



#253-21

**Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #253-21**

DATE: September 3, 2021
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Celebrate National Farm to School Month and Virginia Farm to School Week**

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is celebrating **National Farm to School Month** and encourages school divisions to participate in events throughout October. Virginia Farm to School Week is October 4-8, 2021, and the Crunch Heard 'Round the Commonwealth is being held on October 5, 2021.

The Crunch Heard 'Round the Commonwealth

The VDOE, Office of School Nutrition Programs (SNP), in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), is excited to announce the fifth annual *Crunch Heard 'Round the Commonwealth*.

During this event Virginians are encouraged to make some noise for Farm to School by simultaneously taking a bite out of a fresh local apple. To register for the event and download the FREE toolkit and marketing materials, complete the [Crunch Heard 'Round the Commonwealth Registration Form](#).

Virginia Farm to School Week

House Joint Resolution No. 692 (2015) designates the first full week in October as Virginia Farm to School Week. Farm to School connects schools with farmers and local food hubs, providing opportunities to educate students about the importance of consuming fresh, healthy food, and the impact local food has on Virginia's communities. When schools purchase local foods, they can provide reliable, ongoing support to Virginia's agricultural economy.

School divisions in Virginia can celebrate with locally procured foods featured on school menus, poster contests, virtual farm tours, and online "meet the farmer" events. Schools may also bring farm to school to the classroom with standards of learning-based lessons from the Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom (VA-AITC) that feature [Virginia Harvest of the Month](#) crops.

Virginia Farm to School Conference

The Virtual Virginia Farm to School Conference, hosted by the VDOE-SNP and scheduled for **October 5-6, 2021**, features best practices, resources, and networking opportunities to farmers, school nutrition directors, and educators to elevate Farm to School practices across the Commonwealth. The conference focus is to increase procurement of Virginia grown food and hands-on educational opportunities in school gardens, cafeterias, and classrooms. Attendance is free and registration is required. The VDOE-SNP will provide registration details in a subsequent communication.

Farm to School Funding

The [Virginia Ag in the Classroom \(VA-AITC\)](#) is offering grants to Virginia teachers to encourage the integration of agriculture into their daily curriculum. Grant applications are due **October 15, 2021**.

The Office of Community Food Systems (OFCS) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awards annual Farm to School Grants to local school divisions and federal nutrition program sponsors. Requests for Applications for the Fiscal Year 2022 Farm to School Grants will open this fall. USDA Farm to School grants help schools and communities incorporate local products into school meals, integrate agricultural education in the classroom, and cultivate and expand

farm to school efforts. Refer to the [USDA Resources for Grant Program Applicants](#) for more information.

For more information

For additional ideas on celebrating Virginia Farm to School Week and National Farm to School Month, visit the [National Farm to School website](#). Please let us know about your Farm to School events by completing the Virginia School Nutrition Events Form by September 15, 2021, so we can celebrate with you!

Please direct any Farm to School related questions to Kelly Shomo, SNP Training, Program Improvement, and Grants Supervisor, via email at Kelly.Shomo@doe.Virginia.gov.

SCC/cc

Resources

- A. [Virginia School Nutrition Events Form](#)
- B. [Crunch Heard 'Round the Commonwealth Registration Form](#)
- C. [Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom website](#)
- D. [Virginia Harvest of the Month](#)
- E. [USDA Resources for Grant Program Applicants](#)