

# Food Literacy Action Guide

For food literacy advocates in schools and communities across Massachusetts



# Introduction

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Food literacy is an understanding of the food system including where our food comes from, how to make informed decisions about food, and the impact of those food choices. Food can be an effective lens for teaching other subjects, experiential food-focused lessons can improve educational outcomes, and a better understanding of food and the food system contributes to healthier students, communities, and environments.

A population of people that are food literate, including understanding where their food comes from and why what we eat matters, is a population more likely to make healthy food choices. Food literacy also activates people to be engaged in caring and advocating for the food system which is especially important in light of both persistent and new threats such as climate change and massive cuts to food assistance programs like the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#). Finally, food and agricultural education is an important tool for workforce development, preparing and inspiring more young people to pursue jobs in agriculture, nutrition, food service, and related fields.

The [Campaign for Food Literacy](#), led by the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative, aims to ensure that all K-12 students have equitable access to food education. We envision all students leaving school being food literate, having learned about topics including agriculture, nutrition, culinary skills, and food justice.

The Campaign advocates for food literacy at the state level, which you can read more about in this [White Paper](#). But much of the work to provide food system education now and in the future lands within school systems. Supporting many multi-modal approaches to promoting food literacy in classrooms, schools, and districts across the state is an important strategy towards food literacy for all. This Food Literacy Action Guide outlines a variety of approaches to begin or expand food system education efforts whether you are a student, parent/guardian, teacher, administrator, school nutrition staff, or other advocate.

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# Policy Change

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Policy changes include the passing or changing of laws, also known as legislation, as well as ordinances, resolutions, mandates, regulations, or rules. Policy change can be an effective tool for positive change by requiring, incentivizing, funding, and/or facilitating beneficial programming such as food education. Anyone can help influence policy changes.

## State policy change

This includes advocacy campaigns focused on making statewide policy change. The campaigns support food system education directly and through promotion of a school food environment that includes exposure to and education about local foods.

- [Campaign for Food Literacy](#)
- [MA Food for MA Kids](#)

## Local/Municipal/School Policy Change

These include opportunities to build relationships, join committees, and initiate processes at the local level that can lead to supportive policies for food literacy.

- [School Wellness Committee/Policies](#)
- [School Committees](#)

### Policy is for the people

Policy advocacy is a great opportunity for anyone interested in food education to get involved. You can join a campaign and help advocate for supportive state policy or you can engage with local policy-making bodies, such as the School Wellness Committee, that creates and implements institutional wellness policies, or the School Committee that reviews & approves budgets and sets educational goals and policies.



#### Legislators

- Read more about two state level campaigns that promote food education on the next page.
- Read the white paper, "Promoting Food Literacy" to learn about strategy for systemic food education for all K-12 students.

# State Policy Change

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## Campaign for Food Literacy

The [Campaign for Food Literacy](#) aims to ensure that all students in grades K-12 have access to food system education in school including learning about agriculture, nutrition, food justice, and culinary skills. The primary legislative goal of the campaign, passing *An Act to Promote Food Literacy* (H.735/S.392) includes getting food literacy added to the topics DESE can set educational standards for, as well as establishing a Food Literacy Trust Fund and calling upon DESE to make resources including curriculum and professional development available.



### Take Action

- **Legislators:**
  - Speak about the importance of passing *An Act to Promote Food Literacy* with leadership.
- **All advocates:** Get involved with the [Campaign for Food Literacy](#) to advocate for policy changes that ensure all K-12 students learn about the food system. This includes:
  - [Sign up for updates](#) and/or [Sign on to support](#)
  - Attend the next meeting
  - Talk to your state legislators about the importance of these bills!

## MA Food for MA Kids Coalition

The [MA Food for MA Kids coalition](#) is a statewide advocacy effort by a network of partners and farm to school advocates working to support schools and early education programs in the following areas.

- Maximizing equitable access to meals at school for all students
- Strengthening school meals, including maximizing the use of locally grown and produced foods and providing meals that are culturally connected to diverse student populations
- Offering engaging food education and experiential garden-based learning to all students

Not only does this coalition include a focus on providing engaging food education and school garden-based learning, but supporting Farm to School activities helps encourage a variety of programming that teaches about and exposes students to local food.



### Take Action

- **Legislators:**
  - Speak about the importance of passing *An act establishing the Massachusetts Farm to School Program* with leadership.
- **All advocates:** Get involved with MA Food for MA Kids Coalition
  - [Sign up for updates/Join the Coalition](#)
  - Attend the next meeting
  - Talk to your state legislators about the importance of these bills! Check out Mass Farm to School's [Advocate Materials](#) including tips for visiting or hosting a legislator and other advocacy toolkits.

# State Practice Change

## Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

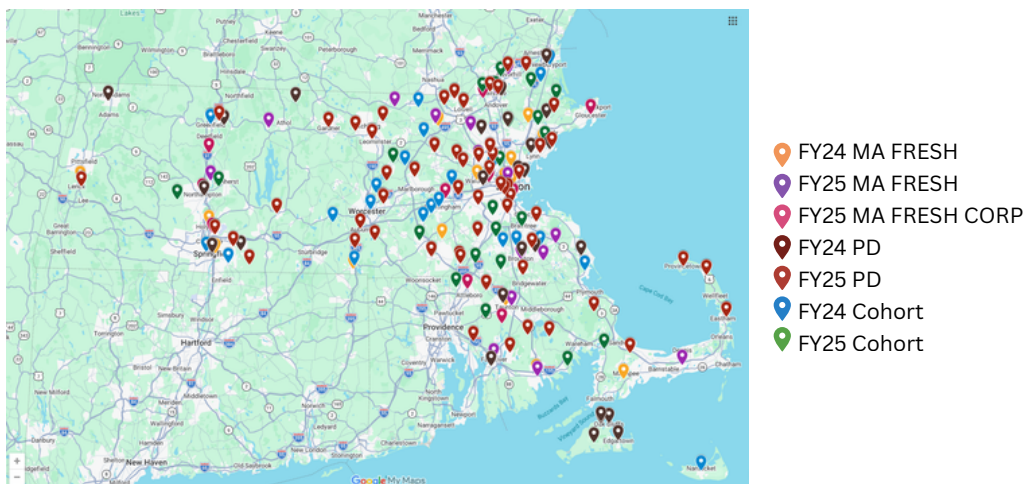
DESE's Office for Food & Nutrition Programs has demonstrated strong leadership in promoting food literacy over the last several years. They convene a Local Food System Education Taskforce bringing together partners that support food literacy in early education and K-12 settings. They have also incorporated a food literacy focus into the School Wellness Initiative for Thriving Community Health (SWITCH). DESE also partners with Mass Farm to School on local food procurement and local food education initiatives including [Northeast Food for Schools Challenge](#) and [Terrific Tray](#).

### Impacts of state investments in food literacy

As of June 2025, 177 school districts (~40% of all Local Education Agencies) have engaged with food literacy state funding and resources:

- 580,000 public school students (~60% of all PreK-12 public school students) have benefited directly or indirectly from food literacy state funding
- 63 schools and early education programs have received grant funding from FRESH grants and FRESH CORP grants
- Over 500 additional hours of food literacy professional development for educators has been made available across 14 distinct course offerings
- Teachers and educators at 129 school districts (30% of LEAs) received professional development through food literacy state funding
- 66 school districts have received school wellness coaching

Figure 1: Statewide reach of food literacy investments



From: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2025



## Take Action

- Join [DESE's STEM District Leader Networks](#) to "share resources and strategies around equitable implementation of the Commonwealth's curriculum frameworks using high-quality instructional materials, and provide input on DESE initiatives"
- Find out if your school district has made use of the above resources

# Local Policy Change

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## School Wellness Committee/Wellness Policies

A [local school wellness policy](#) is a written document that guides a local educational agency's (LEA) or school district's efforts to establish a school environment that promotes students' health, well-being, and ability to learn. School wellness policies are required for all local educational agencies (LEA) or school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program, which includes most schools in Massachusetts. Wellness policies are required to set goals for nutrition promotion and education. To help LEAs assess compliance with the local wellness policy and meet state and federal requirements, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in partnership with the School Wellness Initiative for Thriving Community Health (SWITCH), developed the [Massachusetts Local Wellness Policy Assessment Tool](#). The tool is used in the School Wellness Coaching Program and is also available to all MA LEAs. It includes questions specific to food literacy and food system education, encouraging LEAs to set strong policies and goals in those areas.

## Example

**Tyngsborough** - Innovation Academy is using their Wellness Policy as a pathway to enable and promote food education. First, language was added to the policy, including: "The Farm to School program coordinator/s will collaborate with food service staff, classroom teachers, and other school staff to integrate farm-to-school programming in the classroom, cafeteria, and community." The Wellness Committee has worked closely with the Farm to School committee to integrate farm-to-school and food education programming. Resources they've developed at Innovation Academy include:

1. Food in the Classroom Checklist and Form - helping to allow safe and thoughtful use of food in the classroom
2. Cooking Up Community [Library Resources](#), [Cooking Equipment Lending Inventory](#), and food safety training and support in integrating food and garden education in courses and enrichment activities.
3. Identify and integrate into each grade level (5th - 12th) a key garden and food-based experience connecting students to our local food system (ex. 5th grade field trip to Black Earth compost, maple sugaring for all 7th and 8th graders in their math classes, hydroponic gardening and snacks for all 9th and 10th grade health students, etc.). Mapping the key experiences.



## Take Action

- **All advocates:**
  - Consider joining your School Wellness Committee
  - Learn more about wellness policies on the [SWITCH website](#)
  - [Sign Up](#) to receive school wellness updates from SWITCH
- **Administrators:**
  - Request a spot in the [School Wellness Coaching Program](#).
    - For schools that have food literacy goals in their wellness policy, Tier 2: Implementing Initiatives can help put the policy into action and create sustainable change.
- **Wellness Committee Members**
  - Review [this resource](#) about incorporating food literacy into your Local Wellness Policy from SWITCH.
  - Explore Framingham State's [4-Week Online Courses](#)

# Local Policy Change

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## School Committee

The role of school committees in Massachusetts includes to “review and approve budgets for public education in the district” and “establish educational goals and policies for the schools in the district consistent with the requirements of law and statewide goals and standards established by the board of education.” Engaging with School Committee members and educating them about the importance of food literacy can help facilitate support for and approval of valuable food education programming.

## Examples

**Chicopee** - Chicopee’s Food Services Department recently established a new position “Garden and Nutrition Program Facilitator.” Upon securing funding for this position, the role needed to be approved by the School Committee in Chicopee before being posted for recruitment. Chicopee’s Farm to School Coordinator reflected on the experience and the need to understand the process in your district ahead of time. This was an important step towards establishing this dedicated staff position for food education.

**Southcoast** - The Marion Institute’s Grow Education Program which works with school districts in the Southcoast of MA has gone through School Committee approval in some districts ahead of their partnership. Grow Education is often incorporated as a supplement to the Grade 3 Science Curriculum, and sometimes aligned with Health or Social Studies standards as well. The Marion Institute recognizes the vetting process with a School Committee as a best practice that helps generate buy-in and structure for high quality programming.



## Take Action

- **All Advocates:**
  - Learn about the School Committee’s role via [Massachusetts Association of School Committees FAQ](#), and this [DESE Legal Advisory](#).
- **Teachers, Students, Advocates:**
  - Introduce yourself to a School Committee member
- **Parents/Guardians & Community members:**
  - Learn more about how to engage with your local School Committee as a member of the public
- **School Nutrition Staff & Administrators:**
  - Speak with Human Resources or other relevant staff in your district to understand what engagement with the School Committee is needed in order to do things like establish new staff positions.
- **School Committee members:**
  - learn about and support food literacy efforts in your district

# School Systems Change

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Much of the work to provide food system education now and in the future lands within school systems. Systems change can involve changes in the classroom, throughout a school, or across a district. These changes shift if and how food system education is offered including by adding classroom lessons or standalone courses, establishing dedicated staffing, providing professional development, mentoring and educating others, and seeking grant funding. Supporting many multi-modal approaches to promoting food literacy in classrooms, schools, and districts across the state is an important strategy towards food literacy for all. These varied approaches help (1) immediately bring more food system education to more students, (2) generate buy-in for policy changes that can impact all students, and (3) build capacity for school systems to implement food system education now and upon policy changes.

## **Classroom Lessons**

## **Food System Units & Courses**

## **Cafeteria Programs**

## **Out of School Programs**

## **Grant Funding**

## **Professional Development**

## **Dedicated Staffing**

## **Mentorship & Education**

# School Systems Change

## Incorporate food education into classroom lessons

You can begin teaching about the food system in your classroom or using school gardens as an outdoor classroom. There are a variety of lesson plans and curriculum that align with existing standards while using food and agriculture as a lens to teach core subjects such as math, science, and social studies.

### Examples



**Belmont** - Shoba Reginald is a **7th grade science teacher** who created a standards-aligned class project related to food waste. She identified existing standards that could be taught using food waste as a lens. She petitioned to have food waste added to instructional guidelines for 5th, 7th, and 8th grade Science standards. Reginald connects her food waste project to ESS3. Earth and Human Activity standards in 7th grade which, thanks to her petition, now states students should be able to: “Analyze situations to identify ways to decrease

human impact on the environment, such as using renewable energy resources, carpooling, taking public transportation, reducing storm water runoff, reducing food waste, and recycling.” Throughout the project students get to plant seeds, nurture plants, consider how to enrich soil, calculate water usage, and learn about food waste.

**Salem** - Kelly Cronin was formerly a **K-5 Special Education teacher and later a K-5 STEM Specialist Teacher** in Salem, MA. Cronin is now an integrated preschool teacher at Gloucester Preschool and owner/operator of High Tide Farm, a certified organic small scale fruit/vegetable/flower farm located in Beverly. In both communities, she has worked to integrate farm to school and food education into Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. In Salem, Cronin designed K-5 curriculum that integrated the outdoor garden as a school wide learning space. The lessons and projects, which align directly with MA educational standards in Math, Science, English Language Arts, and Social Studies, include:

- Kindergarten: seasons
- 1st grade: weather (1),
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade: pollinators and habitat study
- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: planting vegetable gardens
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade: cultural foods
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade: composting



## Take Action

- **Students:**
  - Let your teachers know that you’re interested in learning about food!
- **Teachers:**
  - Explore curriculum and lesson plan resources in our [Resource List](#) to use or get inspiration for creating your own lessons.
- **Administrators:**
  - Help empower teachers to incorporate food system concepts through support, stipends, and professional learning opportunities.

# School Systems Change

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## Offer Standalone Units & Courses

Consider adding a food systems specific unit in your class or course at your school.

**Tyngsborough** - Anna Cynar, a Science teacher at Innovation Academy Charter School, teaches a full-year Sustainable Food Systems course for Grades 11-12. In this interdisciplinary course, students “explore...connections to our food system (all of the steps involved in getting food on your plate and the factors that influence that system).”

- Topics include “indigenous and African American foodways, agroecology, industrialized food systems, food waste, food policy, food access, farmworkers' experiences, the school lunch program, etc.”
- Students participate in cooking labs every two weeks, making group meals that build their cooking skills and expand their food knowledge and experiences
- Food and garden-based seasonal experiences are integrated throughout the course to strengthen students' connections to agriculture and place (E.g. heirloom tomato seed saving and planting, garlic planting, maple sugaring, etc.).
- We also work to connect with school staff, local organizations, and leaders involved in food system work. This year, students will participate in small group food systems civics action programs supported by MA Farm to School.

**Falmouth** - In 2021, Ben Harden and several friends and colleagues who were not working in the school system were inspired to do justice-oriented work with students. They approached a few teachers at Falmouth High School. Together, they developed and pitched a new food justice program to the superintendent. Multiple factors aligned at the time, included a grant from the Falmouth Education Foundation, to form an opportunity to start this program. The curriculum explores growing food, food systems, and the cultural context of food on Cape Cod. It's embedded as a Career Technical Education (CTE) pathway and includes several semester courses that build upon each other from the basics of growing food to small-scale farming and beyond. Ben Harden teaches the program, which incorporates racial justice, climate change, and the local context. They've partnered with the Cape Verdean Museum and Cultural Center and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to connect students with the rich agricultural history and cultural diversity of Cape Cod's land stewards. Ben and his collaborators founded Food Justice Initiative, a nonprofit, to help garner continuous funding and support for the program.



## Take Action

- **Students:** Let your teachers & administrators know that you want to learn about food!
- **Teachers:**
  - If you have interest and expertise in food systems, consider if there is an opportunity to offer a dedicated unit (K-8) or standalone elective course (9-12)
    - Start by identifying what steps would be necessary to accomplish this including gaining administrator buy-in, gauging interest, and potentially seeking approval from the School Committee.
  - Watch [“Making Sustainable Food Systems Education Part of the Core Curriculum”](#)
- **Administrators:**
  - Consider if there is space in the course offerings to include a standalone course focused on the food system. Schools have offered it as an elective or a Career and Technical Education pathway.

# School Systems Change

## Cafeteria/School Food Programs

### Harvest of the Month & Taste Tests

Harvest of the Month aims to “encourage healthy food choices by increasing students’ exposure to seasonal foods while also supporting local farmers and building excitement about school meals.” A taste test is “a small sample of food offered either in the classroom, or in the cafeteria at lunchtime, introducing its flavor, texture and smell.” Taste tests can be done in conjunction with Harvest of the Month or separately.



**Webster** - Kelsey Sanders, Food Service Director at Webster Public Schools, has embraced Harvest of the Month as an opportunity to build out a variety of cafeteria programs to get students excited about local produce and teach them about the local food system. Read more about Webster’s experience here.



**Greenfield** - Kyle Zegel is the founder and owner of Dig In, a small food literacy based business that directly contracts with public schools, community centers, and other community organizations to facilitate cafeteria taste test programming, school garden coordination, and culinary and agricultural after school programs. Currently he works with Greenfield Public Schools to facilitate taste test programming in their three elementary schools following the Massachusetts' harvest of the month program. The program is both an opportunity to educate students and provide professional development for school nutrition staff.



## Take Action

- **School nutrition staff:**
  - Learn more and sign up for [Harvest of the Month](#),
  - Incorporate students into the cafeteria (ex. invite them to help choose menu items)
  - Check out this [Cafeteria Taste Testing 101 presentation](#). You can also find a variety of resources for designing taste tests [here](#), from the John Stalker Institute.
- **Teachers:** Learn more and sign up for [Harvest of the Month for Educators](#) which includes monthly newsletters with crop specific curriculum
- **All:** Learn more about other cafeteria & school food programs like the [Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program](#) in our [resource list](#) here.

# School Systems Change

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## Out of School Programs

Out of school programs can engage students in a different setting, help introduce or expand upon a topic for interested students, and provide unique experiences.

### **Garden Clubs**

Garden clubs provide eager students an opportunity to gain hands-on experience with growing food. They can also help create opportunities for the whole school.

**Dartmouth** - Students in the Garden Club Dartmouth Middle School worked together over several years to transform the school's courtyard into an educational space. The courtyard includes picnic tables, storage sheds, compost bins, herbs, vegetables, and a pollinator garden.

### **Green Teams**

The Green Team is an environmental education program for K-12 schools in Massachusetts. Green Teams explore concepts such as waste reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, energy conservation and pollution prevention. Environmental and food system education have many interesting overlaps for things like food waste and composting. Green Teams can be an after school club but they can also start in a classroom, through dining services, or across a whole school.

**Northampton** - HEC Academy in Northampton received a Green Team Award for Environmental Stewardship in 2024 for their work including establishing a garden and successfully advocating for cooking classes to be incorporated into the school curriculum, focusing on nutrient-rich and local food choices, minimizing waste and practicing sustainable farming. Amy Stamm, a special education coordinator at HEC Academy, noted that this new program changed the way students eat.



## **Take Action**

- **Any teacher/school staff/administrator:**
  - Visit the Green Team website here to learn more and register.
  - Explore what Green Teams around the state have done in their schools
  - Start a Garden Club or similar
- **Students**
  - If you're interested in a Garden Club, you can ask a teacher to start one or to help you find someone who can start it.

# School Systems Change

## Mass Farm to School

Throughout this guide, you will see several mentions of FRESH grants, the Farm to School Institute, and other references related to Mass Farm to School. They have led advocacy for the FRESH grant program, and have been instrumental in providing support, resources, and professional development for Farm to School efforts which include food system education in addition to local food procurement. For many, Farm to School can be an appropriate entry point and framework for promoting food literacy systemically in a school or district. School food departments often initiate local food sourcing and are a natural fit to start facilitating programming in the cafeteria that teaches students about local food.

## Seek Grant Funding

Administrators and district-wide staff can consider helping facilitate grant applications to programs like the FRESH grant, FRESH CORPS grants, and others. Learn more about these and other grant opportunities with this [resource list](#).

### Examples

**Gill-Montague** - With a long history of school gardens and a budding interest in Farm to School programming in the Gill-Montague Regional School District, Gill Elementary School's Principal, Walter Huston, decided to seek grant funding. With a grant from Whole Foods Foundation and small grants in partnership with their local garden club, they revitalized their school garden. Building on that energy, they applied for and were awarded a FRESH grant which allowed them to continue maintaining their school garden and providing opportunities for students to grow produce. As they prepare for a leadership transition, continued funding will be crucial for them to sustain their programming.

**Hatfield** - In Hatfield, a small district, leaders wear a variety of hats. The School Nurse Manager, Jean Hobbie, is a passionate supporter of food literacy. Jean worked with other school district leaders to apply for a FRESH grant. The grant allowed them to partner with Prospect Meadow Farm to offer student-led test testing events featuring locally-sourced produce and farm tours. Food Service Director John Halpin and School Principal Melissa Pitratot have also been instrumental leaders for this work. Halpin is dedicated to ensuring nutritious food in a tight budget and Pitrat established the model for student-led taste tests, encouraging students to vote for how well they liked each sample. In Hatfield, leaders believe continued grant funding as well as partnerships with community-based organizations will be necessary to maintain their food system educational opportunities.



## Take Action

- **Administrators & School Nutrition Staff:**
  - Learn more about [FRESH grants and FRESH CORP grants](#)
  - Explore other potential funding opportunities
- **Anyone:**
  - Review the funding resources here. Consider if there are individuals or organizations you can partner with to seek resources.

# School Systems Change

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## Professional Development

Districts can support teachers to promote food literacy by organizing, funding, or helping teachers connect to professional development opportunities.

### Examples

**Lowell** - With the support of a FRESH grant for the school year 2025-26, Lowell Public Schools will be building three new school gardens. A partnership with Mill City Grows will provide support for establishing the gardens, as well as providing professional development for teachers at three schools.

**Salem** - In school year 2025-26, Salem Public Schools, with funding from a FRESH CORP grant, is using a peer-to-peer model to provide professional development to integrate Farm to School, food literacy, and school garden education into Pre-K, Elementary, and Middle School Classrooms. Farm to School coaches at each school will lead the work and provide professional development to other educators. Salem's Farm to School team also participated in the 2024-2025 Farm to School Institute which helped them expand and enhance their programming including honoring indigenous knowledge, hosting food system field trips, and supporting 11 schools and 8 school gardens.

**Chicopee** - Chicopee's Farm to School team participated in the Farm to School Institute offered by Mass Farm to School. Their goal was to expand their programming from cafeteria activities to classroom connections.



## Take Action

- **Administrators:**
  - Provide food literacy focused professional development opportunities
  - Inform teachers about external professional learning opportunities such as the [John Stalker Institute's 4 week online courses](#) which includes courses around food literacy and school gardens
- **Teachers:**
  - Provide feedback or suggest professional development opportunities you are interested in to help build capacity for food education (see the [resource list](#) for options)
- **School Nutrition Directors:**
  - Explore opportunities to provide joint professional development opportunities for school nutrition staff & classroom educators about food

# School Systems Change

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## Establish Dedicated Staff Positions

Staffing has proven to be an important piece of the puzzle to support sustainable food system education programming in a school or district. Dedicated staff positions that help promote food literacy can range from regional and local Farm to School coordinators and School Garden coordinators to curriculum specialists and more.

**Amherst** - The Amherst Elementary School Garden Program is led by a full-time Science & Social Studies Curriculum & Instruction Coordinator and a Garden Educator. They have also hosted interns from UMass Sustainable Food and Farming Program over the last several years.



**New Bedford & Westport** - In 2022, after several years building their school garden programming in partnership with Grow Education (The Marion Institute), New Bedford Public Schools hired a full-time Garden Coordinator. The district also funds 2 part-time Grow Educators to

implement programming. In Westport, a part-time Grow Educator is funded by the district and managed by their nonprofit partner. You can read more about the Grow Education program in an upcoming feature on the Collaborative's website.

**Springfield** - Springfield has a School Gardens Teacher that works within their science department. They emphasize the gardens as an outdoor classroom to support our science standards, but encourage teachers from all subjects to use the gardens in support of academic standards. Springfield also employs a School Gardens Maintenance Specialist who is tasked with supporting the care and maintenance of the school gardens over the summer months.

**Chicopee** - Chicopee employs a full-time Farm to School Coordinator and a Garden Educator through their food service department.

### **Take Action**

- **Administrators:** Explore grant and budgeting opportunities that would allow a dedicated staff position to be established and funded. This can include line items in the food services department budget, embedding staff within the curriculum/instructional team, and more.
- **School Nutrition Staff:** Consider if the food services department budget could include a part-time or full-time staff person dedicated to farm to school or food education.
- **Teachers:** speak up and communicate the need for dedicated school garden/food education staffing & support

# School Systems Change

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## Mentorship

If you are already familiar with food education, you could provide mentorship, share resources, or participate in a community of practice. Teachers who may be interested in this work have mentioned needing more support and education, and you can help!

**Amherst** - Jennifer Reese & Leila Tunnell presented a webinar titled “[Growing Success: Building an Inclusive K-6 Farm to School Program](#)” during a professional development series hosted by Mass Farm to School. They shared how “Amherst and Pelham Public Schools provide all students in grades K-6 with year-round garden-based learning in both school garden spaces as well as in classrooms” generously passing on their lessons learned to participants including classroom/garden educators, school nutrition staff, and other advocates.

## Educating Others

You can start a conversation! If you’re passionate about food literacy, consider approaching other potential advocates and decision makers about opportunities to promote food literacy.

**Belmont** - Shoba Reginald, a science teacher in Belmont, started a [petition](#) to request that DESE include “reducing food waste” in the Massachusetts Science Curriculum Frameworks alongside other sustainability practices already listed. She was successful and “reducing food waste” is now found in instructional guidelines for 5th, 7th, and 8th grade. Shoba has continued to teach a project focused on food waste to her classes, and collaborates with teachers to add it into their lessons.



## **Take Action**

- **Teachers:**
  - Ask administrators about presenting at a professional development day
  - Present about your work at a professional association or through offerings like Mass Farm to School’s [webinar series](#).
  - Share your experiences embedding food system concepts into your classroom (PTO, School Committee, Wellness Committee, Assembly, PD days, etc.)
- **Teachers/SNDs/Administrators:**
  - Create a food literacy team if your school/district does not have one that can share resources, offer support, and raise awareness
  - Build rapport, tell others why you believe food literacy is important; explore opportunities to collaboratively teach about food

# Partnerships

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Leveraging partnerships & collaboration, especially with groups or organizations already skilled in delivering food-focused educational experiences can be a valuable way to establish a commitment to food literacy in a school or district.

## Field Trips/Experiences

Partnering with local farms and food system partners is a valuable opportunity to provide experiences to students that highlight aspects of the local food system such as production, distribution, access, and more.

## Education/Curriculum

There are several farms and nonprofit organizations around the state that have programming or expertise to support food system education and curriculum with school districts.

## Work Experience

Work experiences are another great way for young people to learn about the food system while gaining valuable skills. Since many high schools have community service requirements for graduation, establishing partnerships with local food system organizations could support food education and help meet that requirement.



### **Attention Community Partners**

These partnership examples are great to explore if you are a farmer, nonprofit staff, or other partner interested in supporting schools with food literacy opportunities, or an administrator interested in external partnerships to enhance your food education opportunities.

# Partnerships

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## Field Trips/Experiences

Partnering with local farms and food system partners is a valuable opportunity to provide experiences to students that highlight aspects of the local food system such as production, distribution, access, and more.

### Examples

**Greenfield** - Greenfield Public Schools, with funding from a FRESH Grant, provided all third grade students an opportunity to visit Just Roots, Greenfield's Community Farm for a curriculum-aligned Fall field trip along with two additional food literacy lessons during the 2024-2025 school year.

**Gill-Montague** - For Gill Elementary School students, agriculture has a strong presence in their community, including at a farm that abuts school property. This proximity, paired with administrator and teacher support for food system education, provides a perfect opportunity for all K-6 students to experience multiple farm visits each year. Students get to help pick raspberries, see cows and how they are milked, and more.

**Springfield** - Students in Springfield visit the [Cultivating for Community](#) Farm operated by the Food Bank of Western MA. The farm focuses on education, providing students with exposure to "regenerative farming, nutrition, the local farm economy, and food insecurity." Springfield Public Schools students also visit Red Fire Farm, Barstow's Dairy, and Grow Food Northampton.

**East Boston** - Climate NATURE (Nature As Teacher for Urban Resiliency Education), a program conceived of and created by Eastie Farm, is a program offered by a coalition of environmental groups in East Boston that offers environmental education including a variety of topics such as recycling and composting. Eastie Farm also offers a paid fellowship program, [Climate Corps](#), gaining experience with "local food systems, land conservation, sustainability-focused organizing/advocacy, and coastal resilience work."



## Take Action

- **Administrators, Teachers:**
  - Research farms near you - As a starting point, you can use the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) [MassGrown Map](#) to view farms near you.
  - Reach out to the broader school system community including parents/caregivers, especially if you are in an agricultural area, to build connections with farmers
- **Parents/Caregivers, Community Members**
  - Support schools in connecting with local farms and food system organizations that you are involved in or aware of

# Partnerships

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## Food Systems Education/Curriculum

There are several farms and nonprofit organizations around the state that have programming or expertise to support food system education and curriculum with school districts.

**Boston** - Boston Public Schools partners with City Sprouts and Green City Growers to offer garden-based education opportunities to students. Garden educators from City Sprouts facilitate lessons in Pre-K through 5th grade with curriculum that aligns with the MA Science, Technology, and Engineering standards. Green City Growers farmer educators lead garden-based sessions for preschool, K-12, and special education students that incorporate science, language arts, art, math, social studies, and social emotional learning.

**Gloucester** - With an FY24 FRESH Grant, Gloucester Public Schools established a partnership with Backyard Growers which they are expanding through an FY25 FRESH CORP grant. They will now include preschool and middle school students in their Harvest of the Month taste tests. Backyard Growers will also offer educators garden guides on ways to infuse seasonal use of the garden into classroom learning.

Note: Many FRESH grant recipients have established powerful partnerships. You can [read the FRESH grant reports/project descriptions](#) on Mass Farm to School's website to get more inspiration.

**Worcester** - REC Worcester offers a mini market series which brings their farmers markets into the classroom. The team teaches students about our local food system; they read a story together and talk about where produce comes from. Then, each student gets to 'shop' the farmers market, choosing free fresh, local food to share with their family.



### **Take Action**

- **Administrators, Teachers:**
  - Research other organizations that support food system education in your area and reach out to learn more. Some examples include:
    - [Holly Hill Farm](#) (Cohasset)
    - [Land's Sake Farm](#) (Weston)
    - [Mass Audubon](#) (Statewide)
    - [Round the Bend Farm](#) (South Dartmouth)
    - [Soule Homestead Education Center](#) (Middleborough)
    - [The Farm School](#) (Orange/Athol)
    - [Waltham Fields Community Farm](#) (Waltham)

# Partnerships

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## Food System Work Experiences

Work experiences are another great way for young people to learn about the food system while gaining valuable skills. Since many high schools have community service requirements for graduation, establishing partnerships with local food system organizations could support food education and help meet that requirement.

### **Examples**

**REC Worcester** - YouthGROW is a program that employs up to 40 high school teens (age 14-18) year-round who gain leadership and jobs skills as they maintain three urban organic farms. YouthGROWers complete a curriculum focused on Professional Development, Leadership Skills, Urban Agriculture, and Social Justice (PLUS,) through participation in the 6-week summer intensive, fall and spring sessions, monthly workshops, and community service.

**The Food Project** - The Food Project offers several youth leadership development and work experience opportunities in the Boston and North Shore area. Their programs include Seed Crew (summer), Dirt Crew (academic season), and Root Crew (year-round). The activities youth do with The Food Project include “participating workshops, serving at local hunger relief organizations, leading volunteers on the farms, building raised bed gardens, and working with the community to find innovative ways to expand food access.”



### **Take Action**

- **Students, All Advocates**
  - Find an organization that supports youth development and food system work experiences in your area and establish a connection:
    - Eastie Farm (East Boston)
    - Gardening the Community (Springfield)
    - The Food Project (Boston & North Shore)
    - REC Worcester (Worcester)
    - Roots Rising (Pittsfield)
    - Urban Farming Institute (Boston)
- **Teachers, Administrators, School staff:**
  - Share information about these programs with students

# Map

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A map of the examples that are included throughout this guide.



- 1 - Gill Elementary School, Gill-Montague Regional School District - [Grant Funding](#) | [Field Trips](#)
- 2 - Greenfield Public Schools - [Cafeteria Programs](#) | [Field Trips](#)
- 3 - Amherst-Pelham School District - [Staffing](#) | [Mentorship/Educate Others](#)
- 4 - [Hatfield Public Schools](#)
- 5 - [HEC Academy, Northampton](#)
- 6 - Chicopee Public Schools - [School Committee](#) | [Staffing](#)
- 7 - Springfield Public Schools - [Staffing](#) | [Field Trips](#)
- 8 - [Worcester Public Schools w/ REC Worcester](#)
- 9 - [Webster Public Schools](#)
- 10 - Innovation Academy Charter School, Tyngsborough - [School Wellness Policy](#) | [Standalone Course](#)
- 11 - [Lowell Public Schools](#)
- 12 - [Gloucester Public Schools w/ Backyard Growers](#)
- 13 - Salem Public Schools - [Lessons](#) | [Professional Development](#)
- 14 - [East Boston schools w/ Eastie Farm](#)
- 15 - Belmont Middle School - [Lessons](#) | [Educate Others](#)
- 16 - [Boston Public Schools w/ City Sprouts & Backyard Growers](#)
- 17 - [Westport & New Bedford Elementary Schools w/ The Marion Institute Grow Education Program](#)
- 18 - [Dartmouth Middle School](#)
- 20 - [Falmouth High School](#)