



Fall 2022

Dear Colleagues:

Health and wellness begin early in life when children are learning and forming behaviors they will take with them into adulthood. Implementing policies and practices that support a healthy child care environment is a crucial step in ensuring the health of Connecticut’s youngest residents. The Department of Public Health, in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, has developed this e-Bulletin to provide resources to assist early care and education programs in creating healthier environments that support early learning and development.



CT Grown for CT Kids Week & National Farm to School Month



National Farm to School Month is celebrated across the country each year in October. In Connecticut, we also celebrate [CT Grown for CT Kids Week](#) during the first week of October to show support for our state’s own local agriculture and elevate the importance of Farm to School and Early Care and Education. Please join us in celebrating CT Grown for CT Kids Week, October 3-7, 2022, with some of the activities listed below!

The [CT Farm to School Collaborative](#) has everything you need to source, serve and celebrate local foods in your lessons plans, gardens, and at meal or snack time! Please visit the CT Farm to School Collaborative website to:



- Order free materials including books, stickers, and posters



- Find menu items such as videos, curricula, and celebration ideas



- Access a Social Media Toolkit, resources for buying local, and much more!



CT Grown for CT Kids Resources

Cafeteria and At the Table

Host a taste test! Set up taste tests using local foods from your garden, grocery store, or local farmers' market to allow students to try unfamiliar foods. For clear instructions on how to conduct a taste test, check out this [Guide to Taste Testing Local Foods in Schools](#) by Vermont Feed, and the FoodCorps' [Taste Test Basics](#). If you participate in the CACFP program, you can [order](#) these free farm to school stickers to promote participation in the taste test!

Classroom and At Play

Learn How Plants Grow. Introduce to students the four key factors that help a plant grow by singing [Sun, Soil, Water, and Air](#) by Banana Slug String Band. Explore how various vegetables and fruits grow in the garden and enjoy fun activities through a series of lessons available [here](#).

Community, Families and Caregivers

Promote and enhance family engagement. Invite caregivers and family members to engage in gardening, cooking, and other food and agricultural-related activities. Encourage families to stop by a Connecticut [local farmers' market](#) to incorporate fresh local fruits and vegetables into their meals. Check out this [resource](#) on engaging families in Farm to ECE.

Put Local on Your Tray is another great resource for all things Farm to ECE. Click on the image below to check out the website.



Spotlight on Bristol Little Chefs

Bristol Child Development Center is doing amazing things in Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE). When educator Jo Lopez read an email about the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant, she saw an opportunity and had to seize it. Jo took the idea of meal subscriptions and worked with her husband, a professional chef, to develop the idea of bringing complete meal kits and cooking lessons to the children of the Child Development Center. Working alongside Maegan Adams, the director of Bristol Child Development Center, Little Chefs was created.

Little Chefs is a program where the local community, farmers, and the child care center work together to provide nutrition education to students through hands-on culinary experiences. Each month, children participating in the program are sent home with a Little Chefs kit packed in a reusable bag. Among other



things, the kit includes resources and information for local community gardens, farms and farmer's markets, and several literacy support materials for parents. The kit also provides a Little Chefs Guide with an overview of all the materials, a schedule of on-demand online classes, collectable recipe cards, and all the tools and food the family will need to complete the monthly activities. Finally, the monthly kit sends home a \$4 voucher for the children to use at the Bristol farmer's market.

Reaching over 90 families, Jo exudes her love and passion for nutrition education and garden-to-school opportunities as she details the biggest reward that she has seen, which is "giving the children the opportunity to experience something as simple as making their own salad at home or going to the farmer's market and buying stuff on their own, for themselves, that they want. Seeing those wheels turn and the 'a-ha moments' and the light bulbs go off as they're doing the activities is worth every single effort."

There are many ways to support Farm to ECE. Find out more about the CT Grow for CT Kids Grant on the next page of this eBulletin!

This excerpt was originally published by Abigail DuBois. Please read the full article [here](#).

Funding Opportunities

CT Grown for CT Kids Grant

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is pleased to announce that the second round of the GT Grown for CT Kids Grant is now open! The CT Grown for CT Kids Grant is a statewide grant program to help establish and further Farm to School and Farm to ECE initiatives. The complete guidance document can be found at www.CTGrown.gov/grants. Applications are due on November 15, 2022, at 4:00 PM. Grant coaching is available through UConn to help you refine your ideas! Group Sessions and one on one meeting times will be offered starting October 20th. Direct link to sign up [HERE](#). Contact Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov for information.

Farm to ECE Mini-Grant Program

The Connecticut Department of Public Health will be announcing the Farm to ECE Mini-Grant Program call for applications later this fall. Please stay tuned! You may contact Debora Brandon at Debora.Brandon@ct.gov to be added to our contact list.



Joseph Support Services, 2021 Farm to ECE Mini-Grant Recipient

Contact Us!

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