



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Education**


September 16, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents



FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: Virginia Farm-to-School Week – October 3-7, 2016**


The first full week of October has been designated annually as Virginia Farm-to-School Week by the General Assembly. October is also National Farm-to-School month. Each year, schools across the Commonwealth celebrate Farm-to-School Week with menus that include local foods, farm celebrity guests, school garden harvests, and educational activities that emphasize Virginia foods, farming, and healthy eating.

The 2015 [National Farm-to-School Census](#)  showed that nearly 80 percent of Virginia school divisions have active Farm-to-School programs or plan to begin one. Virginia school nutrition programs reported nearly \$8 million of local food products are purchased annually for service in the school breakfast, lunch, and snack programs. And, more than 154 school gardens are growing in Virginia.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) is the coordinating agency for Virginia's Farm-to-School, Farm-to-Child Care, and Farm-to-Summer activities. VDACS and its partners, including the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Department of Health, and the Planning Council for Child Care, are taking a small step to increase the impact of Farm-to-School Week. Virginia school students, children in early care, families, and members of other organizations across the state are invited to "crunch" into a Virginia Grown apple or other locally grown crunchy fruit or vegetable at noon on Thursday, October 6, in celebration of Virginia Farm-to-School Week. Virginians of all ages are asked to join the "crunch" at lunch time to show their support for healthy eating and to celebrate Virginia agriculture.

Schools that plan to participate in the "crunch" are encouraged to register. The Planning Council's Farm2Childcare webpage is the host site for the 2016 Virginia Grown Apple Crunch. Visit the [webpage](#)  to register, share photos, and learn more. The [Virginia Farm to School](#) and the [National Farm to School](#)  websites have additional resources and ideas for celebrating Farm-to-School Week.

School divisions may also want to consider applying for the following federal grant opportunity. The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm-to-School Grants provide funding to school districts, state and local agencies, agricultural producers, and non-profit organizations in their efforts to increase local foods served through child nutrition programs, teach children about food and agriculture through garden and classroom education, and develop schools' and farmers' capacities to participate in farm to school. The funds may be used for training, supporting operations, planning, purchasing equipment, developing school gardens, developing partnerships, and implementing farm to school programs.

This year, grant awards ranging from \$20,000 to \$100,000 will be distributed in four different grant categories: Planning, Implementation, Support Service, and Training. Applications are due directly to USDA by December 8, 2016. For more information on how to apply for FY 2017 funding, visit the [grant opportunities page](#) .

For questions or additional information about Farm-to-School in Virginia, please contact Leanne Dubois, VDACS Farm-to-School Coordinator, by email at [leanne.dubois@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:leanne.dubois@vdacs.virginia.gov), or by telephone at (804) 225-3663, or Lynne A. Fellin, Associate Director of School Nutrition Programs, by telephone at (804) 225-

2717 or by email at [lynne.fellin@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:lynne.fellin@doe.virginia.gov).

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