

How to Incorporate Farm to Child Care Themes



Every summer, mother nature provides a perfect opportunity to teach children about science, math, and nutrition through the growing or tasting of locally-grown foods. You may have heard of (or even participated in) a formal “farm-to-child care” program, but farm-to-child care isn’t limited to a formal program; it’s a mindset that can lead to a variety of educational experiences.

Farm-to-Child Care consists of two main features:

1. Acquiring and serving local foods
2. Teaching children about local foods

Consider participating in one of the following activities to implement a farm-to-child care theme in your program.

Acquiring Local Foods

- **Local Farmers’ Market.** To find a farmers’ market near you, visit www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/ or www.minnesotagrown.com/ (for markets in Minnesota only).
- **Local Food Co-op.** Many co-ops carry locally-grown food. Two examples of food co-ops in the Red River Valley are Prairie Roots (Fargo – www.prairie-roots.coop) and Manna Food Co-Op (Detroit Lakes – www.mannafood.coop).
- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.** Food purchased through a CSA is usually paid for in advance, and then weekly boxes of food are delivered or available for pick-up all season long. Several CSAs operate in the Red River Valley. To find a CSA program near you, visit www.localharvest.org/csa/ or www.minnesotagrown.com/ (for CSAs in Minnesota only).
- **Grow a Garden.** Edible gardens are perfect for smaller amounts of produce. Easy foods to start with include beets, radishes, snap peas, carrots, lettuce, herbs, and cucumbers.

Teaching Children about Local Foods

- **Field trips to a farm or farmers’ market.** Contact a local farmer or visit a farmers’ market with the children in your program.
- **Story Time.** Regularly read books about eating fruits and vegetables, gardening, or farming.
- **Grow a garden, small vegetable, or herb.** There is much to be learned from growing your own food. If you’re not ready for a garden, start with an herb (such as basil) in a small container.
- **Incorporate Farm to Child Care into various activities.**
 - **Art:** Encourage children to draw pictures or create stories about gardening/farming.
 - **Dramatic Play:** Provide children with props and encouraged them to pretend to be farmers, gardeners, chefs, etc.
 - **Nature/science:** If growing a garden or small plant, make observations about what is happening in the garden, or make predictions about what will happen. Teach children about the parts of a plant and what makes plants grow (sun, water, soil, etc).
 - **Math:** Count items purchased from farmers’ market or grown in the garden, and make charts to compare height, weight, and length of growing time for items in a garden.