



[Massachusetts Food for Massachusetts Kids](#) is a coalition of organizations and farm to school advocates working to support schools and districts in the following areas:

- Maximizing **equitable access** to meals at school for all students
- **Strengthening school meals**, including maximizing the use of locally grown and produced foods and providing meals that are culturally connected to diverse student populations
- Offering engaging **food education** and experiential garden-based learning to all students

In the current legislative session, our efforts are focused on a bill to create a farm to school grant program within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The grant program, as envisioned in [H.686 and S.349](#), would provide eligible schools as well as early education and care programs the critical funds needed to start up or expand farm to school activities such as renovating kitchen facilities, training staff, establishing direct market systems for local farmers, and providing garden-based and other outdoor learning opportunities for students.

Our request to the state is to support this effort with an appropriation of \$1,000,000 to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in fiscal year 2022 to fund the first year of the grant program.

We believe that this appropriation is eligible for federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and that utilizing ARPA funds for the first year would get this program off to a good start without unnecessary delay.

- As schools continue to adapt to the changing educational landscape caused by COVID-19, offering safe spaces to come back to work and opportunities for upskilling will be critical for the retention of school nutrition staff, educators, and others.
- Outdoor learning provides public health safety for children and educators and creates new opportunities to incorporate farm to school curriculum and help students build lasting connections with locally grown food, farms, and more.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has created serious supply chain disruptions in the food system. Helping schools tap into local markets will help mitigate the negative consequences of current supply chain disruptions. At the same time, providing more stable markets for our local producers can strengthen our economy and our food supply, making us more resilient overall.

An appropriation of \$1,000,000 would allow for 10-20 grants to be awarded, ranging from \$50,000-100,000 each. How do grants make a difference at the local school level? Check out these examples from previous funding sources.

Springfield Public Schools

Awarded a USDA Farm-to-School grant of \$77,475 in 2019 to install 5-7 new school gardens in the district and develop education workshops on nutrition and food policy and the recruitment of parents to run additional activities.

Lowell Public Schools

Awarded a USDA Farm-to-School grant of \$96,925 to leverage Lowell's ethnic diversity, agricultural partners, school curriculum and culinary creativity to increase access to local food consumed in school cafeterias, classrooms, and the community.

Codman Academy/Codman Square Health Center

Awarded a USDA Farm-to-School grant of \$96,883 to increase local procurement efforts and agricultural education implementation for students, including agriculture lessons, garden building, and connection with the local and regional food producers.

Hawlemont Regional School

Awarded \$37,000 from the Kendall Foundation to expand the "Hawlemont, Agriculture, and You" program, which strengthens student relationships with academic learning and with food and the environment.