Tips for Teaching Local Food Literacy in the Classroom

Tipsheet #1 in our Local Food Literacy in Ontario Schools Series

Overview

- Food skills are extremely valuable. Local food literacy education at school can engage and excite students about food, and help young people learn how to: cook from scratch, grow their own food, navigate a grocery store, and understand the complexities of the food system.

- Local food can be used as an engaging approach to many different subject areas (from math to social studies to food and nutrition).

- A critical part of local food literacy is knowing how to make meaning of the complex food system.

FoodShare Field to Table Schools’ Top 5 tips for teaching local food literacy in schools:

1. Highlight vegetables and fruits whenever possible, which often means integrating them into well-known recipes that students love.

2. Broaden culinary horizons with new ingredients, while at the same time, honour the cultural importance of the foods we choose and the foods we eat at home.

3. Choose local food whenever possible, but also understand that importing is often necessary in a chilly winter climate and variety is the spice of life.

4. Highlight the benefits of ethically or sustainably raised and grown food, but understand that affordability and accessibility are key.

5. Understand and discuss the long-term systems change needed in our current food system, but always end with an uplifting discussion around what we can do to make positive change.

Ideas for celebrating Local Food in the classroom:

- Events like the Great Big Crunch – where everyone crunches into an apple or carrot at the same time: [http://foodshare.net/program/crunch/](http://foodshare.net/program/crunch/)

- Special Guests (e.g. beekeeper or farmer or someone who owns a grocery store to talk about food from their perspective or experience)

- Visits from grandparents for inter-generational perspective

2017 – Developed in partnership by Sustain Ontario, Ecosource, FoodShare & Roots to Harvest
Elements of successful Local Food Literacy programs:

- **Teacher champions** (projects that are initiated by or come from school staff / school board staff)
- **Strong administrative and school board support**
- **Good relationships with producers / farmers** – go to farmers’ markets with students or on your own to build relationships! You can then purchase local food and even invite farmers to come in to classroom to speak.
- **Get students cooking, growing, tasting**
- **Flexibility and creativity**
- **Have a connection with community partners**

One local product can lead to many curriculum connections:

![Cooking & Tasting - A Case Study](11)

**Tip for High Schools:** Use food and agriculture to help build youth employment skills (develop classroom workshops and projects; use greenhouses and urban farm spaces; or employ youth in the summer).
Spotlight: A Selection of Local Food Literacy Resources

- **10 activity guides** – can use full lesson plans or pick and choose activities
- For **primary, junior & intermediate students** (with accommodations & extensions)
- **Sample activity: Flower Power** – includes stewardship activities and cooperative games that can be used in the schoolyard or gym. One game is to build a pollinator house; curriculum connections support **inquiry, science and technology, visual arts, math and measurement**, even **media literacy**. Games allow students to build **physical educational skills** while also learning about **pollination, seed dispersal** and other environmental concepts.

- **10 lesson plans** in both **French** and **English**. Each lesson plan includes hands-on activities, interactive games, garden learning and discussion (has a seasonal focus).
- Focus on hands-on learning, can be used both at **home** and at **school**.
- **Sample game: Farm to Table Relay Race**. Students race to different farms – one a local Ontario farm and the other farther away – while learning about where food comes from and how it gets to you. This tool can connect to a number of different curriculum requirements including **Physical Education, Literacy, French, Social Studies** across many different grade levels and needs.

Field to Table Schools Workshops (FoodShare Toronto): [http://foodshare.net/program/student/](http://foodshare.net/program/student/)
- An extensive collection of educator workshops and lesson plans.
- **Cooking & Tasting Toolkit** - introduces students to ingredients, cooking techniques and tasting experiences using vegetables and fruits (local when possible).
- **Great Big Crunch Activity Guide** – invites good food enthusiasts to learn about healthy eating through the apple’s journey from seed, to harvest, to market, to table (and around again)!

- Curriculum guide offers **15 lesson plans** (which were written and conceived by Durham District School Board (DDSB) secondary school teachers).
- Intended to open meaningful conversations with **secondary students** about our local food system, and the complexities of our food choices.
- Lesson plans are written to address the **Science, Geography, Family Studies, Hospitality and Business** curriculum expectations and contain step by step instructions for lesson preparation and delivery, and various assessment opportunities and corresponding student worksheets.
Where to Find More Hands-On, Ready to Use Teaching Resources

- Houses food lesson plans and resources for teachers.
- Click on the “Food Literacy” initiative to search for hands-on teaching resources by subject, grade, and other search fields.

AgScape (formerly OAFE): [http://www.agscape.ca/](http://www.agscape.ca/)
- Offers agriculture-focused teaching guides and visits from Teacher Ambassadors (for free in-class lessons).

AgScape’s Growing Careers website: [http://www.growingcareers.ca/](http://www.growingcareers.ca/)
- Has information about careers in Agribusiness:

FoodLand Ontario: [https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/foodland-ontario](https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/foodland-ontario)
- Provides links, fruit and vegetable Availability Guides: [https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/page/availability-guide](https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/page/availability-guide)
- Kids’ Corner has kid-friendly info about Ontario fruits and veggies: [https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/page/kids-corner](https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/page/kids-corner)

- Developed by the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH).
- Provides food and nutrition-focused lessons and a set of badges that can be achieved (though not specifically focused on local)

- Go to Resources to access a large database of teaching resources from around the world searchable by type, grade, subject, season.

This Local Food Literacy tipsheet has been prepared thanks to: