

Keystone STARS Bonus Point Quality Initiative: Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE)

In which Keystone STARS Performance Standard will my program earn bonus points for successfully implementing Farm to ECE?

Partnerships with Families and Communities (2 points)

How does Farm to ECE align with the Keystone STARS Performance Standards?

Farm to ECE offers benefits that parallel the goals and priorities of the early care and education community. Farm to ECE expands healthy food access for children and families.

The reasons below highlight how Farm to ECE activities help providers meet their goals of providing the highest quality care and educational experience available to the children they serve.

- **Health:** Farm to ECE activities like taste tests, cooking lessons, and gardening offer repeated exposures to new and healthy foods. This promotes lifelong healthy food preferences and eating patterns and decreases the risk for obesity.
- **Family and Community Engagement:** Gardening and food related activities appeal to families and create more opportunities for meaningful engagement. Children take home the excitement of learning about new foods and act as a catalyst for change in the family and community. Purchasing local products also helps the community.
- **Experiential Education:** The experiential learning opportunities associated with Farm to ECE enhance the learning environment, can help achieve early learning standards, and support appropriate cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development.

Below are some specific examples of Farm to ECE:

- Using a curriculum of set of activities that includes a focus on local foods such as the USDA's Grow It, Try It, Like It curriculum or using a Harvest of the Month framework for classroom activities.
- Cooking in the classroom
- Farm field trips
- Having a farmer or chef visit the classroom
- Serving local fruit and/or vegetable for a snack
- Procuring a locally grown or produced item to use in CACFP
- Planting seeds indoors
- Creating a raised bed garden and inviting parents to volunteer

Though healthy foods of all kinds are valuable, Farm to ECE is about a connection to local agriculture. This could mean local food from your county, state or region.

What evidence should I expect to provide to my Quality Coach to show full implementation of Farm to ECE?

Upon full implementation of this quality initiative, you should be able to do at least one of the following:

- Offer photos
- Walk through your garden
- Share lesson plans & activity write ups
- Highlight local items on CACFP menu
- Identify farms from which items were procured
- Keep an Early Childhood and Education binder to record activities and dates

Who do I contact for more information on Farm to ECE?

Organization: The Food Trust
Address: 1617 John F Kennedy Blvd. Suite 900 Philadelphia, PA 19103
Phone: 215-575-0444 ext. 7172
Email: contact@thefoodtrust.org
Website: www.thefoodtrust.org

Where do I go to find additional information on Farm to ECE?

- www.pafarmtoschool.org
- <https://learning.thefoodtrust.org/preschool/>