
OCTOBER IS NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH...LET'S CELEBRATE!!

by Krista Smith, Farm to Early Care and Education Consultant



Whew... 2020 has certainly been dishing it out! But while your *figurative* plate may look less than appetizing, your *literal* plate doesn't have to. Serve up some local food in your child care, and expect some home-grown smiles!

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Learning about nutrition and where food comes from is a great way to get children to try new things. Did you know that young children often need to be offered a new food 10 – 15 times

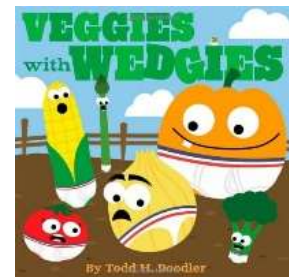
before they will even try it? And the more ways they experience a new or unfamiliar food, the more likely they are to give it a go.

Make taste tests a fun monthly occasion. Send home notes, hand out [“Official Taste Tester” stickers](#), and celebrate the joy of trying something new. Do away with the assumption that “kids don't like broccoli”. Read about broccoli, examine pictures of broccoli, and explore broccoli in its raw form. Give children the opportunity to hold it, smell it, and taste it. Have a Broccoli Party! Replace the word “broccoli” with any fruit or veggie you'd like to introduce, and remember: When you act excited about a new food; your kiddos likely will, too!

There are countless ways to get involved in Farm to ECE activities in Iowa, in your community, and in your child care that can keep you busy all month long. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

TEACHERS & PROVIDERS

- Plan nutrition and agriculture education activities for the classroom
- Books, books, books! Read about growing food, eating healthy food, and be sure to include fun titles like one of my personal favorites, ***Veggies with Wedgies*** by Todd H. Doodler. Check out this [Farm to ECE book list](#)
- Use a harvest of the month curriculum
 - Feature a seasonal local food
- Explore fruits and veggies in their natural form
- Engage children in local food taste testing. Always follow food safety rules. Click [here](#) for COVID-19 guidelines.
- Schedule a virtual farm field trip or visit from a farmer
- Watch a food farmer video on [IPBS “Iowa Ingredient”](#)



- Set up a farmers market in dramatic play center or create a farming experience similar to the Iowa State Fair's "[Little Hands on the Farm](#)"
- Teach fun songs and finger plays about fruits and veggies
 - [Veggie Beats](#) Phonemic Awareness Rhyme
 - [Veggie Soup](#) song
 - [Apple Colors](#) poem
 - [Popcorn!](#) scarf song
- Talk about seasons changing in Iowa and spend time in your site garden making connections
- Participate in [Iowa Local Food Day](#)

DIRECTORS

- Prioritize local food in purchasing
 - Contact a local grower or an [Iowa food hub](#)
- [Register](#) your site for [Iowa Local Food Day](#)
- Coordinate teachers and cooks with a harvest of the month
- Organize a local food celebration site-wide

NUTRITION DIRECTORS/COOKS

- Feature the harvest of the month at lunch, making learning connections and generating excitement
- Include local foods in current menus
- Edit menu rotations to include [1] local food per week [set your own goal!]
- Make a big deal of Iowa grown food when you talk to kids (i.e. "Guess what? We get to eat [cabbage] at lunch today that was grown right here in town!")

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

- Newsletter features: Local Food Day, Harvest of the Month recipes, Taste Testing Day
- Set up a Farm to [your site name] Facebook page and invite families to share cooking at home stories and pictures
- Send home pictures of children taste testing new food

There are so many more wonderful, creative ideas just waiting to be generated by all of YOU, and I'd love to hear them. Shoot me an email, krista@iowaaeeyc.org, or like us on Facebook at [Farm to ECE Iowa](#) to share your F2ECE pictures, stories, and ideas during Farm to School month...or any time of year!

I'm looking forward to hearing from you,

Krista

FARM TO ECE RESOURCES

[Farm to ECE Resource page](#) - PDF

Websites:

Iowa Farm to ECE <https://www.iowafarm2ece.com/>

Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Network <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/f2s/>

National Farm to School Network website <http://www.farmentoschool.org/>