

Farm to Preschool: farm field trips

The Importance of Farm Field Trips

“Children come away from farm field trips forever connected to local food and farms. As students harvest sugar snap peas, grind dried corn, and feed pigs, they make long-lasting and life-changing memories. On the farm, classroom lessons about soil, life cycles, community, and storytelling come to life. Students form relationships with the people who grow their food and gain a deeper understanding of rural ways of life. Through the hands-on experiences of farm field trips, children explore new ideas, discover their own strengths, and awaken new interests.”

—From ASAP’s [Hayride](#)

*Photo courtesy Willamette Farm
& Food Coalition*



General

Guidelines:

- Be flexible
- Hands-on activities and getting dirty are part of the experience!

Suggested Farm

Ground Rules:

- Listen when adults are talking to the group
- Don’t touch or climb on equipment or tools without permission
- Walk in the paths, not on vegetable beds
- Only pick and taste when given permission

First Steps: Decide...

- Which class/group will be going and what role the teacher will have with coordinating
- Who will coordinate the farm field trip
- Number of children that will be attending
- Ideal length of time for trip
- Budget; consider:
 - Transportation
 - Compensation for farmer
 - Purchase of food at farm
- Any special accommodations (wheelchair accessibility, etc.)

Find a Farmer

- Consider how far you are willing/able to travel to visit a farm or a farmers’ market
- Think of any farmers that you know from the farmers’ market or local farm stands that you think would be good at interacting with and talking to preschoolers. It takes a special kind of farmer.
- If you don’t know farmers in your area, you might visit a local farmers’ market to connect with farmers that might be a good match.
- Or, talk with your local farmers’ market manager or Extension agent for recommendations.

Plan with your Farmer

- Find a day that works for both parties; schedule the field trip
 - Suggested season for field trips: June 1-September 30th (this is the busy season for farmers, but the weather will be nice and produce will be available)
- Visit the farm in advance if possible to work out details and prep with the farmer; if you cannot visit, make sure you can connect over the phone or via email (ask farmer what the best way to contact them is)
- Ask about:
 - Farm address/directions
 - Parking (and space for bus to turn around if needed)
 - Restrooms
 - Hand-washing station
 - Covered space in case of rain (greenhouse, barn, or other covered area)
 - Product and general liability insurance
 - Compensation: does the farmer have set rates for hosting field trips?
 - If not, \$5/child is recommended if possible
 - Harvesting produce: can you harvest produce for a snack or tastings for the children?
- Plan your day together:
 - Let farmer know:
 - Number and age of students
 - Number of chaperones/adults that will be present
 - Expectations and roles for each adult
 - Ask farmer if he/she normally hosts field trips, or has ideas on what the children should do on a visit
 - Stations work well when thinking about your schedule for the day
 - Station 1: farm tour with the farmer
 - Station 2: hands-on activity or helping task for children
 - Station 3: harvesting produce, or watching adults harvest if needed
 - Station 4: coloring journals, farm scavenger hunt, or other activity
 - If you would like to eat lunch on the farm, ask if there is a good place for a picnic lunch
- Create a detailed schedule for the day, and distribute it to all interested parties: farmer, teacher, center director, parents, volunteers, etc. See an example schedule on the next page.
- Plan a backup in case of inclement weather; decide who is going to make the call to cancel in such an event: teacher or farmer

Plan for the Day of

- Recruit parent chaperones/volunteers (ratio of at least 1 adult to 5 children is best)
- Arrange transportation (confirm that there is space for bus to turn around at the farm if needed)
- Get the farm address/any special directions
- Send permission slips home if needed
- Request sack lunches if needed
- Remind families that children should wear clothes and shoes that can get dirty
- Prep nametags for children; if children will be in small groups, identify groups on nametags (can use different colored ink, stickers, etc.)
- Confirm with farmer, transportation, and volunteers a few days in advance

After the Field Trip

- Pay farmer for number of children on the field trip, and for any produce harvested or provided
- Send thank you notes and pictures from the day to the farmer

Example Field Trip Schedule



Photo courtesy of the Oregon Child Development Coalition

- 9am—meet in classroom
- 9:15—buses depart
- 9:30—arrive at farm
- 9:30-11—at the farm
 - 9:30-9:40—ground rules
 - 9:40-10
 - red group: tour and tasting
 - blue group: helping task and harvesting
 - green group: farm scavenger hunt
 - 10-10:20—rotate
 - 10:20-10:40—rotate
 - 10:40-11—snack or lunch at farm
- 11-11:15—bus back to school
- Afternoon—color thank you notes

Supply list:

- Nametags
- Soap, paper towels, and hand sanitizer for hand washing at farm
- Baskets or bins for harvesting into
- Rain ponchos
- Any needed activity supplies
- Lunches if eating at the farm
- Sunscreen
- First aid kit
- Blankets/tarp for picnic
- Camera
- Knives and cutting boards for cutting produce for tasting on the farm
- Water jug
- Cups for kids

Materials adapted from:

- Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)
- The Urban and Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College
- Willamette Farm & Food Coalition