



Setting Up a Farm to School Site Visit

1. Finding the Site

- Choose a site that exemplifies a farm to school program, even if it is still facing some challenges as it works hard to provide fresh local food to the students.
 - For example, the site may be a school in the Congressperson's district or state that serves local fruit once per month as part of the National School Lunch Program, or it may be a school that has a salad bar featuring local items on a daily basis.
- Choose a site that is easily accessible to the Congressperson and the media.
- Pick a day when school lunch participation is high.
- Pick a mealtime at which your Congressperson and the media can visit.

2. Who to Invite

- Your Senators and/or Representative
 - A model [invitation letter](#) and a model [scheduling request](#) (MSWord documents) are available from the Food Research and Action Center at www.FRAC.org/html/federal_food_programs/cnreauthor/cnrc.htm.
- Local and state newspaper, radio, and TV media
- Farmers who sell to the local schools
- Local school food service directors
- Organizations involved with the Farm to School Program in your area

3. Planning the Visit

- After identifying a school, schedule a date and time for the visit. In scheduling the visit, you will want to work with both the School and the Congressional Offices to find a time that works for all parties.
- It is important to keep both the site and Congress members attending informed of media outreach and/or presence at the event, press releases, etc.
 - If you plan to take pictures at the event (whether by media or for use on your website) you will need to collect photo release forms from students, indicating that their parents give permission for them to be photographed or filmed during the visit
 - If planning to take pictures, you will also need to get permission from Congress members and their staff
- You should put together information packets for attendees that include documents providing background on Farm to School, such as:
 - Nourishing the Nation One Tray at a Time
 - National Farm to School Network Brochure (available at www.farmentoschool.org)
 - Farm to School Information for Legislators

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- Frequently Asked Questions About Farm to School (available at www.farmtoschool.org)
- Information about local Farm to School Projects, or recent press releases/news articles highlighting local Farm to School efforts.
- Prepare the children for the event by keeping them informed and helping them prepare a presentation (if applicable) for the visiting congress members
- Create and circulate a press release for the event

4. During the Site Visit – Potential Ideas:

- Have the Congress member eat lunch with the students – hopefully lunch will feature at least one local ingredient!
- Present both the successes and barriers of starting a Farm to School program. Some ideas include:
 - What were the challenges of purchasing locally on the administrative side for the School? (Food Service Director)
 - How has selling to schools had a positive impact on the farmer’s business? (local farmer)
 - What has the school been able to accomplish as far as purchasing locally? What do they hope to do in the future?
- Have the kids give a presentation on how much they love the nutritious farm fresh products from the farm to school program, or give the Congressperson something to take away from the visit, like a small scrapbook of kids happily eating local fresh products, participating in the school garden, and having a nutrition class.
- Give a tour of the school garden, if one exists, and talk about the food and nutrition curriculum components of farm to school programs

5. During the Site Visit - Making Sure Your Message is Heard:

- The Congressperson may be limited by the amount of time he or she is able spend at the site, so be clear in your message throughout the visit
- Set aside a little time after the meal to talk with the Congressperson to reiterate the message that farm to school needs and deserves federal funding.
- Emphasize that the Congressperson should support \$50 million in mandatory funding for farm to school programs in Section 122 of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act
- Consult the Farm to School talking points on the CFSC website for additional information to discuss with your Congressperson.
- Research the issues your Congressperson works on. You can approach Farm to School from several perspectives – hopefully one will fit with your member’s interests!
 - child nutrition perspective,
 - a rural economic development perspective,
 - or both, according to what would most interest your Congressperson.
 - Note: If the Congressperson is solely interested in rural economic development, it might be worth trying to set up a farm visit with local farmers selling to schools, instead of a school visit.



6. Media Tips

- Contact the media as soon as you have the date and time scheduled for the visit
- Be aware that TV and newspaper reporters have early afternoon deadlines
- Put together media kits including a press release, the farm to school brochure, and other background farm to school information. For more information on media kits, contact Deb Eschmeyer (deschmeyer@oxy.edu) of the National Farm to School Network.
- Prepare in advance who will talk to the reporters during the visit

7. After the Event

- Send a Thank You note to each member of Congress that attended the event, as well as to any schools or farms that hosted the event.
- Follow-up with the Congressional office with answers to questions, and inform them of any press coverage.
- Publicize the event in your newsletter or on your website to help gain further support for mandatory federal funding for farm to school