



Nutrition Education in Farm to ECE Programs

Nutrition education plays a pivotal role in Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) programs, offering numerous benefits for children, families, and caregivers. Early exposure to nutritious foods and hands-on learning influence dietary choices and eating behaviors later in life. By aligning nutrition and agriculture with early childhood education, programs promote lifelong health and well-being, healthy eating habits, and a deeper connection to food systems.

Benefits of Nutrition Education

- **Encouraging Diverse Diets:** Children are more likely to try new foods when they understand where they come from. Activities such as gardening, cooking, and taste tests provide opportunities for hands-on exploration with fresh, locally sourced ingredients.
- **Experiential Learning:** Through activities like planting seeds, harvesting vegetables, and preparing meals, children gain hands-on experience with food, nutrition, and agriculture.
- **Family Engagement:** Farm to ECE programs engage families in nutrition activities through cooking and gardening. Children who participate in these programs often share their excitement for growing and trying new foods with their families, encouraging health and wellbeing at home.
- **Curriculum Connections:** Nutrition education aligns with other subject areas, including science, math, and art. From learning about plant growth cycles to measuring ingredients for recipes, children gain hands-on experience in multiple subjects.

Tips for Getting Started

- **Utilize Evidence-Based Resources:** Incorporate evidence-based resources and curricula into Farm to ECE programs, such as the [USDA's Grow It, Try It, Like It! toolkit](#) and [Harvest of the Month](#) programs. These resources offer structured lesson plans, activities, and materials aligned with educational standards, making it easier for educators to integrate nutrition education into their programs.
- **Promote Family Involvement:** Encourage family involvement in Farm to ECE through take-home materials, family events, and gardening activities.
- **Incorporate Other Subjects:** Promote nutrition across subject areas by incorporating science, math, and art that reinforce concepts related to nutrition and agriculture.

Interested in starting your own Farm to ECE program? Check out the National Farm to School Network's [Getting Started Guide!](#)