

Wisconsin Farm to Early Care and Education: Considerations for Programs in YoungStar

This guide offers considerations on how to support children in developing a positive connection to food while strengthening the health of children, families, teachers, and staff through farm to ECE activities.

Wisconsin Farm to ECE increases access to local, nutritious foods and increases the support for quality education in all types of ECE settings through:

- facilitating **hands-on learning and play** in nutrition, food, and agriculture;
- buying, preparing, and serving **local foods** in meals and snacks;
- building on-site edible **gardens** or container gardens;
- and engaging **families and caregivers** in health and wellness efforts.



Programs participating in **YoungStar** (Wisconsin's Child Care Quality Rating and Improvement System) work to improve the quality of care and education for children and engage with families. While the farm to ECE concept is new to some, many providers are already incorporating it into their daily activities. Specific ways to integrate farm to ECE into your program will be identified throughout this resource as relevant sections of the YoungStar Evaluation Criteria are considered.

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Why Farm to ECE?

The use of garden-based education in ECE environments is supported by research. Nathan Larson, who helped to create the [Wisconsin School Garden Network](#), outlines 15 principles of garden-based education in his book, [Teaching in Nature's Classroom](#). Some of these principles, which are evidence-based best practices, include:

- Building self-efficacy
- Building a diverse learning community
- Cultivating a sense of wonder
- Engaging the senses
- Engaging kids in meaningful fitness
- Making connections to home and community
- Cultivating a connection to food
- Cultivating a sense of place



Learning Environment and Curriculum - Farm to ECE Considerations

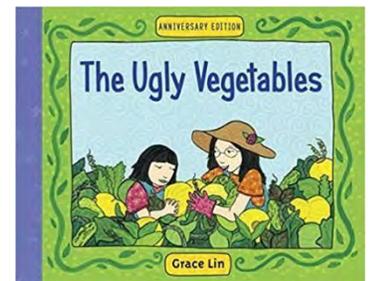
Farm to ECE offers many applications for **developmentally appropriate practices** in natural and authentic contexts. An engaging, comforting, culturally sensitive, and compassionate environment can be created using farm to ECE.

- Teacher-child and peer-to-peer farm to ECE experiences and activities, such as working in a garden or preparing food together, are enjoyed in close physical proximity to one another. This gives children practice communicating appropriately in different situations and provides opportunities for positive interactions that are both child-initiated and teacher-initiated.
- Nature-based experiences, such as tasting freshly harvested strawberries or discovering a butterfly in the garden, give teachers and children a chance to spend quality time together while learning from one another.
- Hands-on experiential edible education is engaging.
- Gardening teaches compassion and respect for our living world and increases our connection to others.
- Time spent in the garden provides comfort and an opportunity to connect with the natural world.
- All farm to ECE activities can involve foods and plants that reflect diverse children, families, teachers, and communities.
- Teachers can lead turn-taking conversations on what was discovered during farm to ECE activities and ask children where our food comes from or why the world is as it is.
- A staff-initiated receptive language activity can involve reading a book or telling a story about gardening, nature, or making a special food.

- Children can learn how to work together to accomplish a goal in the garden or assemble a snack.

In addition, when children see themselves and the culture of their family reflected in the recipes and foods prepared, plants in the garden, books read, and stories told, they feel a sense of belonging. Here are ideas and resources for creating a culturally sensitive environment:

- Include plants in the program’s garden that are reflective of the program’s families’ ancestries and culinary preferences - for example: bok choy, cilantro, okra, tomatillos, garlic, collard greens, watermelon, corn, squash, potatoes, and cabbage.
- Sing food and garden songs with the children in other languages such as “[The Fruit Chant](#)” and “[Come Vegetables](#)” in Spanish, “Old McDonald” in [Hmong](#) and in [American Sign Language](#), “[Giizis Binoojiyag \(The Sun Children\)](#)” in Ojibwe, and “[J’aime les fruit](#)” in French (links to songs are also in the Resources section at the end).
- Share healthy recipes for children with allergies or special dietary needs and/or religious or cultural preferences. This could include age-appropriate cookbooks for children or pictures of food substitutions that go into recipes. For some ideas on incorporating healthy foods from various cultures into daily meals or snacks see:
 - [Serving Up Tradition: A Guide for School Food in Culturally Diverse Communities.](#)
 - [American Indian Traditional Foods in USDA School Meals Programs](#)
 - [Bringing Tribal Foods and Traditions into Cafeterias, Classrooms, and Gardens.](#)
- Signs in the garden can include translations in the preferred language of the children’s families.
- The following farm to ECE-themed books reflect the diversity of people, their needs, and cultures:
 - *Rainbow Stew* by Cathryn Falwell
 - *Round is a Tortilla: A Book of Shapes* by Roseanne Thong
 - *Round is a Mooncake: A Book of Shapes* by Roseanne Thong
 - *Green is a Chile Pepper: A Book of Colors* by Roseanne Thong
 - *What Shall I Make?* by Nandini Lyer
 - *The Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin
 - *The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story* by Joseph Bruchac
 - *When the Shadbush Blooms* by Carla Messinger
 - *Community Soup* by Alma Fullerton
 - *If I Were a Farmer. Nancy’s Adventure* by G. Fredrickson and D. Jewell
 - *The Beeman* by Laurie Krebs and Valeria Cis
 - *A Boy and a Jaguar* by Alan Robinowitz
 - *Princess and the Peanut Allergy* by Wendy McClure
 - *Bugabees – Friends with Food Allergies* by Amy Recob



- *Food Allergies and Me* by Juniper Skinner

When developing farm to ECE activities, it can be helpful to know **what gardening or cooking activities are developmentally appropriate** for young children. Here are some suggested guidelines for children of different ages:

Infants

- Engage infants by creating opportunities for them to move through the garden. Children who are crawling may enjoy vine covered tunnels to explore.
- Allow access to scented plants that are entirely edible like mint, basil, dill, and lemon balm. Infants can smell, touch, and taste them.
- Plant different colored and textured plants for added exploration. Sunflowers with soft yellow petals and rough leaves, smooth red lettuce, and bumpy dinosaur kale are all child-safe plants.
- If the soil is safe (see [Safety in the Little Gardener's Garden](#)), encourage infants to touch it, dig in it, or finger paint with mud.
- At the sensory table or outdoors, provide cooking tools such as measuring cups and spoons, whisks, funnels, ladles, or sieves to explore with sand and water.



Toddlers

- Direct children to water each plant with one small child-sized watering can (or ½ gallon milk jug with holes poked in the top). If they are excited to do more, redirect them to areas that won't be as affected by too much water like a grassy area.
- Toddlers can freely dig in a special digging area, help to loosen soil in a garden bed, or dig holes for transplants and seeds.
- Hand-harvesting of cherry tomatoes and strawberries will be easy for this age group as well as digging up sweet potatoes, carrots, and other root crops.
- Toddlers can help tear lettuce for salads, shake a baby food jar with cream to make butter, mash and stir cooked potatoes, dip vegetables in hummus or other spreads, and turn a hand-cranked blender to make smoothies.

In addition to what toddlers can do, **3- to 4-year-olds** can:

- Move mulch or straw around with small wheelbarrows and add it to paths or planting beds.

- Plant larger seeds, vegetable seedlings, and larger plants.
- Pick insects off of plants or pluck mint or basil leaves for harvest.
- Participate in cooking activities by pouring liquid ingredients into a bowl, scrubbing carrots with a brush, slicing soft vegetables with blunt-tipped knives, spreading hummus on crackers, or using cookie cutters to shape sandwiches or baked goods.

In addition to what 3- to 4-year-olds can do, **preschoolers and school-age** children can:

- Thin seedlings, plant smaller seeds, and sift compost through a screen.
- Pull weeds (flour can be used to dust on plants to indicate which should be pulled or kept).
- Harvest produce or flowers using scissors or garden clippers (with supervision) and make bouquets for families.
- Participate in cooking projects by measuring ingredients, whisking a sauce or dressing, rolling dough for personal pizzas, grating cheese or veggies, shaking Parmesan or herbs as a topping, peeling and slicing hard-boiled eggs, peeling carrot strips for use on salads, slicing vegetables with wavy choppers (with supervision to make sure both hands are on top), or shucking corn.



Interest Centers/Areas and Materials

Examples of interest centers/areas and materials that involve farm to ECE and reflect Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standard's five domains include:

Dramatic Play

- Children can play restaurant or bakery (e.g., chef's hat, play kitchen tools), farm or farm stand (e.g., hats, gloves, overalls, empty seed packets, buckets, baskets, a box for the farm stand, play money), spinner (e.g., yarn skeins, a stuffed sheep, small loom), or flower shop (e.g., artificial flowers, plastic vases, ribbons).
- Include play foods (plastic, wooden, felt, or cloth) that represent local food and reflect what children eat at home.
- Children can also dress up as farm animals or use animal puppets for play.

Science and Nature/Outdoor

- Teachers can provide magnifying glasses and help children look for worms or examine details of flowers.

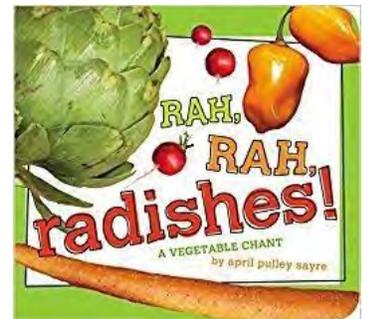
- Children can be encouraged to make predictions about what will happen in the garden, record weather observations, and observe changes over the seasons in a certain plant.
- Children could also try experimenting with different types of growing methods (for example trellis vs. ground for pumpkins or tomatoes) in the garden.
- Go on a scavenger hunt in the garden and look for animals, leaves, plants, etc. Do one each season and talk about what you notice. What is the same? What is different?
- Explore outside to find all colors of the rainbow. Give children paint samples or color chips and have them try to find a match for their color with an item found in nature.
- [Kitchen scrap gardening](#): Grow new plants from old plant parts! For example, plant old cloves of garlic or bulbs of onions just below the surface in containers filled with moistened potting soil. Within a few weeks you'll see sprouts and you can eat these greens in salads or stir-fries.

Block and Construction Play

- Children can use blocks to construct barns for play animals, build pretend animals, or create rows of blocks to represent crops and stack blocks to represent plant growth.
- Toy animals, food, or tractors can be incorporated into the block play.

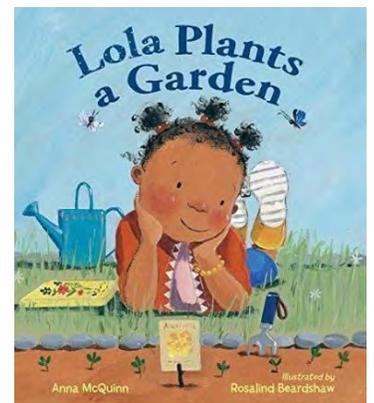
Music and Movement Experiences

- Sing garden-related songs such as "[Dirt Made My Lunch](#)" by the Banana Slug String Band (see other song suggestions in the Resources section at the end).
- Children can act out the process of a seed growing into a plant or the movements of farm animals.
- Teachers can help children make musical instruments out of gourds or put different types of seeds in plastic eggs for maracas.
- An outdoor music-making area can be made in the garden.



Literacy and Writing Activities

- The class can read books about food and gardening (see link to comprehensive lists in Resources section), and children can be encouraged to make their own books about recent field trips or garden experiences.
- Teachers can lead a sensory scavenger hunt in the garden or compare tastes and textures of fruits and vegetables, then



talk with the children about what words they would use to describe their experience.

- Older children can write labels for signs in the garden or on homemade seed packets. Directions for cooking activities can increase in complexity over time, from one step – “stir the yogurt and berries” to multiple steps, such as reading an illustrated recipe for making bread.
- Children can also practice experimenting with the sounds of language using farm to ECE vocabulary (e.g., “What word do you get when you put together *water* and *melon*?” [*watermelon*] “What word do you get when you say *butterfly* without *fly*?” [*butter*]).

Math Experiences

- Very young children can look for shapes in the garden or compare the height of growing sunflowers to their own height.
- Preschoolers can practice counting when harvesting fruits and vegetables from the garden, measure lengths of carrots, or do a taste test with different colored cherry tomatoes or carrots and chart the results.
- In the fall, children can measure or estimate the size of the pumpkins, and then count the number of seeds inside an apple.

Art Experiences

- Children can collect natural materials from the outdoors to use in art collages and mobiles, to weave into an outdoor loom, or to make a fairy garden.
- Collages can also be made from seed catalogues and empty seed packets.
- Children can make “food faces” and eat them as a snack; make flower and vine crowns and bracelets; or draw plants and animals seen in the garden in an art journal.
- [Make paint from soil.](#)



Small Manipulatives and Games

- With assistance, children can cut flowers or leaves with scissors.
- Matching games can be made with animal and vegetable cards.
- Puzzles, beading items, and sewing cards can feature farm animals and food produced in the area.

- Older children can play seed bingo by matching different types of seeds (beans, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds) to a picture of the plant.

Sand, Water, and Other Sensory Play

- Young children can paint with mud on the sidewalk; use cooking tools such as measuring cups, sieves, and ladles with sand or water in the sensory table; and collect plant parts to mix up a “soup” for fairies or to make secret potions.
- Children gain increased fine motor control by scooping water with plastic measuring cups at the sensory table and progressing to pouring milk from a pitcher.
- Add plants and plant parts such as crunchy fall leaves, bark, wheat stalks, scraps of wool, or gourds to the sensory table.
- Containers with small holes can hold different herbs and spices for smelling.
- Children can use a mortar and pestle to grind herbs.
- Provide a small tub of water to wash produce from the garden.
- Teachers can build a [worm bin](#), and children can help care for the worms, feel the compost and the worms, and use the compost in the garden.
- Different types of soil (clay, sand, compost) can be put in a muffin tin and compared when dry and wet.



Note: If there is concern that children’s clothing will become wet and dirty during activities, consider using waterproof coveralls (a.k.a. “mud suits”) for your children to prevent this from being a barrier to sensory or outdoor activities.

Social Studies Experiences

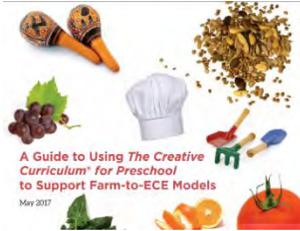
- Children can explore different ways people use plants such as for dyes or to make baskets.
- Children can try recipes from different cultures (see Resource links for ideas).
- Programs can donate garden produce to a local food bank (include the children in the delivery if possible).

Outdoor Large Motor Activities

- Children can dig in a garden or digging spot; use watering cans to water plants; maneuver wheelbarrows; and practice skipping, galloping, and doing movements of farm animals.

- Children can balance on paths made of tree trunk slices or large, flat stones.

In addition to the interest area considerations, there is a recommended quality practice of providing both quiet spaces and active areas for children. Consider installing a sunflower circle or bean teepee (beans growing up bamboo poles) in a corner to create a peaceful, quiet area near the playground.



Note: Two great resources that include many activity ideas as well as ways to align **child assessments** with Farm to ECE is [“The Guide to Using the Creative Curriculum for Preschool to Support Farm-to-ECE Models”](#) and [“The Guide to Using the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos to Support Farm-to-ECE Models.”](#)

Business and Professional Practices - Farm to ECE Considerations

Some great resources (links also available in Resources section at the end) to help support **planning and tracking healthy, local foods** in meals and snacks include:

- [“How to Buy, Prepare, and Serve Local Foods.”](#)
- “Making Your Own Local Baby Food” available in [Spanish](#) and [English](#).
- [“Community Supported Agriculture \(CSA\) and Your Early Care and Education Program.”](#)
- Using cycle menus featuring food grown and produced seasonally in Wisconsin. See the [Seasonal Availability of Wisconsin Fruits and Vegetables](#) to learn what is available here each month.
- Incorporating menus from the [CACFP recipe book using local, seasonal foods](#).
- Using guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Instruction [“On, Wisconsin!”](#) menus.
- Other recipe ideas are available at the [Farm to Preschool](#) website.
- The [“Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program Memo”](#) describes how to purchase local foods using CACFP, how purchases towards garden supplies are approved, and how produce grown in an on-site garden or produce donated from other gardens can be counted as part of the reimbursable meal.

Staff and families can be informed of farm to ECE being incorporated into meals and snacks by:

- Indicating local food on a posted menu.
- Highlighting local food in daily meals and snacks on a chalkboard or bulletin board.



- Participating in the [Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch](#) and the [Wisconsin Chili Lunch](#) and promoting it to the staff and families (farm to ECE guide available when you register!)
- If meals and snacks are brought from home, the program could provide information to parents with ideas on incorporating seasonal, local, and healthy foods into their meals and snacks.

When working intentionally on farm to ECE, consider these suggestions below regarding your **staff and policies**:

- Inform employees that farm to ECE concepts and practices are important to the program.
- Expectations could include that the staff will set a healthy example by not eating unhealthy snacks or drinks in the presence of the children.
- Staff can be guided to use best practices to encourage healthy eating such as to:
 - Speak positively about healthy foods.
 - Model a willingness to try new foods with the children.
 - Encourage children to take an, “I’ll try it bite” and then ask the child what they think. If they don’t like it, staff can say, “That’s okay if you don’t like it yet.”
 - Not force children to eat or try any food and teaching children to listen to their bodies regarding fullness or hunger.



If you are implementing farm to ECE practices to improve the health of your children, you could also **encourage staff to participate** to aid in their health and resiliency as well. Goals for workplace improvements can create a healthy environment for all employees. Some ways to provide support to staff are:

- Encourage staff to start a garden at the ECE site or a community garden.
- Support individual or program membership in a farm Community Supported Agriculture share, and/or provide incentives to shop at the farmers’ market.
- Replace soda and sugary snack vending machines with healthier options.
- Encourage walking during break times.
- Participate in farm to ECE activities in the classroom.

Below are training materials developed specifically for Wisconsin for **professional development** around farm to ECE (links are also available in the Resources list at the end):

- Rooted’s training videos (available for Registry Credit):
 - [Incorporating Local Foods at Your ECE Site](#)

- [Gardening with Young Children at Your ECE Site](#)
- [Hands-On Farm to ECE Activities](#)
- [Family Engagement in your Farm to ECE Program](#)
- [Cultivating Childhood Wellness Through Gardening](#) – online training video (Registry credit available)
- [Got Dirt?](#) - This resource is designed to provide simple, step-by-step plans for starting a garden. [Spanish version also available.](#)
- Farm to Early Care and Education Resources – [Rooted](#) and [Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#) – Information specific to Wisconsin on getting started with farm to ECE, incorporating gardens into early childhood curricula, connecting with local growers and producers, engaging families, visiting the Farmers’ Market, and more.
- [Safety in the Little Gardener’s Garden](#) – Explains how to build and use a garden space that meets and exceeds the safety requirements and licensing rules for child care programs in Wisconsin.



Farm to ECE-related trainings could also be conducted during **staff meetings** to inspire new activities, inform staff, and to plan for the program’s garden, field trips, farmer visits, family recipe book, or other program-wide activities. Allowing time during staff meetings for discussion on farm to ECE can help to increase staff interest and ensure that there is support for these activities.

Family Engagement - Communication

- To aid in efforts to communicate with children and families in their **preferred language**, here is a list of farm to ECE-related resources translated into other languages:
 - Information about getting started with Farm to ECE, interest areas, and local food procurement in English and Spanish, and Farm to ECE information for growers in English, Spanish, and Hmong is available on the [Rooted](#) website.
 - [Harvest for Healthy Kids](#) family newsletters are available in English, Spanish, and Russian and [Harvest of the Month \(California\)](#) provides family and community newsletters in English and Spanish.
 - To encourage families to garden at home, a beginning guide to gardening in Wisconsin called [”Got Dirt?” is available in Spanish.](#)
- Parents can be informed through the **parent handbook** that farm to ECE concepts and practices are important to the program. The **written policy** can note that evidence-based research supports developmentally appropriate practices, and that farm to ECE activities encourage intentional teaching and goal setting. Model language for program



wellness policies that include gardens, nutrition education, and purchasing locally grown products can be found in the [Wisconsin School Garden Network](#) resource library (see Resources section at the end).

- When programs invite families to share their knowledge of their children, questions could be asked regarding cooking, eating, or gardening experiences at home.
- To inform parents of what is happening during the school day, and to promote conversation between the parents and child, children can receive stickers that read “I tried something new!” or “I helped in the garden!” for participation in farm to ECE activities.
- Have parents pick up their children in the garden at the end of the day. This could be a good time to offer a taste test of garden or farm-fresh produce. Families can vote for their favorites.
- Recipe exchange between the program and the families can be a way to facilitate two-way communication.

Family Engagement - Family Needs and Feedback

The program can **collaborate with parents** to create educational and developmental goals for the children that involve farm to ECE activities such as gardening or cooking together at home. See the next section for more ideas on parent collaboration.

The program can **interview families** about culturally appropriate foods and other traditions around food and gardening so that the program can respect their family decisions, values, beliefs, and practices. See information under “Learning Environment and Curriculum” and the next section for ways to learn more about culturally appropriate foods and traditions.

Family Engagement - Collaborative Activities with Families

Farm to ECE provides many opportunities for **staff and families to learn from one another** such as:

- Families can contribute healthy recipes for the program to use along with family stories of food or garden traditions and memories.
- Host a “*Stone Soup*” meal where families can bring in an ingredient of their choice to contribute to the soup (modeled after the book by Marcia Brown or Jon Muth).
- Signs in the garden can include translations in the preferred language of the children’s families. Families could lend assistance in writing the names and teaching the correct pronunciation of them.



Several examples of **volunteer opportunities** that match families' strengths, interests, and skills are:

- Help with in-class edible education programs such as a grandmother sharing the story of a favorite family recipe and making it with the class, or a father bringing in chile peppers from his garden and talking about how they are roasted. Children love stories more than recipes and families can help facilitate this personal connection to food and traditions.
- Teach the children a garden- or food-related song from their childhood.
- Be chaperones on field trips to farms, community gardens, farmers' markets, or flower shops.
- Donate seeds to the class garden, help to build raised beds, or help to make signage in the garden.
- Donate vegetables from their own gardens or items from their CSA share.
- Make felt or cloth vegetables and fruit for a felt-board garden or the dramatic play area.
- Help to assemble and decorate farm to ECE-related activity bags with books and materials for hands-on projects to do at home.

Family Engagement - Community Resources and Family Support

Programs can help **connect families to community partners** such as governmental agencies and community-based non-profit organizations that work towards increasing access to healthy, local foods for young children and families and/or provide garden education services. See organizations listed in the Resources section at the end for examples.

Resources related to food access, gardening, and cooking that can be made available to families such as:

- Information about local foods, nutrition, and physical activities: [Healthy Bites in Spanish](#) and [English](#), [Got Dirt?](#), [Healthy Kids](#), [Healthy Future](#), [UW-Extension food safety information](#), [Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care](#).
- Programs can display information on a bulletin board about community gardens, [local farmers' markets](#), and easy recipes using seasonally available food (see links in Resources section at the end).
- A list of community resources for families in food crisis can include information on [local food banks and pantries](#), [WIC and SNAP information](#) (participants can use their funds at farmers' markets and some markets are part of a "[Double Dollars](#)" program), and [Community Supported Agriculture share assistance](#). See links in the Resources section at the end.



- Information on CACFP, nutrition standards, research on the positive effects of gardens on kids, and techniques for best and safest cooking and gardening practices with kids at home are also available in the resource list.

Educational workshops and trainings for enrolled families could include (*Note: When a program hosts culinary events where food is being prepared and served, child care licensing and certification requirements must be followed regarding food safety*):

- A family gardening night.
- A cooking class for families using local produce hosted by a culinary professional or UW-Extension staff.
- A celebration around [Farm to School Month](#) (October), the [Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch](#) or [Wisconsin Chili Lunch](#).
- Field trip to a farm or farmers' market with families.
- Hosting a local farmer to visit and talk about what they grow.
- A workshop on how to grow a garden with young children.
- A workshop on preparing nutritious local foods on a budget and grocery store or farmers' market tour.
- Invite guests to the program to discuss fun family strategies for healthy eating, cooking, gardening, getting outdoors, and physical activity (i.e. Healthy Bites and Active Early at home). Guests could include University of Wisconsin Agricultural Extension agents, gardeners or Master Gardeners, food and nutrition specialists, department of health staff, community center staff, WIC or FoodShare/SNAP Outreach specialists, cooks/chefs, florists, bakers, biologists, and naturalists.
- Programs could be at the child care site or at a farmers' market, CSA farm, community garden, or a local health-related event.
- Examples of culturally inclusive programs include:
 - A workshop on cooking healthy meals from various cultures.
 - Inviting family or community members to share stories about their family history, cultural foods, and celebrations.

Programs can provide families with **child-specific home-based activities** pertaining to gardening and cooking. Examples include:

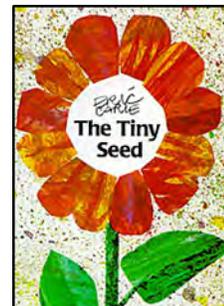
- Information on gardening- and cooking-related games that their child learned at the program and how families can play it at home. For example, a matching game of colors and fruits and vegetables, or a garden map with empty spaces and photos of vegetables to plan a hypothetical or real garden.



- Provide information on vegetables that are growing in the program's garden and recipes families can make at home to develop math, science, and communication skills.
- Create a lending library of books related to gardening and cooking to work on literacy skills (see book list links in Resources section at the end).

The program could also create take **home bags/tool kits** for families with farm to ECE themes such as:

- Learning About Seeds - Eric Carle's book *The Tiny Seed* in both English and Spanish, paper, glue, seeds to create art with, and instructions.
- Apple Taste Test - red and green apples, a wavy chopper for slicing the apples, a taste test questionnaire to prompt questions about the textures, flavors, and appearance of the apples, and the book *Apple Farmer Annie* by Monica Wellington in both English and Spanish.
- Nature Exploration - a magnifying glass, measuring tape, bug houses, child-sized binoculars, and plant and animal identification guides.
- Gardens - books related to gardening with children, seeds for sprouting in water, magnifying lenses, and child-sized gardening tools.
- Cooking - wavy choppers/crinkle cutters, cutting board with rubber sides for stability, measuring cups, whisks, and recipe ideas.
- Mealtime - a set of age-appropriate mealtime questions and answers regarding where our food comes from and how it is made along with the book *Up in the Garden, Down in the Dirt* by Kate Messner.



Health and Well-being - Farm to ECE Considerations

At the heart of farm to ECE is the health and well-being of the children. **Any activities that relate to food and nutrition are considered farm to ECE.** The use of fresh, local produce in snacks or meals, harvesting produce from an on-site garden, engaging children in cooking, conducting taste tests with children and families - all of the activities described throughout this resource will help to improve the acceptance of healthy foods and the development of lifelong healthy habits.

Specific considerations for this component are:

- The Go NAPSACC program has an option for self-assessment specifically on Farm to ECE practices: <https://gonapsacc.org/self-assessment-materials>

- The publications [Healthy Bites](#), [Got Dirt?](#) and [Got Veggies ECE Edition?](#) can all inform practices for programs engaged in farm to ECE.
- To encourage moderate to vigorous activity with a farm to ECE focus, children can practice skipping, galloping, and other movements by acting like favorite farm animals or imitating planting, harvesting, and other farm activities.
- Remember to encourage families to participate in gardening activities, either at the program or at home, to increase the physical and nutritional health of the entire family.

High Quality Practice 1

Curriculum Aligned with Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)/ School-Age Curricular Framework (SACF)

Some resources that align farm to ECE activities with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards include:

- [Apple Taste Test in Spanish](#) and [English](#)
- [Sunflower Garden](#)
- [Herb Container Garden](#)

Thank you for considering farm to ECE as a tool to improve the quality of care at your program!

See the Resource list on the next page for handy links to all farm to ECE topics.



Resources

Wisconsin Farm to ECE Resources

- **Wisconsin Farm to School and Farm to ECE Newsletter** – Find Wisconsin-specific resources, trainings, funding and job opportunities, updates, and more twice a month by signing up for the newsletter. Sign up here: <https://mailchi.mp/rootedwi.org/f2sfs2ecesubscribe>
- **Rooted Farm to ECE Resources** – find resources on getting started, Farm to ECE interest areas, family engagement, visiting the farmers market, finding local farmers, starting an ECE program garden, and more - <https://www.rootedwi.org/for-educators/farm-early-care-education/>
- **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction - Farm to Early Care and Education** – information on Wisconsin resources, finding a farmer, food safety, CACFP and more - <https://dpi.wi.gov/community-nutrition/cacfp/farm-2-ece>
- **Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch** - Crunch into a Wisconsin-grown apple along with other schools and ECE sites across the state in October. Sites that register will receive a special Farm to ECE Apple Crunch activity guide and stickers! <https://www.cias.wisc.edu/applecrunch/>
- **Wisconsin Chili Lunch**- Join K-12 schools, early care and education programs, hospitals, and colleges in celebrating local foods by cooking and serving a chili recipe made with local ingredients! <https://cias.wisc.edu/chililunch/>

Farm to ECE Curricula

- Guide to Using the Creative Curriculum© for Preschool to Support the Farm to ECE Model: http://www.farmentoschool.org/Resources/FarmtoECE_CreativeCurriculumGuide.pdf
- USDA “Grow It, Try It, Like It!” - <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it>
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy’s Farm to Childcare - <https://www.iatp.org/blog/201704/growing-farm-childcare>
- Occidental College Farm to Preschool - <http://www.farmpreschool.org/documents/Farm2PreschoolYear2.pdf>
- Harvest for Healthy Kids - <http://www.harvestforhealthykids.org/>
- Renewing the Countryside: Pint Size Produce- https://www.renewingthecountryside.org/pint_size_produce

Gardening-related Resources

- Cultivating Childhood Wellness Through Gardening - online video - Registry credit available - <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/physical-activity/foodsystem/gardening.htm>
- Wisconsin School Garden Network - <http://wischoolgardens.org>

- *Safety in the Little Gardener's Garden* – explains how to build and use a garden space that meets and exceeds the safety requirements and licensing rules for child care programs in Wisconsin - <https://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A3905-07.pdf>
- *Got Dirt?* in English and Spanish- includes information on starting a garden- <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p4/p40112.pdf>
- University of Wisconsin-Extension - Connect to your local Cooperative Extension Agent, Master gardener volunteers, or learn about gardening in Wisconsin - <https://ces.uwex.edu/>

Cooking with Children, CACFP, Recipes, and Food Safety Resources

- Healthy Bites (English and Spanish) - <https://dpi.wi.gov/community-nutrition/cacfp/wellness/active-early-healthy-bites>
- UW-Wisconsin Extension food safety information - <https://foodsafety.wisc.edu/>
- Child and Adult Care Food Program approved recipes - <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/cacfp-recipes>
- Memo on Local Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program - includes notes on use of CACFP funds for gardening supplies and use of the produce - https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP11_2015os.pdf
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's "Wisconsin School Meals Rock!" Program- <https://dpi.wi.gov/wisconsin-school-meals-rock>
- Farm to Preschool – Seasonal Menus and Recipes - <http://www.farmpreschool.org/seasonalmenus.html>
- Seasonal Availability of Wisconsin Fruits and Vegetables - <https://www.cias.wisc.edu/foodservtools/2-Get-started/wisconsin-produce-calendar.pdf>

Physical Activity Resources

- Active Early in Spanish-<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00280s.pdf> and English- https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/active_early.pdf
- Let's Move Child Care (Healthy Kids, Healthy Future) - <https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/>
- Go NAPSACC- <https://www.gonapsacc.org/>

Family Resources

- Ideas and techniques for cooking with kids at home - <https://cookingwithkids.org/>
- Information on eating healthy on a budget, recipes, and active living from UW-Extension's FoodWise program - <https://fyi.uwex.edu/foodwise/families/>

- Recipe ideas for families from CACFP - https://theicn.org/cnr/?utm_source=website&utm_medium=a-z_resources&utm_campaign=cnr
- Wisconsin Model Early Learning: Engaging Families Around WMELS - <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/wmels/engaging-families/>
- Research and publications on benefits of Farm to ECE - <http://www.farmtopreschool.org/publicationpresentations.html>
- Food pantries in Wisconsin - <http://www.foodpantries.org/st/wisconsin>
- Affordable Community Supported Agriculture subscriptions from FairShare CSA Coalition: <https://www.csacoalition.org/partner-shares>
- SNAP and Farmers' Markets - <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-education/nutrition-education-materials/farmers-markets>
- Information on Double Dollars program for SNAP/FoodShare users in Dane County - <https://www.cityofmadison.com/mayor/doubledollars>
- How to find local farmers and farmer's markets
 - Wisconsin Farm Fresh Atlas - <https://farmfreshatlas.org>
 - Wisconsin Farmers' Market Association - <http://www.wifarmersmarkets.org/>
- Wisconsin Family Child Care Association- <http://wisconsinfamilychildcare.org/>

Listings of Farm to ECE and Diversity-related Books

- Multicultural Collection of Farm to ECE Books from Pennsylvania's Ready Set Grow – highlights children's books that feature characters from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, many of which are authored by writers of color – also includes bilingual or exclusively Spanish books – www.pareadyssetgrow.org/book-list/
- Searchable database of farm to ECE books from Growing Minds - <http://growing-minds.org/childrens-literature/>
- 25 Children's Books to Nourish Curiosity from Food Tank - <https://foodtank.com/news/2017/12/childrens-books-growing-minds/>
- Diverse Bookfinder - <https://diversebookfinder.org/>
- The Children's Peace Education and Anti-bias Library – search thousands of titles in this database to find specific themes around diversity, justice, love of nature, knowledge of self, and connection to others. Focused on children ages 1-6 years of age - <http://www.childpeacebooks.org>

Multicultural Resources

- Serving Up Tradition: A Guide for School Food in Culturally Diverse Communities- <https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/ServingUpTradition.pdf>
- Bringing Tribal Foods and Traditions into Cafeterias, Classrooms, and Gardens - <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/TribalFood.pdf>

- Harvest for Healthy Kids family newsletters in English, Spanish, and Russian - <http://www.harvestforhealthykids.org/>
- Harvest of the Month (California) provides family and community newsletters in English and Spanish - <http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/Downloads.aspx>
- Several Wisconsin Farm to ECE resources are available in Spanish, Farm to ECE for Growers is also available in Hmong - <https://www.rootedwi.org/for-educators/farm-early-care-education/>
- Food and Garden Songs:
 - “The Fruit Chant” - Spanish - <http://www.spanishplayground.net/me-gusta-cantar-songs-practice-gustar/>
 - “Come Vegetales” - Spanish - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RsJionlGI>
 - Giizis Binoojiyag (The Sun Children) - Anishinaabemowin - <http://ojibwe.net/songs/childrens-songs/giizis-binoojiyag/> - see more songs at ojbwe.net
 - “J’aime les Fruit” - French - <http://www.frenchlearner.com/songs/fruits-song/>
 - See the Hmong Kids Channel on YouTube for other videos such as one on farm animal names in Hmong: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hy-kitzecG0> and a season-themed counting song in Hmong - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtgdVhDnoMI&index=13&list=PLB-YUDjw0d34w7CJqN5S47xqja9YVqQIM>
 - “Old McDonald Had a Farm” - American Sign Language - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUoipFFCEm0>

Other Related Resources/Organizations

- Ten Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care - WI Dept. Health Services - <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00022.pdf>
- WI Department of Children and Families - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/>
- WI Department of Health Services - <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/>
- WI Department of Public Instruction - <https://dpi.wi.gov/>
- Supporting Families Together Association - <https://supportingfamielstogether.org/>
- Wisconsin Early Childhood Association - <http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/>



Photos courtesy of HomeGrown Nature School, Little Folks Schoolhouse, Woodland Montessori School, St. Luke's Lutheran Preschool, and Rooted.

Questions? Comments? Get in touch:

Contact our farm to ECE team at wifarmtoece@rootedwi.org. Visit our website rootedwi.org for more farm to ECE resources.

