



Farm-to-School Champions in the Cafeteria: Getting Started

Research says children need to try new foods anywhere from 7 to 15 times before they acquire a taste for them. Harvest of the Month activities, such as offering taste tests in the cafeteria, serve as “training wheels” that introduce children to new food options, setting them up for a lifelong ride of healthy eating.

Farm-to-school (F2S) Champions play an important role in fulfilling the goals of the Harvest of the Month program by working in partnership with the Food Service staff, cafeteria “duties,” classroom teachers, garden educators, and others offering food education in school. Our hope is that F2S Champions will feel empowered to share their ideas and enthusiasm for engaging students in thinking about and making healthy food choices.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Talk with Food Service staff** about what they have done to prepare for Harvest of the Month and explore ideas to educate children about healthy eating.
- **Spread the word** – Make sure parents know about the Harvest of the Month program and invite parents to eat lunch with their kids on these days.
- **When offering taste tests, ask students to be scientists reporting objective observations.** Encourage them to use their senses to discuss flavors, smells, textures and recognizable ingredients – What does it smell like? What is the texture like? How many colors does it have?
- **Never underestimate the power of positive peer pressure** – Refer to children who are willing to try new foods, inspiring hesitant eaters to follow their example.
- **Use props** (e.g., show the whole plant the Harvest item grows on so kids learn where foods come from).
- **Use trivia questions** as a playful way to pass on fun facts about the Harvest of the Month item (trivia sheets available on the Whatcom Farm-to-School website).
- **Get organized** – Utilize a cart (if available) to organize and transport taste tests, props, and paperwork around the cafeteria.
- **Ask students to help create new names** for foods they are trying – these could be used on the school menu later.
- **Take a Vote** – Get feedback from students (thumbs up/down, would they like it served for lunch again) and submit to the F2S Support Team to help guide development of future school meals.
- **Have Fun!** Remember that a positive experience is what builds kids’ interest and willingness to try new foods.

