



# Ontario Edible Education Network Action Plan

## Food in the Curriculum

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**Date:** November 11, 2013

*This document provides the Ontario Edible Education Network's Action Plan to advance its Food in the Curriculum focus area. Following the details of the Plan, this document provides the results of a survey that informed its direction.*

*The Ontario Edible Education Network's process involved the development of 6 Action Plans for the following priority areas: (1) Food in the Curriculum, (2) Food Education Outside of the Classroom, (3) School and Community Food Gardens Engaging Children, (4) Food Skills and Cooking Programs, (5) Local/Sustainable Food in Schools, and (6) Student Nutrition Programs.*

*More information about the Ontario Edible Education Network is available at:  
<http://www.sustainontario.com/initiatives/ontario-edible-education-network>*

# Ontario Edible Education Network: Food in the Curriculum Action Plan

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## Summary: Action Plan Goals and Objectives:

1. Share and create a searchable database of teaching tools on the Network website, including lesson plans and a resource for connecting food to the current Ontario curriculum.
2. Build and maintain networks and connections between different players in the food literacy education community.
  - a) Create a tool for networking and strengthening connections on the Network website.
  - b) Organize networking events for teachers, NGOs and other stakeholders working with food literacy education.
3. Advocate for an increase in school-based food literacy education.
  - a) Create resources for schools, parents, community members and organizations to use to advocate for food literacy programming.
  - b) Advocate for food literacy education through Ontario-wide media and social media outlets.
4. Provide educational opportunities for teachers about food literacy programming.
5. Compile specific suggestions for changes for the Ontario curriculum to include food literacy and research the process of making curriculum changes.

## Priority Actions and Implementation Details:

★ = “Quick Win”: Priority action that can be taken in the next year, using limited resources, to demonstrate movement, and build momentum

### A. Network Building and Connecting

#### *Facilitated Relationship Building*

<i>Priority Actions</i>	Priority Level	Implementation Details
<b>1) Create a tool for networking and strengthening connections on the Network website</b>	High	a. Create a list of Network members and/or member organizations, sorted by category, with short descriptions. Members can write profiles and indicate what programming and connections they offer and are looking to make. ★ b. Ensure a diversity of stakeholders are represented on the site – teachers, schools, organizations, farmers, etc.
<b>2) Promote and organize networking events, either in-person or online, to build and maintain networks and connections between different players in the food literacy education community.</b>	High	a. Promote networking events organized by Network members. ★ <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Work with members from different parts of the province to organize their own in-person events to ensure that all regions are represented.</li> </ol> b. Link up with existing events, such as Bring Food Home. ★ c. Organize networking events for teachers, NGOs and other stakeholders.

## Funder Education

<i>Priority Messages</i>	Priority Level	Implementation Details
<b>1) Teachers need funding to go to events</b>		A significant concern for teachers about coming to events involves funding – for travel, for providing supply teacher, etc. Bursaries for food-themed events (such as PD days, conferences, etc.) would be beneficial.
<b>2) Food literacy education is interdisciplinary and diverse.</b>		Food-themed lesson plans can be used to address curriculum requirements in nearly all school subject areas.

## B. Aggregating Thought and Information

### Sharing information, resources and stories:

<i>Priority Actions/Areas</i>	Priority Level	Implementation Details
<b>1) Collect and share lesson plans related to food. Create a searchable database of lesson plans and other teaching tools and resources.</b>	High	<p>a. Research existing lesson plans from member organizations and add to Network website (with permission). 🌟</p> <p>b. Allow Network members to submit lesson plans – could profile members on the website and/o in the newsletter.</p> <p>c. Ensure lesson plans are accessible and easy to use for teachers and educators. (See appendix A for suggestions and guidelines for lesson plans.)</p> <p>d. Screen submitted lesson plans to ensure that they are aligned with the Network's values - screening can potentially be done by an advisory committee working group.</p> <p>e. Possibly link with Edible Schoolyard to share their searchable database and add an "Ontario" search option.</p>
<b>2) Provide educational opportunities for teachers about food literacy programming.</b>	Med	<p>a. Promote food-themed teacher education workshops by member organizations. 🌟</p> <p>i. Member organizations can submit food-themed teacher educational opportunities (webinars, online courses, workshops, PD days, etc.)</p> <p>ii. Promote these opportunities so that teachers choose food-related PD days for their self-determined PD days.</p> <p>iii. Share through the Network and Sustain Ontario communication channels.</p> <p>iv. Encourage member organizations to develop and host teacher education workshops around the province.</p> <p>b. Seek funding to send teachers/educators to member events and trainings, to make these events more accessible.</p>
<b>Other:</b>		

<b>Approach teachers' colleges about providing food literacy education training to their students.</b>		a. Link member organizations with teachers' colleges and encourage them to connect with teachers' colleges and provide food-related education to teacher college students.
<b>Teacher education workshops coordinated by the Network.</b>		a. Organize food-themed workshops and/or encourage member organizations to do so. b. Provide education to teachers about food literacy. c. Develop new food-themed lesson plans with teachers at workshops, or test existing lesson plans.

**Research Gaps / Data Collection:**

<i>Priority Actions to Address Research Gaps</i>	Priority Level	Implementation Details
<b>1) Research existing lesson plans and see how they fit into current curriculum. Find the gaps.</b>	Med	a. Find gap in lesson plan subject areas. b. Create new lessons and/or ask for submissions from Network members – can be done in the form of a contest or with some other incentive.

**Communications: Fact Sheets, Handouts, other resources:**

<i>Priority Communications Resources</i>	Priority Level	Implementation Details
<b>1) Create a resource for connecting food to the current Ontario curriculum. 🌟</b>	High	a. Research existing curriculum connections resources. Ask Network members to share any related resources they may have. b. Emphasize interdisciplinarity and ease of connecting food lessons to existing curriculum. c. Create a chart/table sorted by grade and subject to demonstrate potential links of food literacy topics to current curriculum.
<b>2) Create resources for advocating for food literacy education.</b>	High	a. Create resources for schools, parents, community members and organizations to use to advocate for food literacy programming (presentations, hand-outs, fact sheets, case studies, social media campaign, etc.) b. Post these resources on the Network website.

**C. Advocacy and Government Relations**

<i>Priority Policy Objectives/Opportunities</i>	Priority Level	Implementation Details
<b>1) Start dialogue with government ministries about food literacy curriculum changes. 🌟</b>	High	a. Start dialogue about policy and curriculum changes with the Ministries of Education, Health, Child and Youth Services b. Capitalize on energy and connections from Local Food Act announcements.

<p><b>2) Advocate for food literacy education through Ontario-wide media/social media</b></p>	<p>High</p>	<p>a. Promote food-related educational events through the Network, Sustain Ontario and member websites and social media 🌟</p> <p>b. Send press releases about key Network activities and events to media outlets.</p> <p>c. Survey Network members to collect key dates/activities/events.</p> <p>d. Concise and exciting e-mail newsletters to Network members and others who have shown interest. 🌟</p> <p>e. Promote to new (i.e. not currently involved in food literacy) networks and organizations that work with parents, students, educators, and school communities.</p>
<p><b>3) Compile specific suggestions and make policy recommendations for changes to the Ontario curriculum to include food literacy, and research the process for making curriculum changes.</b></p>		<p>a. Create a document with food literacy curriculum recommendations for the Ministry of Education, possibly working collaboratively with the ministry directly and providing/getting ongoing feedback and dialogue. Consider getting advocacy support from somebody with government advocacy experience. (See Appendix B for suggestions and guidelines.)</p> <p>b. Contact the Curriculum Council for detailed information about submitting curriculum recommendations.</p> <p>c. Create a working group of Network members to research and write the recommendations.</p>

## Appendix A: What was heard – Environmental Scan (Survey)

### *About the Survey – Process and Respondents*

The Food in the Curriculum survey collected responses from June- September, 2013. Its aim was to collect in-depth information about what is already happening in Ontario in the area of food education in the classroom, as well as to collect perspectives about the future directions of the Ontario Edible Education Network. **Different versions of the survey were sent to teachers/educators, NGOs and other organizations, as well as “other stakeholders”.**

The survey explored:

- how the different stakeholders would use a **Network website**
- the importance of **linking food-themed lessons directly with current curriculum requirements**
- whether stakeholders consider it important to advocate for **the inclusion of food literacy in the Ontario curriculum**
- what **barriers** were faced by the various stakeholders
- how **programs become successful**
- the **effectiveness of respondents’ networks**

There were a total of 21 respondents to the Food in the Curriculum survey:

- 9 teachers/educators
- 7 NGOs and other organization representatives
- 5 other stakeholders
- Note that some respondents have asked to keep their identities anonymous

### **Category: Teacher/Educator**

<i>School / Project / Program</i>	Geographic Location	Name
<b><i>Blake St. Public school</i></b>	Toronto	Erin Barr
<b><i>Humewood Community School</i></b>	Toronto	Andrew Lister
<b><i>Near North District School Board</i></b>	Parry Sound	Stephen Webb
<b><i>Withrow Avenue Public School</i></b>	Toronto	Matt Davies
<b><i>Withrow Avenue Public School</i></b>	Toronto	Steven Massa
<b><i>Greater Essex Public School Board</i></b>	Windsor	Ashleigh Moulder
<b><i>Concordia University</i></b>	Montreal, Quebec	Jade Owen
<b><i>Humewood Community School</i></b>	Toronto	Andrew Lister
	Vancouver, British Columbia	Jyssa Richardson
		Anonymous

**Category: NGOs/other organization providing food education programming**

<i>Organization / Project / Program</i>	<i>Geographic Location</i>	<i>Name</i>
<b>Canadian Organic Growers Ottawa-St-Lawrence-Outaouais Chapter/Growing Up Organic</b> <a href="http://www.cog.ca/ottawa/growing-up-organic">www.cog.ca/ottawa/growing-up-organic</a>	Ottawa-St Lawrence-Outaouais	Alissa Mae Campbell
<b>Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc.</b> <a href="http://www.oafe.org">www.oafe.org</a>	Milton	Becky Parker
<b>Bruce Peninsula Environment Group</b>	Lion's Head	Jim Kuellmer
<b>Organic Council of Ontario</b> <a href="http://www.organiccouncil.ca">www.organiccouncil.ca</a>	Guelph	Jodi Koberinski
<b>Roots of Bruce- Agriculture in the Classroom project</b> <a href="http://www.rootsofbruce.com">www.rootsofbruce.com</a>	Walkerton	Monica Zettel
<b>GBCAE</b> <a href="http://www.gbcae.com">www.gbcae.com</a>	Allenford	Thorsten
<b>Huron County Health Unit</b> <a href="http://www.huronhealthunit.com">www.huronhealthunit.com</a>	Huron County	Amy MacDonald

**Category: Other stakeholders, e.g. School board, chef, parent, farmer, etc.**

<i>Organization / Company / School / Project / Program</i>	<i>Geographic Location</i>	<i>Your Name(s)</i>
<b>Gammondale Farm Family Fun</b> <a href="http://www.gammondalefarm.com">www.gammondalefarm.com</a>	Slate River (near Thunder Bay)	Sue and Gerry Gammond
<b>UNICEF Canada</b> <a href="http://www.unicef.ca/en/teachers/article/global-classroom">www.unicef.ca/en/teachers/article/global-classroom</a>	Toronto – Riverdale	Paula Gallo
		3 Anonymous

**Curriculum Links**

When asked “Is it important to you that food literacy lessons be directly linked with curriculum requirements?”, responses were mixed.

Many teachers indicated that it is nice to have curriculum connections, but that it is not hard for them to make something fit into the curriculum and that they find food education valuable whether it is in the curriculum or not, as shown by the following quotes:

“If possible, but I still think is valuable even if it is not directly related.”

“It would be great, but not totally needed. It's not hard to make something fit into the curriculum.”

“While food literacy should be essential learning linked to curriculum, some communities are more directly impacted by the agriculture industry (as it supplies both food and employment to families, as opposed to only the former).”



NGO respondents indicated that curriculum links are useful for creating teacher buy-in for their programmes. The importance of making direct curriculum links in food literacy programming is dependent on the school and community. The issue is well summarized by the following quote:

**“It is an incredible tool for achieving curriculum goals, so why not?”**

While support was indicated for **advocating to make changes to the Ontario curriculum to specifically include food literacy**, some concerns were expressed including the **time involved in making changes**, and **concerns from teachers about adding more curriculum requirements**.

When asked **“What kinds of food-related lessons do you already teach at school?”**, survey responses demonstrated the **diversity and inter-disciplinarity of food literacy education** in the classroom. A wide range of food-related themes (healthy eating, agriculture, cooking skills, gardening, environmental impacts of food choices, where food comes from, food literacy, etc.) are being addressed in nearly all areas of the Ontario curriculum.

### *Culturally Appropriate Food Education*

Respondents were asked: **“Is it important to you that food education be culturally appropriate?”** to which they provided the following comments:

Teachers/Educators:

“Whereas culture is a social construct, food is ubiquitous. Food can provide insight and understanding of different cultures. Food can also serve as a critical lens for analyzing our own culture(s).”

“It's always best when the diverse student population of the classroom can see themselves in the lessons. So, making them culturally appropriate helps keep the students engaged and interested.”

NGOs:

“Only to the point of engaging students.”

“Yes. It is important that food referred to in educational programming encompasses a variety of cultures. We have developed a resource which explores some of the World Crops which are being researched at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre.”

“We have had very little direct to school interaction to date - as we develop our programs over time culture is a huge part of our "lens".”

### *Network Connections*

The survey asked teachers and educators about their connections with farmers / food producers to provide food education activities outside the classroom (e.g. farm tours, farm-based field trip opportunities)?”. The following comments highlight the positive aspects of these relationships:

“We go to the Royal Winter Fair and interview farmers and ask for tips.”

“Many students have some connection to the farm as it is local. It inculcates a sense of community for the students while also stressing the essential place of sustainable food networks and food security.”

Some of the teachers who responded that they do not have connections to farmers are interested to make these connections.

Respondents were asked to discuss the barriers or challenges that they faced when connecting with other stakeholders. The following comments were heard:

Comments from teachers / educators:

“Many small farmers and producers are unable to sustain themselves with the food production as their sole source of income. Therefore, many are less able to commit their time to collaboration with school programs while they attempt to juggle their farm and another job.”

“As a French Immersion teacher, it's hard finding programming in French for my students.”

NGOs outlined time constraints and school board policies as barriers.

Other stakeholders provided the following comments:

“Finding a farmer that had the time.”

“We work with schools, teachers and faculties, and do a lot of teacher training across Canada. The challenge is always that teachers are busy, there is so much on their plate (no pun intended!), and that if something is not specifically connected to the curriculum it is hard to justify doing it.”

### *Role of the Ontario Edible Education Network*

Respondents were asked **whether the Ontario Edible Education Network could help increase their connections with schools or overcome barriers.**

One Teacher / Educator suggested:

“Providing a list of possible connections / opportunities and making it easier for teachers to track them down etc...”

NGO responses included:

“Having a way to communicate with schools in specific regions for specific purposes.”

“No. These are barriers that need to be addressed on a very personal basis, in-person, through strengthening relationships between our staff and teachers.”

While support was indicated for **advocating to make changes to the Ontario curriculum to specifically include food literacy**, some concerns were expressed. There were concerns with the **time involved in making changes**, and **teacher concerns about adding more curriculum requirements.**

The importance of **network-building** was clear. **Connections between schools and NGOs** were identified as being very important to ensure the success of food literacy programming. Other important factors were **funding, parent or community support, staff/member support, the leadership of an individual, and partnerships** with other related organizations.

**Advocacy support is also important on a community level.** Respondents indicated that there needs to be advocacy in many directions and from a variety of sources for buy-in from the whole school / education community and to ensure the continued success of food literacy programmes.

When teachers/educators and NGOs were asked about what efforts the Network should prioritize, as well as what barriers might exist for people to access these potential efforts, the following was heard:

- **Increasing training for teachers on the subject of food literacy** was supported by respondents from each group, through PD Days, online courses and conferences, but there were strong concerns related to time and money, and challenges with travelling to courses and conferences.
- Responses to an **OEEEN website and e-mail newsletter** were somewhat more positive. Respondents indicated interest in:
  - accessing and contributing food-themed lesson plans
  - accessing a tool to help make links between food and the current Ontario curriculum
  - learning about innovative partnerships and reading case studies
  - finding information about funding and grants
  - networking with other educators or NGOs
  - accessing recipes, and
  - finding opportunities for involving parents and community members in food literacy programming

Respondents categorized as “other” provided the following responses when asked how the Network could provide resources and/or activities:

“Helping the family farms promote their tours would be very helpful to give more students to meet the farmers who grow their food.”

“I think it would be great to get groups together that aren't specifically food focused (such as UNICEF) but are working toward similar goals - advocacy, building capacity, empowerment, youth voice and meaningful child participation.”

**As indicated by the Food in the Curriculum action planning survey, the priorities for the Network in this area are:**

- **sharing and creating teaching tools**
- **facilitating network building**
- **advocacy on a variety of levels**
- **working toward changes in the Ontario curriculum to include food literacy components**

## Appendix B: Suggestions and Guidelines for Lesson Plans

1. Research existing lesson plans from organizations such as FoodShare, The Stop, Evergreen, Green Thumbs Growing Kids, and from individuals.
  - (a) Look at what already exists with Ontario curriculum connections, then look for non-Ontario lesson plans which can be adapted, and then find network members to create lesson plans to fill the gaps.
  - (b) Ensure that groups/individuals whose lesson plans are used are properly credited.
2. Ensure ease of use for teachers and educators.
  - (a) Lesson plan website should be easily searchable with a variety of options, such as grade level, subject area, key words, curriculum links, etc.
  - (b) Lesson plans should be easy for teachers to grab and go: format of lesson plans should be straightforward; minimal materials and preparation
  - (c) Consider creating videos of lesson plans in action.
3. Some criteria to consider for lesson plans:
  - (a) Lesson plans for all grades, K-12
  - (b) Indicate connections to Ontario curriculum, where possible
  - (c) Ensure a balance of lessons for the garden, kitchen, classroom, etc., so that it is inclusive for schools regardless of resources and geographic location.
  - (d) Mix of lessons for teachers with limited time and resources to grab-and-go, as well as lessons for other educators and organizations who have the possibility of going more in-depth with food literacy programming.
  - (e) Ensure cultural diversity and sensitivity to different socio-economic situations in lesson plans (e.g. Affordability of food, avoiding activities that could be seen as wasting food, etc.). Reach out to different communities for lesson plans, such as Northern Ontario, Aboriginal Peoples, etc.
  - (f) Try to also find resources and lesson plans in French, for ESL, for different learning styles, etc.
4. Create a process for contributing and screening lesson plans, to ensure that all resources on the Network's website fit the network's vision.
  - (a) Make sure that lesson plans are sensitive to the Network's definition of "good food" and present a wide range of agricultural practices, leaving the students to work on their own decision-making process.

## Appendix C: Suggestions for making government policy recommendations

1. Curriculum changes are made on an ongoing basis, with different subject areas and grades being revised at different times. In 2007, the Working Group on Environmental Education chaired by Roberta Bondar submitted a report detailing 32 recommendations for environmental education, commissioned by the Ministry of Education. This can be used as a model for what could be written for making changes towards food literacy. Roberta Bondar has demonstrated support for food education through speaking at a Green Thumbs Growing Kids event, so she might be approached for recommendations and contacts.  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/curriculumcouncil/shapingSchools.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/curriculumcouncil/shapingSchools.pdf)
2. Contact the Curriculum Council, which researches and compiles curriculum change recommendations for the Ministry of Education.  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/curriculumcouncil/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/curriculumcouncil/index.html)
3. Start by prioritizing elements of food education which are not covered in other parts of the curriculum, such as cooking skills.
4. Work with existing projects and campaigns to make policy recommendations about including food literacy in the school system and the Ontario curriculum.

## Appendix D: How the Network can contribute / work with / build on existing initiatives

- Partnerships with a university or college – perhaps a consistent department or supervisor who signs on as a long-term partner on the project and manages the work and assignment of multiple students, at a faculty of education, community development, nutrition, food security, health promotion, environmental studies, etc.
- Networking events at existing events, conferences
- Network member organizations
  - possibility of interns at member organizations who can work on specific Network tasks
  - possibility of dedicating some staff time to Network tasks
- Network advisory committee
  - create sub-committees/working groups for collecting/screening lesson plans; compiling curriculum connections document; working group for curriculum change recommendations
- Faculties of Education and their students
  - can encourage student(s) to do thesis work about food in the curriculum
  - internships at Sustain Ontario or Ontario Edible Education Network member organizations
- Environmental education programmes, e.g. York University’s MES programme
  - encouraging students to do thesis work about food in the curriculum
- Green Teacher Magazine
  - sharing information about the Network in their publication
  - gathering teacher support and involvement with lesson plan creation
  - they had a food-themed issue in 2005 – maybe the Network could collaborate with them to create a new food issue, to advocate for and promote food literacy education
- UNICEF Canada’s Education Team
  - expressed interest in collaborating as part of their Rights Respecting School programme
- Educators who have expressed interest in collaborating to help create lesson plans

## Appendix E: Summary of results from 2012 survey

Based on results from a preliminary survey conducted by the Ontario Edible Education Network from January 2012 to February 2013, it was clear that **food education in the classroom is occurring in Ontario, but also that it is an area in which many people are looking for support**. Themes related to food in the curriculum were **providing classroom food education, food curriculum and resource development, and advocacy for food education**.

Some **suggestions from the 2012 survey** for the future activities of the Network were to:

- **build on what is already available** in terms of resources and experiences
- ensure that the network focuses largely on **action**, rather than theory
- be conscious of **involving participants from all areas of the province**, of **not creating divides** between rural and urban areas, and of ensuring **participation from various sectors** related to food education
- **remain conscious of the Network's values of how it defines "good food"** and to monitor network participation based on these values.

Developing a **Network website** was indicated as being useful and **advocacy** work was shown to be an important activity for the network.