EATING LEARNING GROWING

A DELICIOUS GUIDE TO CULTURALLY RELEVANT FARM TO SCHOOL EDUCATION

OVERVIEW

This Eating Learning Growing guide provides a framework, activities, and reflections that help educators enhance farm to school lessons to make them more culturally relevant and celebrate fruits and vegetables.

GRADE LEVEL: 6–8

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CALIFORNIA FOOD
FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS®

CENTER FOR ECOLITERACY

Eating Learning Growing
A Delicious Guide to Culturally Relevant Farm to School Education

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DEAR EDUCATOR,

Educational opportunities are often most vibrant when they intersect with students' lived experiences. California's extraordinary cultural diversity and its position as the largest agricultural producer in the country provide abundant opportunities for farm to school education to become real, exciting, and profoundly culturally relevant for all students.

Eating Learning Growing: A Delicious Guide to Culturally Relevant Farm to School Education provides a framework, activities, and reflections for you to learn along with your students as you explore farm to school education through the many dimensions of culture.

All of us eat every day. Yet a deep understanding of how our food grows, who grows it, and how it reaches us is often not experienced during the busy school day. Farm to school education is an opportunity to explore the origins of our food—the fruits, vegetables, flavors, and dishes central to our cultures—and our daily connection to the people that often go unseen: the farmers and producers who provide us with sustenance and enjoyment.

We developed *Eating Learning Growing* to support you and the unique students and learning environments through which health and culture thrive in your school. Thank you for your commitment and willingness to make farm to school education culturally relevant for your students.

With gratitude,

Alexa Norstad

Executive Director
Center for Ecoliteracy

INTRODUCTION

Culture is powerful. Yet, there are few formalized efforts that reflect the cultures and diversity of California students in farm to school education. The *Eating Learning Growing* guide contains a framework, activities, and reflections that are designed to help educators extend, enhance, and enrich existing farm to school lessons to be more culturally relevant and engaging for the unique students in each learning environment.

What Is Farm to School?

Farm to school education includes programs and activities that benefit students by helping them learn about food and agriculture. Many programs include meeting farmers and farm workers, learning about ecosystems that support healthy crops, and tasting fresh fruits and vegetables.

Positive outcomes often include:

- **Improved student health.** Students who participate in farm to school programs have a lower risk of childhood obesity and diet-related diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.[1]
- **Increased fruits and vegetables consumption.** Farm to school programs increase students' consumption of healthy fruits and vegetables.[2]
- **Improved academic performance.** Students who participate in farm to school programs show improvements in their grades and test scores.[3]

If you are interested in learning more about farm to school education, visit the following websites:

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Office of Farm to Fork:
https://cafarmtofork.cdfa.ca.gov/

US Department of Agriculture (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/im-new-farm-school

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you enhance existing farm to school lessons so that they are more culturally relevant to the students in your learning environment. You can use the framework provided with any farm to school lessons about fruits or vegetables.

The framework is divided into three phases: (1) get to know your students; (2) enrich a lesson; and (3) reflect on the process. Each phase offers reflections, questions, and activities. Choose the activities that feel most useful to you as you move through the resource. There is no set number of questions or activities you need to complete. You may repeat some phases as you work with additional lessons.

This guide is designed to be used by educators working independently or in collaboration with others, which can provide valuable opportunities for shared learning and feedback.

What Is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Why Is It Important?

The California Department of Education references Gloria Ladson-Billings' seminal article, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," and defines culturally relevant pedagogy as "a theoretical model that focuses on multiple aspects of student achievement and supports students to uphold their cultural identities. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy also calls for students to develop critical perspectives that challenge societal inequalities."

Farm to school is a useful entry point, especially in California. California has the largest agricultural economy in the country. Its farms, ranches, and food producers employ many students' families. Food allows us to explore questions that value students' cultures and help students develop a sense of place and belonging. For example, through learning about California crops, students can: learn about natural ecosystems that support health and sustainability; explore the origins of certain foods and how they reflect patterns of trade and migration; consider who is growing food, how, and where; and learn about types of foods that have traditionally grown in their area and how they are used.

Culturally relevant pedagogy also considers the intersection of social justice and farm to school education. This approach encourages educators to ask questions such as:

- How is farm to school experienced and understood by students?
- What is their experience with agriculture, access to food, or being in nature?
- How can farm to school nurture feelings of belonging?

It's important to recognize the diversity of experiences that students bring with them. How teachers approach farm to school education can provide healing and empowerment. Sometimes, however, it might unintentionally evoke feelings of discomfort and alienation. By becoming knowledgeable about students' lived experiences, educators can help make farm to school an experience that is nourishing for all students.

For guidance on how to consider and prepare for students' reactions to your lessons, see "Why Farm to School Education Might Make Some Students Uncomfortable (and What You Can Do About It)," beginning on page 22.

Lastly, because culturally relevant teaching and learning is respectful, warm, and welcoming to diverse student populations, it can improve student outcomes. Using familiar examples that reflect students' backgrounds—whether it's referencing how far food travels to market to teach math, or sharing the words for fruits and vegetables in a variety of languages—can improve comprehension and participation. Using these practices can fundamentally benefit the culture of your classrooms.

Smart By Nature Principles and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The Center for Ecoliteracy developed a set of four ecological principles as a part of its foundational work in schooling for sustainability. These principles were published in *Smart By Nature: Schooling for Sustainability* in 2009. The *Eating Learning Growing* guide uses the Smart By Nature Principles to guide educators in exploring how to extend, enhance, and enrich lessons. Below are the principles and their relationship to culturally relevant pedagogy.

1. Nature Is Our Teacher

Nature thrives and is resilient because of its diversity. Health and innovation are outcomes of interconnected relationships and the value of all living beings. So, too, do students thrive when classroom environments welcome diverse voices, histories, learning styles, and values. Similarly, culturally relevant pedagogy nurtures student-teacher understanding and social-emotional connections that invite deeper learning.

2. Sustainability Is a Community Practice

Nature sustains life by creating and nurturing communities. We rely on our collective knowledge, experience, and actions to cultivate sustainable food sources, nurture healthy environments, and develop functional community systems. A community

perspective that validates and nurtures connections will also support cross- and interdisciplinary teaching and learning that integrates broader and deeper understanding.

3. The Real World Is the Optimal Learning Environment

Farm to school is ideal for connecting learning and the real world. Everyone eats. This most fundamental human experience connects to virtually any subject matter, including science, history, math, language arts, and more. Whether students live in an urban or rural environment, food can provide insight into the natural world and human society, providing pathways to observe, investigate, and learn. When engagement is based in students' real lives, it leads to deeper connections and more impactful learning experiences.

4. Sustainable Living Is Rooted in a Deep Knowledge of Place

For students to become good stewards and active citizens, they need to cultivate a deep knowledge of their home location and ecology. When culturally relevant pedagogy invites exploration of the places that students know well, they begin to care more deeply about their world and the effect they can have on it. They learn what their world provides and how to care for it. Through a deep knowledge of place, students can envision connections to larger global issues and respect knowing their own location as a starting place.

Activities, resources, and reflections that support the Smart By Nature Principles begin on page 12.

Social Justice Standards and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Social justice is central to culturally relevant pedagogy. Many educators have found it helpful to incorporate the Social Justice Standards developed by the organization Learning for Justice when applying culturally relevant pedagogy to their lessons. These standards offer a framework for anti-bias education and help guide learners in celebrating the diversity in their communities while enhancing their ability to work with others of different backgrounds toward community action.

The Social Justice Standards supplement the Smart By Nature Principles, making this framework a viable resource in today's classrooms. The standards are divided into four sections, as follows:

- **Identity.** "Characteristics by which a person is definitively recognized or known."

- **Diversity.** "The condition of having differences or being composed of different elements; variety, especially the inclusion of different types of people (as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization."

- **Justice.** "A combination of fairness and opportunity: In a just society or group, people have the same rights and are not punished more because of who they are."

- **Action.** "Taking steps to honor and celebrate identity and diversity, as well as taking steps to bring about justice."

"Social Justice Standards," Learning for Justice:
https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards

Selecting a Lesson

The *Eating Learning Growing* guide is designed to help educators enrich and extend existing farm to school lessons to make them more culturally relevant and engaging for diverse student populations. We recommend selecting lessons that prioritize local food sources, highlight the rich cultures of your students, or celebrate your students' communities.

Here's a breakdown of the recommended lesson selection criteria:

Local Food Focus: Centering lessons around locally-grown fruits and vegetables is the best way to promote healthy eating habits. Consider incorporating a lesson that highlights a local and seasonally grown fruit or vegetable from your region. Even better, allow your students to choose a fruit or vegetable that piques their interest.

Cultural Elevation: Collaboration and shared responsibility are fundamental cultural values. Choose a lesson that emphasizes student interactions and builds upon their existing knowledge. Consider different characteristics of cultural identity, including family of origin, race, local community, geography, gender, religion, generations, physical ability, nationality, cuisine, and language.

Celebrating Home Location and Ecology: Explore opportunities to connect the lesson to school gardens, local farms, or farmers markets, allowing students to

gain firsthand exposure to the agricultural process. Connecting our youth to local agriculture creates opportunities for nutrition education and community building.

The Center for Ecoliteracy developed a guide to help schools plan and host successful visits from local fruit and vegetable farmers. When planning visits, we encourage you to prioritize farms owned and operated by culturally and linguistically diverse farmers. Featuring diverse farmers can benefit those from historically marginalized backgrounds and agricultural leaders who reflect the diversity of California's students.

"How to Plan a Student-Centered Farmer Visit to Your School," Center for Ecoliteracy:
https://ecoliteracy.org/article/student-centered-farmer-visit

GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

Fostering a sense of belonging is a key element of creating transformational learning experiences for students. Before enriching a lesson, take the time to understand your students' interests and cultures. This will help you design lessons that connect to your students' lived experiences and build your own knowledge from this foundation.

Before asking your students about their interests and cultures, it's important to reflect on your own relationship to food and how that influences the way you think about and experience farm to school education regarding fruits and vegetables.

Personal Reflections

As you begin your work, consider:

- What are your own eating habits and food traditions, and what has shaped them?
- How have they changed over time?
- What larger societal factors shape how you eat?
- How does this inform your view of farm to school?

Focus Students

To begin to learn more about your students, invite two or three focus students in your learning space to talk with you. Consider picking students you might have had

a harder time connecting with and use this time to build a rapport. Use the "Focus Student Worksheet" linked below to get to know these students better. You can also reach out to other school-based resources such as the students' counselor or coach to help you better understand them from a whole child perspective.

"Focus Student Worksheet":
https://ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/media/focus_student_worksheet.pdf

Apply what you learn about your focus students to enrich your lesson in a way that responds to these students' interests and skills. You can repeat this exercise with different students. As you go through this process of building relationships with your students—and understanding more about their families and communities—always be respectful of what information they are comfortable sharing.

ENRICH A LESSON

Use what you learned about students, families, community, and your personal perspectives to extend, enhance, and enrich your lesson. This knowledge will provide opportunities for you to imagine stories and new ways of teaching and learning. When students see themselves in the content and activities, it fosters deeper learning experiences and a sense of belonging.

Use the Smart By Nature Principles and the questions, activities, and resources below to guide you in reflecting on and enhancing a farm to school lesson of your choosing. You do not need to answer all of the guiding questions. Depending on your lesson, some of the guiding questions below may lead to more ideas for content or activities than others. Choose the ones that seem most relevant to your chosen lesson.

Nature Is Our Teacher

Nature thrives and is resilient because of its diversity. Health and innovation are outcomes of interconnected relationships and the value of all living beings. So, too, do students thrive when our classroom environments welcome diverse voices, histories, learning styles, and values. Similarly, culturally relevant pedagogy nurtures student-teacher understanding and social-emotional connections that invite deeper learning.

REFLECTION: Does your lesson...

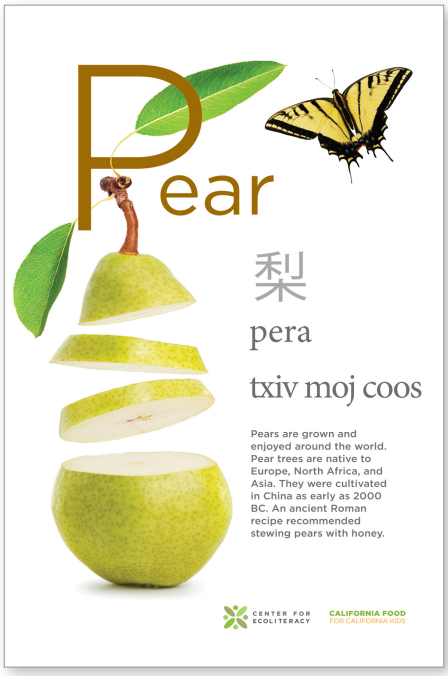
- Authentically reflect the diversity of your students?
- Encourage students to demonstrate their understanding in varied forms including orally, visually, or using their home language?

ACTIVITY: What is this crop called?

Use this activity to encourage students to explore diversity and community in a way that is non-threatening, inviting, and fun. This activity is a good icebreaker and can spark further explorations of food and culture.

Put one or more pieces of large paper on the wall and invite students to write the name of the crop in your lesson in every language they know. In California, there are some districts where more than 50 languages are spoken at home, so this could become a friendly competition as students share their linguistic and cultural sophistication. Students with closer connections to agriculture might know several names for the same crop. For example, what some students call a "tangerine" might be known by other students as a "satsuma," "clementine," or "cutie." If this activity goes well, consider asking students how the crop tastes in different languages. For example, ask them to share words they know for sweet, sour, crunchy, etc.

Put a large piece of paper on the wall. Encourage students to write the name of the crop in every language they know. Include a photo or illustration of the crop if you have one.



To share languages and information about the origins of crops, download and display the Eating Learning Growing posters in your learning space.

Eating Learning Growing, Center for Ecoliteracy: https://www.ecoliteracy.org/elg-resources

Sustainability Is a Community Practice

Nature sustains life by creating and nurturing communities. We rely on our collective knowledge, experience, and actions to cultivate sustainable food sources, nurture healthy environments, and develop functional community systems. A community perspective that validates and nurtures connections will also support cross- and interdisciplinary teaching and learning that integrates broader and deeper understanding.

REFLECTION: Does your lesson...

- Include people or locations that are part of the local food system and could be resources for your lesson? Examples could include a school nutrition director, garden coordinator, community elder, local farmer or agriculture worker, farmers market, or food hub.

- Represent people who are culturally and linguistically diverse as leaders and changemakers?

- Provide various engagement strategies to allow students to work collaboratively and develop collective knowledge?

- Elevate and build on the knowledge and experience students bring to the classroom?

ACTIVITY: Who grows this crop?

This activity is an opportunity to acknowledge farmers and producers across the food system. Many students have family connections to agriculture and food production in California. This activity is an opportunity to express interest in and gratitude for the people who grow our fruits and vegetables. Through this activity, students can also explore the experiences and working conditions of farm workers and food producers. As they learn more about the work that goes into the fruits and vegetables they enjoy, they can consider how to express gratitude and respect for food and work to prevent it from being wasted.

To learn how food reaches them, ask students to look at a complete food system. For example, they could diagram the path of a tomato from seed to table and consider how it was cultivated, harvested, packed, transported, stored, and marketed. Who does this work at each point in their food system diagram? Ask

students to also consider environmental and social issues along the way, including climate change and workers' rights.

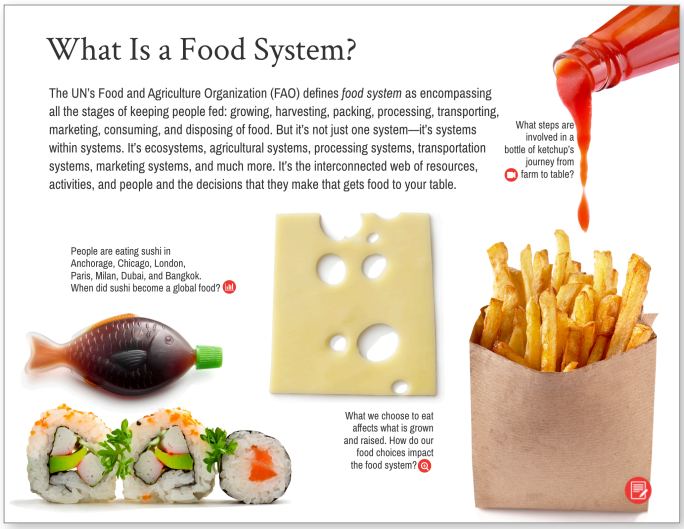
When they are done, ask them if they have some recommendations about where or from whom the school district procures its food. Ask them if they would like to present their findings and ideas to the school nutrition professionals or school administrators.

Resource: This bilingual farm to school short film showcases the Pajaro Valley Unified School District and the power of youth leadership in the farm to school movement.

"Farm to School," Center for Ecoliteracy: https://www.ecoliteracy.org/video/farm-school-film

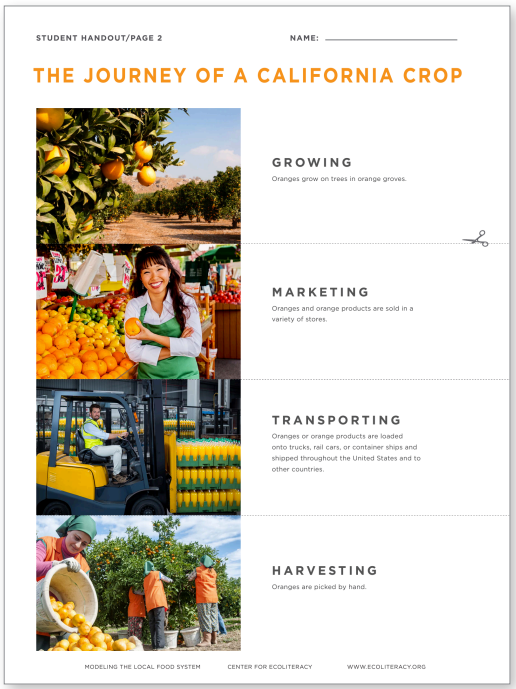
Resource: Students learn about the Delano Grape Strike, Dolores Huerta, and Cesar Chavez in this farm to school lesson.

"Table Grapes: Celebrating the Harvest," Center for Ecoliteracy: https://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/media/cel-table-grapes-lesson-grades3-5.pdf



Resource: In *Understanding Food and Climate Change: An Interactive Guide*, students explore dimensions of a food system through imagery, video, and text. In this section, a video reveals where ketchup comes from and how it reaches the table. Activities are included.

Understanding Food and Climate Change: *An Interactive Guide*, Center for Ecoliteracy: https://foodandclimate.ecoliteracy.org/interactive-guide/page_0002.xhtml



Resource: Students experience how an orange is grown and travels to market.

"Modeling the Local Food System," Center for Ecoliteracy: https://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/media/cel-modeling-your-food-system-lesson-grades3-5.pdf

The Real World Is the Optimal Learning Environment

Farm to school is ideal for connecting learning and the real world. Everyone eats. This most fundamental human experience connects to virtually any subject matter, including science, history, math, language arts, and more. Whether students live in an urban or rural environment, food can provide insight into the natural world and human society, providing pathways to observe, investigate, and learn. When engagement is based in students' real lives, it leads to deeper connections and more impactful learning experiences.

REFLECTION: Does your lesson…

- Include issues and topics that are important to your students?
- Draw from multiple perspectives to help your students better understand current social movements to create a just and sustainable food system?
- Honor your students' history, family, or community practices?

ACTIVITY: How is this crop enjoyed?

Invite students to share some of their favorite dishes that include the crop and any holidays or ceremonies during which the crop is featured at home or in their communities. For example, students might share about a favorite summer fruit punch, a native cactus beverage, the bitter herbs of Passover, or dates at Ramadan. Do the crops have a special history? Or is there a particular way of preparing them that is notable? Are there any obstacles or challenges to procuring these foods? Are the crops expensive, in limited supply, threatened by climate change, or needing to travel a long distance? Encourage students to strategize ways to nurture and preserve these food sources.

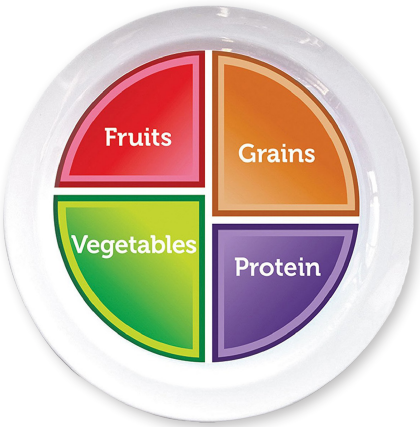
Resource: In The Migration of Food, students learn about the broad flavor profiles typical of five regions of the world. They research the origin and migration of a key ingredient from one of the flavor profiles and create posters describing its history, cultivation, and use.

"The Migration of Food," Center for Ecoliteracy:
https://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/CEL-Migration-of-Food.pdf

ACTIVITY: Design your own school meal

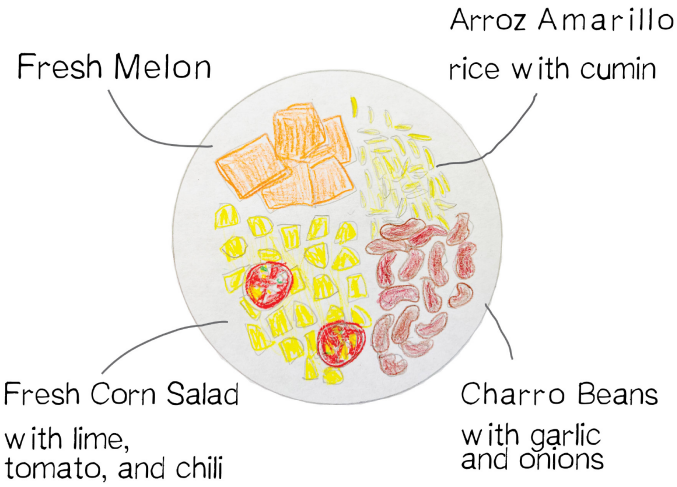
Invite students to design a school meal that includes fruits and vegetables and reflects their culture and favorite foods. Ask them to consider foods enjoyed by their family or community, foods they recently learned more about, or foods that they want others to experience.

Use the USDA MyPlate graphic described on page 18 to provide a supportive structure. If some students are interested in influencing the food served at school, tell them that following the basic MyPlate structure helps the people who prepare school meals understand what they want because school nutrition staff work with MyPlate every day.



Resource: The USDA MyPlate graphic is a helpful visual support students can use as they design their own school meals.

MyPlate graphic, USDA:
https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate



Using MyPlate as a guide, students can draw and label a meal that reflects their culture featuring fruits and vegetables.

Here are instructions for students to use MyPlate to design a school meal:

Fill half the plate with fruits and vegetables. These can be uncooked, including the fruits and vegetables on a cafeteria salad bar, or cooked, such as roasted broccoli or beets, sautéed spinach or zucchini, or other vegetables. Students can suggest seasonings that enhance fruits and vegetables to their liking, such as chili and lime, soy sauce, or paprika.

Fill about a quarter of the plate with whole grains. Invite students to consider grains that have connections to their culture or community, including rice, oats, wheat, and corn (maize). Remind students that grains can take many forms. For example, wheat can be served as a whole grain bun, waffle, or as whole wheat berries; corn can be made into polenta, cornbread, or tortillas.

Fill the rest of the plate with protein. Protein can include meat, fish, poultry, or eggs. There are also non-animal sources of protein. For example, many legumes—peas, beans, and lentils—contain protein. Invite students to consider some legume-based foods that may have cultural connections for them, such as tofu, dahl, black-eyed peas, lima beans, hummus, and hominy.

As students work on their meals, they can list their ingredients or they can draw a picture of their plate, labeling the foods with call-outs. Invite each student to share about their choices.

Would some of your students like to see their meal choices included on school menus? Although it's not guaranteed, it can be a rewarding experience for students to ask for what they want. Invite your students to select a few of their favorite MyPlate ideas for school nutrition to consider. Ask them to plan a presentation about why their meals are good and why other students would like them. Reach out to school nutrition at your school and invite someone to listen and respond to your students' ideas.

Sustainable Living Is Rooted in a Deep Knowledge of Place

For students to become food stewards and active citizens, they need to cultivate a deep knowledge of their home location and ecology. When culturally relevant pedagogy invites exploration of the places that students know well, they begin to care more deeply about their world and the effect they can have on it. They learn what their world provides and how to care for it. Through a deep knowledge of place, students can envision connections to larger global issues and respect knowing their own location as a starting place.

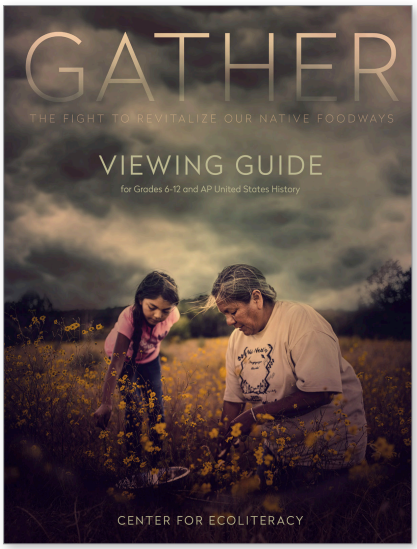
REFLECTION: Does your lesson...

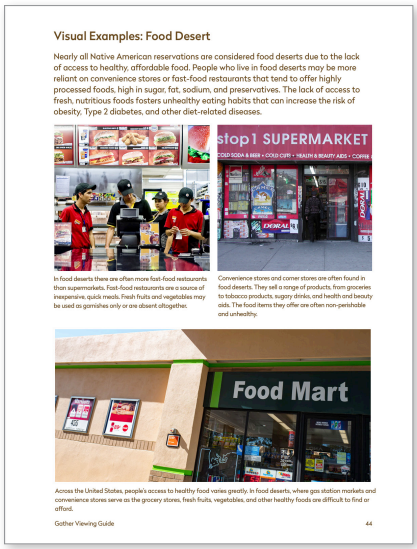
- Empower students and provide opportunities for collective action for change in themselves, their communities, and the environment?
- Uplift students' food stories in ways that acknowledge the potential complexity in their relationship to food, agriculture, and farm to school?
- Acknowledge and credit traditional and Indigenous forms of knowledge that influence modern ideas?

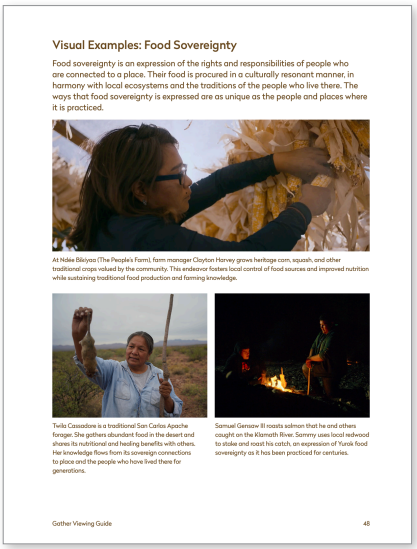
ACTIVITY: Where does this crop come from?

This question touches on two essential dimensions: agriculture and culture. Agriculture refers to where this crop is grown and why regional soils, water, and climate matter. Is it native to its growing region in California? Or was it developed from native plants in Mexico, Central or South America, Asia, the Mediterranean, or somewhere else? Culture refers to how the crop figures in our lives. Do students have associations, family histories, or connections with places or cultures where this food originated? How can these valuable crops be cultivated sustainably? How can more people have access to them?

Students can research crops and develop maps showing where the crop originated or where it grows in abundance today. This activity can also include a land acknowledgment of Indigenous peoples on whose lands the student currently resides and where their food is grown.







Resource: To teach and learn about profound connections to place, use the *Gather Viewing Guide*. *Gather* is an award-winning documentary film that provides an intimate portrait of the growing movement among Native Americans to reclaim their spiritual, political, and cultural identities through food sovereignty. The *Gather Viewing Guide* explores four short films excerpted from the feature-length documentary, each of which follows a different Native American nation and its efforts to reclaim their ancestral food systems. The guide includes focus chapters, a visual glossary, discussion questions, ideas for action, and extended learning.

Gather Viewing Guide, Center for Ecoliteracy:
https://www.ecoliteracy.org/download/gather-viewing-guide

Resource: To teach and learn about the contributions of Asian Americans to the development of American farming, use the Eater article "Bok Choy Isn't 'Exotic'". Explore a growing movement of young Asian American farmers reclaiming their culinary heritage by cultivating and promoting traditional Asian vegetables. Today, Asian Americans represent less than 1% of American farmers, yet their contributions to the culinary world have made America's food scene more diverse and vibrant.

"Bok Choy Isn't 'Exotic'," Eater:
https://www.eater.com/2019/4/8/18295351/asian-vegetables-heirloom-farmers-farming

REFLECT ON THE PROCESS

When you engage in culturally relevant teaching and learning, changes in your classroom or learning environment may be subtle at first. In this phase, reflect on the teaching process and students' engagement throughout the enhanced lesson. Consider how you can foster a deeper sense of belonging and community in farm to school education to support a more rewarding experience for your students.

A helpful reflections worksheet is here:
https://ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/media/ecoliteracy_eating_learning_growing_reflection_questions.pdf

Reflection Questions for Educators

Use the questions below to reflect on the process of getting to know your students and using the Smart By Nature Principles. Note the changes that you observed with your students and determine what learnings you want to carry forward in your teaching practice.

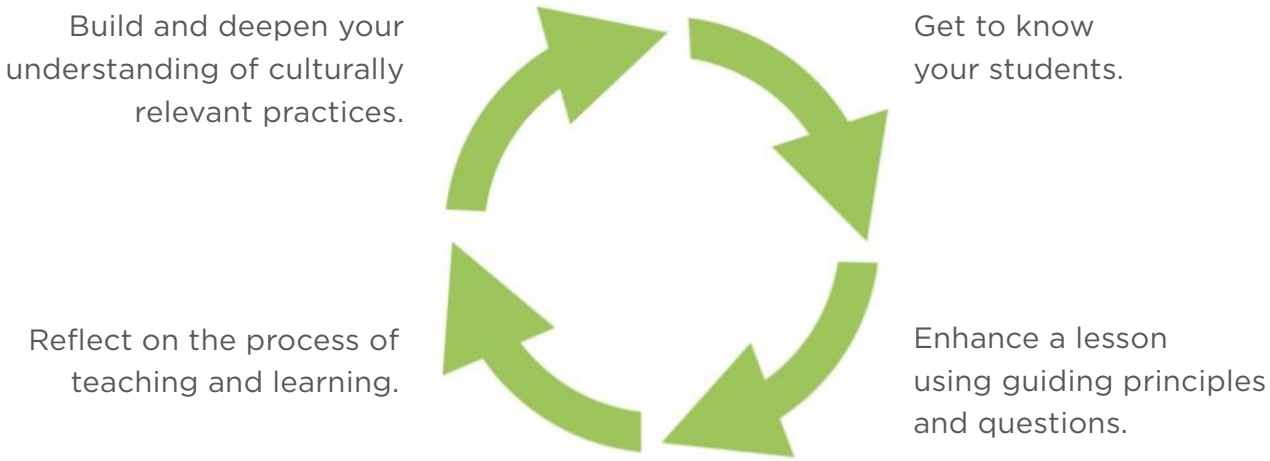
- Did your focus students see themselves in your lesson?
- How did they feel valued and experience a sense of belonging?
- Did your students feel empowered to engage in community action?
- What are you taking from this experience? How might you shift your teaching going forward?
- Where do you want to grow and learn alongside your students?

Importance of Repeating the Process

Using the Eating Learning Growing Framework is not a one-time event; it is a continuous cycle of understanding culturally relevant practices, getting to know your students, enhancing lessons, and reflection. By repeating the process, we can ensure that our teaching practices remain relevant, engaging, and effective in addressing the needs of our students.

As we apply the framework, we witness firsthand how our students respond to the enhanced lessons. Reflection allows us to capture these learnings and incorporate them the next time we teach a lesson. Culture is dynamic and constantly evolving, often redefined by our youth. As educators, we are not simply sharing knowledge—we are also lifelong learners ourselves.

The circular process embodies the humility we must have in our teaching practice. As we connect with students, enhance lessons, and reflect on the teaching process, we must acknowledge that all things grow and change. We encourage you to embrace this process by committing to continuous self-reflection and professional development.



Why Farm to School Education Might Make Some Students Uncomfortable (and What You Can Do About It)

Culturally relevant farm to school education provides opportunities for students to celebrate diverse cultures and feel included, respected, and valued. However, even with the best lesson planning, there may be topics or activities that could cause

stress or feelings of discomfort for some students. The significant work required to address social issues and racial injustice in their many dimensions is outside the scope of this guide. However, below are three areas of possible stress for your students and what you can do about them.

Some Students May Be Hungry

As many as one in four families may experience food insecurity throughout the school year. Discussing food could cause some students to feel hungry, physically uncomfortable, or possibly alienated from classmates who appear better fed. Because fresh fruits and vegetables can be more expensive than fast or processed foods, some students may not be able to enjoy them as often. Therefore, focusing on fresh fruits and vegetables in class can be another source of discomfort.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Fortunately, California is the first state in the nation to permanently offer breakfast and lunch at no cost to every student, every school day. Remind your students to visit the cafeteria. Smile and tell them to be sure to enjoy breakfast or lunch before class, because you'll be discussing fruits and vegetables and you don't want them to get hungry during the lesson! Encouraging students to eat regular meals at school supports your work as a teacher, because well-fed students are ready to learn.

Some Students May Be Hesitant or Unwilling to Share About Themselves

Some student may feel shy sharing about themselves at the group level. Some may have little control over what they eat at home. Others may be reluctant to share about their family or community identity, including their family's country of origin, languages spoken, or dietary customs (including restrictions such as Kosher or Halal). In some cases, students may have been instructed at home to be cautious about sharing personal information due to immigration concerns or the fear of being bullied.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Whenever possible, structure your lessons so that group activities are voluntary. For example, in the activity that starts on page 13 in which students share the names of fruits and vegetables in all the languages they know, invite all students to participate, but don't force them. Do not develop assignments that require students to share personal information on which their grade depends. Over time, students may participate more fully as your learning environment demonstrates that it is safe, inclusive, and enjoyable.

Some Students May Have Painful Associations with Known Injustices

For many American students, the history of how land was acquired and worked can be a source of pain or anger. Slavery and forced labor, displacement of Indigenous peoples and seizure of their lands, and appropriation of private property during the forced internment of Japanese American citizens during World War II are some examples of traumatizing events that could affect some of your students. In current times, the mistreatment of food and farm workers may be quite vivid for students whose families work in those jobs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: You are not alone. Before beginning a farm to school lesson, consult with your school or district leadership about trauma-informed policies and practices that can help guide you. Many districts provide guidelines on how to anticipate and address these needs and concerns of students and families.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Supporting Resources

This collection of resources equips educators with practical strategies to create an inclusive and engaging classroom environment.

"Beyond Heroes and Holidays: Expanding Understanding and Practices of Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Approaches," California Center for School Climate

https://ca-safe-supportive-schools.wested.org/event/beyond-heroes-and-holidays-expanding-understanding-and-practices-of-culturally-responsive-and-sustaining-approaches/#reg

Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional Learning (CASEL)

https://casel.org/

"Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," California Department of Education

https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/culturalrelevantpedagogy.asp

"Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain," Zaretta Hammond

https://crtandthebrain.com/book/

"Putting the Smart By Nature Principles into Practice," Center for Ecoliteracy

https://ecoliteracy.org/article/putting-smart-nature-principles-practice

"Social Justice Standards: A Framework for Anti-Bias Education," Learning for Justice

https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards

"Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," Gloria Ladson-Billings

https://www.jstor.org/stable/1163320

Self-Paced Professional Development

This section provides a variety of workshops, trainings, and courses designed to equip educators with research-based strategies for implementing culturally relevant pedagogy within their classrooms.

Creating An Anti-Racist Science Classroom, STEM4Real
https://stem4real.org/anti-racist-webinar/

Time commitment: 1 hour
Cost: Free

Critical Practices for Anti-Bias Education: Instruction, Learning for Justice
https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/critical-practices-for-antibias-education-instruction

Time commitment: 1 hour
Cost: Free

Culturally Responsive Teaching Course, Teachaway
https://www.teachaway.com/courses/culturally-responsive-teaching

Time commitment: 1.5 hours
Cost: $49 USD

Culturally Responsive Teaching, The Child Care Company
https://www.childcarecompany.org/store/p391/Culturally_Responsive_Teaching%E2%80%942.5_Hours_%28Self-Paced%29.html

Time commitment: 2.5 hours
Cost: $15 USD

GLOSSARY

Culture: Culture is a pattern of behavior shared by a society or group of people. Many different things make up a society's culture, including food, language, clothing, tools, music, arts, customs, beliefs, and religion.

Source: https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/culture/399913

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A theoretical model that focuses on multiple aspects of student achievement and supports students in upholding their cultural identities. Culturally relevant pedagogy also calls for students to develop critical perspectives that challenge societal inequalities.

Gloria Ladson-Billings proposed three main components of culturally relevant pedagogy:

- focus on student learning and academic success,
- develop students' cultural competence to assist in developing positive ethnic and social identities, and
- support students' critical consciousness or their ability to recognize and critique societal inequalities.

Source: https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/culturalrelevantpedagogy.asp

Place-Based Education: Actively incorporates the local heritage, cultures, landscapes, ecology, opportunities, and experiences of our students and community. This serves as the foundation for understanding language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum. Place-based education and project-based learning invite learning through participation and can lead to meaningful student-led action.

Resource: "Teaching Strategies," Center for Ecoliteracy:
https://www.ecoliteracy.org/article/teaching-strategies

Endnotes

[1] National Farm to School Network, Benefits of Farm to School, May 2020, https://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/benefits-of-farm-to-school

[2] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, August 2017, "Research Shows Farm to School Works," accessed January 4, 2024, https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/research-shows-farm-school-works

[3] California Department of Food and Agriculture, *Planting the Seed: Farm to School Roadmap for Success*, February 2022, https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Farm_To_School_Report_20220222-small.pdf

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About the Center for Ecoliteracy

The Center for Ecoliteracy is an internationally recognized leader in systems change innovations in education for sustainable living. Since 1995, the Center has engaged with thousands of educators from across the United States and six continents. The Center for Ecoliteracy leads systems change initiatives, publishes original books and resources, facilitates conferences and professional development, and provides strategic consulting. Our California Food for California Kids® initiative—a network of over 122 public school districts across the state—supports public school districts in providing students with fresh, locally-grown food and reinforcing educational connections between the classroom, cafeteria, and garden. We pursue change in K–12 education and school food systems to provide a more just, sustainable, and equitable experience for our children and the people who nourish them.

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