice</p> <p>The FTS program has established long-term relationships with community members and organizations to provide FTS connections throughout the year.</p>	
<p><b>Farmers &amp; Producers as Partners</b></p>	<p>The FTS committee has identified a variety of farmers and producers to partner with on the creation of a FTS program.</p>	<p>Farmers, food producers, and local food-based businesses support the FTS program, share expertise, and are sites for learning.</p>	<p>Farmers, food producers, and local food-based businesses partner with educators and students to develop and/or implement curriculum and projects.</p> <p>Relationships with systemically marginalized farmers and food producers are nurtured.</p>	<p>Long-term relationships established between local &amp; systemically marginalized farmers, food producers, and food-based businesses.</p>	

# Integration & Staying Power

INDICATOR	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	DEEPENING	THRIVING	NOTES
<p><b>Leadership* Support</b> *School nutrition, director, principal, program director, school board, committee superintendent</p>	<p>Administration is interested in the creation of a farm to school program.</p>	<p>Administration supports and integrates or aligns FTS with broader goals.  Administration communicates regularly about farm to school activities and/or with the farm to school committee.</p>	<p>Administration supports staff-wide farm to school professional learning and participates in farm to school activities.  Administration includes FTS in communication with the broader community, board, and their networks.</p>	<p>Administration supports inclusion of farm to school tasks into job descriptions and/or provides release time for staff to do farm to school planning.  Administration is a resource to other leaders on how to start and sustain a farm to school program.</p>	
<p><b>Culture of FTS</b></p>	<p>FTS champions have identified connections between FTS values and activities and other school initiatives.</p>	<p>A farm to school committee has been created and is active with diverse representation of members from across the school community.  The FTS committee has developed a values statement that guides their action plan.</p>	<p>Staff, youth, families and community members review the goals and action plan and develop strategies for the future.  All staff are provided on-going opportunities for farm to school professional learning.  Staff and community members feel farm to school is an integral part of school identity.</p>	<p>FTS program values are adopted school wide. There is alignment between FTS program values and other activities and campus practices such as celebrations, events, waste reduction, schoolyard renovation, etc  FTS is considered in policies and scheduling (e.g. school wellness policies)  FTS helps implement other priorities such as diversity, equity, belonging, restorative justice, student wellness, etc.</p>	
<p><b>Communication</b></p>	<p>Communication about farm to school takes place within peer groups (educators, administration, school food service, families, students, community members).</p>	<p>Communication about farm to school happens across peer groups and to/with families.  FTS committee ensures access to FTS information to the full diversity of school community (This might include translating materials, elevating student perspective and voice)</p>	<p>Vehicles for community-wide FTS communication have been established.  There is a FTS communication plan that is implemented at a variety of scales and audiences. (such as meetings, e-mail list, newsletters, website, social media platforms, etc)</p>	<p>A diversity of staff and community members contribute to the ongoing communications of the value of farm to school to the social, physical, emotional, intellectual benefits of students and the community.  A system is in place for FTS communication that prioritizes equity and access.</p>	
<p><b>Resource Allocation</b></p>	<p>Funding and resources have been identified to launch farm to school program.</p>	<p>Resources are allocated to support on-going farm to school efforts including financial, staff time, technical assistance, infrastructure, communication, etc...  PTO/PTA, school foundations, committees, or other supporting organizations help with FTS resource allocation.</p>	<p>Resources are allocated to successfully implement the annual FTS action plan.</p>	<p>A variety of resources are in place to ensure effective implementation, innovation, communication, and evaluation of the FTS program over the long-term.</p>	