



FARM TO PRESCHOOL NEWSLETTER

TAKING ROOT



At Burlington Children's Space, Farm to Preschool family dinners have been a major success! Read more and learn how to host your own family dinners below.

Photo courtesy of [Sam Simon](#)

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National survey of Head Start members provides insight into Farm to Preschool activities

As part of the W.K. Kellogg funded Food and Community Connections project—a national effort to help organizations expand their roles in promoting access to good food and creating healthy places where the nation's most vulnerable children can thrive—the Michigan State University [Center for Regional Food Systems](#) (CFRS) has partnered with The National Head Start Association to conduct a member survey around the specific activities that support access to and awareness of local, healthy, fresh, foods. This survey is intended to provide a snapshot of farm to school activity—local food procurement, curriculum and school gardening, in Head Start programs (ages 0-5) across the country. This survey compliments other national survey efforts like the recent [national Farm to Preschool survey](#) (which included Head Start as well as all other early care and education settings) by identifying key efforts, barriers, and opportunities that are specific to Head Start programs.

Read the [Farm to Head Start survey summary here](#).

Farm to Preschool webinar: Tuesday, November 13th, 12 P.M. CDT

Spread the word, mark your calendars and [register here!](#) Come learn about the National Farm to School Network's exciting Farm to Preschool initiative (all early childcare settings included). Participants will be introduced to the Farm to Preschool movement and resources, find out how to get involved, and get a closer look at some example programs from across the country. Presenters: Emily Jackson, [ASAP](#), and Zoe Phillips, [UEPI](#). The main webinar presentation will last 20 minutes followed by a question and answer

session.

In the meantime, the Let's Move! Child Care webinar, *Digging in to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity*, recorded on September 12, 2012, is now archived and [available online](#).

The holidays are coming! Celebrate by hosting a Farm to Preschool family dinner

[Burlington Children's Space](#) (BCS) in Burlington, Vermont began hosting family dinners in 2010 as a way to involve parents and families in their effort to serve more local foods. This Farm to Preschool activity is perfect for the holiday season, or any time of year! [Lunch Lady Erinn Simon](#) tells us how it's done:

"Our food program was growing and changing and Sarah, our Director, and I had a vision forming. We knew we wanted families to really benefit from the food program as well as the kids. We realized that food is a powerful way to bring people together, so why not make a meal we serve the kids for lunch and invite families to come and share it? It would be free for everyone, no strings attached. We just wanted people to come, eat, and be together in our space.

We held our first Family Dinner in September 2010. We scheduled the dinner to begin informally at 5:00pm, half an hour before closing time, in an effort to catch lots of families during pick up so no one would have to leave and make a trip back to the center. We asked parents to come as early as 4:30pm if they wanted to help with preparations. We have a tight budget, like everyone else, so we called our local grocery and asked for a donation. They gave us a \$100 gift card which funded the whole dinner. We made a BCS favorite: macaroni and Vermont cheddar cheese, and served homemade bread and local apples. About 30 people attended, and several showed up early and helped chop apples, slice bread, and set tables. The kids were obviously thrilled to share the experience with their families. Everyone relaxed and talked and had fun, and the food disappeared. We knew we were on to something, and we started planning another one right away.

We needed help with an on-going budget for the meals since our first and most important goal was to have them be free events. We were lucky to partner with our local food co-op, City Market, who agreed to fund 6 dinners over the year, so we were able to schedule one every other month. Our second family dinner was a Thanksgiving feast attended by 60 people, and our attendance has kept growing since then. At our 2011 Thanksgiving dinner we served 120 people including kids, parents, extended families, community friends and staff!

We think the keys to the success of family dinners are simple: we schedule them at a time when parents are picking kids up, and everyone's hungry. They are always free for everyone, and families need not bring anything but themselves. We keep it informal and relaxed. We serve one or two seasonal dishes straight from our lunch program, using as many local ingredients as we can, like always. We hand out recipes to anyone who wants them, and we keep lots of containers on hand to send leftovers home!"

Resource Spotlight: Pumpkin activity and recipe

Celebrate fall with a Pumpkin Exploration! The [Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's](#) pumpkin lesson is a perfect harvest activity. This free lesson includes:

- Goals for your exploration
- Book suggestions
- Seed counting activity
- Tasting guide, and
- A recipe for roasted pumpkin seeds! Yum!

[Download the lesson and recipe here.](#)

Do you have a seasonal activity to share? [Let us know!](#)

Don't forget!

Visit our website for tons of Farm to Preschool resources and information. You can also submit your own events, news, or materials: farmtopreschool.org

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