

**MAKING THE FARM CONNECTION:
*A GUIDE TO FIELD TRIPS
FOR FARMERS***



CAFF advocates for California family farmers and sustainable agriculture.
www.caff.org

Edited by Kathryn Spencer and Ildi Carlisle-Cummins of CAFF's Farm to School Program

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MAKING THE FARM CONNECTION

*CAFF created this guide to help farmers and farm educators feel more comfortable planning and running successful farm visits for students. Both teachers and farmers play active roles in creating a positive learning experience for students out on the farm. The farm visit concepts outlined in this manual are best suited for students between second and sixth grades, but can be modified for older or younger students. *If your farm is in California and is interested in connecting with other similar program please join our on-line California Farm Education Network by visiting www.farmbasededucation.org and clicking on the “groups” tab.**

WHY FARM VISITS?

“What people do not understand, they do not value; what they do not value, they will not protect, and what they do not protect, they will lose.” — Charles Jordan

These days, most children have little or no knowledge about where their food comes from. Visiting farms is one of the most tangible ways to reconnect children and youth with agriculture, coaching a new generation’s interactions with the food system. Visiting a farm can inspire young people to make healthier food choices that support local farm communities. Field trip visitors learn about the value of farming, experiencing first-hand the production of food from seed to table. Field trips to farms are also great places to bring school subjects such as science, math language arts and nutrition to life through engaging hands-on activities. And what’s more, farms hosting educational programs can help generate revenue and forge stronger connections with the local community. Farm field trips make a big impression on students. If every kid the county visits your farm, they’re likely to remember your farm name and may even bring their parents back for a second tour.

SECTION I: PLANNING YOUR FARM VISIT

Whether you are a farm with a major focus on educational programs or a working farm wanting to add educational programs, there are a few farm visit basics to keep in mind.

Recruiting schools and Teachers:

Sending out solicitations for schools or classes to visit the farm should be done sometime between late spring and early fall (roughly April-September). Direct connections with local schools are always the best method to get interested classes out to your farm (i.e. contact teachers who have been out to the farm before and encourage them to spread the word to other interested classes).

Seasonality & Scheduling Your Trip Date

Farms are not the same year around. When planning a farm field trip it is important to consider the school year and testing dates, while also trying to visit the farm when it is most vibrant. Trips in late spring (late April to early June) and the early fall (the end of August to the first week or so in October) are the best for school groups and the farm. The concepts of seasonality should run through all the lessons and activities on the farm. Knowing what certain food crops look like at different stages of development, and when they are ready for harvest is an important lesson for visitors that will build a deeper understanding of seasonality and produce availability in their region. Picking a date for the trip takes a lot of communication between the farm, the lead liaison for the group and the lead on transportation to the farm. Allow for ample time and flexibility in finding a suitable date that works for all groups. Read the transportation section below carefully.

Transportation to the Farm

Figuring out the logistics of getting to the farm is a large part of coordinating a successful farm field trip. Depending on the farm's education program and the type and size of groups visiting the farm, getting to the farm could involve parent's personal vehicles, walking, chartering vans or buses, and using the school district's buses. Choosing the mode of transportation depends on the number of students or visitors and the funds available for the trip. Note that transportation costs, especially for school district buses, is very high and can be the most expensive part of a field trip. Having the visiting group arrange their own transportation is easiest for the farm, though it may limit the number of classes that visit. Making transportation arrangements with the school district transportation department takes time and patience, as dates for the visit might be adjusted for the availability of buses, the class, and the farm. A district's transportation department will need to know who to charge for the cost of the trip, detailed directions and information on parking and turning the bus around. Some district buses will not drive on unpaved or narrow roads, so keep this in mind when planning your trip. Teachers are typically interested in filling the school bus if they're coordinating transportation. The bus holds up to 70 kids and parents—so plan for a large group!

Duration of the Trip

For a robust visit to the farm and to make the cost of transportation worth it, we recommend planning farm field trips to last 3-4 hours. Depending on the focus of the farm and the needs of the group visiting, activities and trip duration can vary widely. Certain farms provide one-hour tours and tastings with waves of students visiting

throughout the day. Others have longer programs and see only one group on any given day. Some coordinators and farms plan activities down to the minute, which is very helpful for orchestrating trips with 60 students from a local school. But for farms that have the opportunity to work with smaller groups with less time restraints and curricular focus, there can be more flexibility during a farm visit. For example, Montessori School classes may visit a farm monthly or weekly as part of an agricultural curriculum. Decide what schedule works best for your group and farm, but keep in mind that thorough planning for the logistics of having groups of children on a farm is key for a successful trip, even if you're only planning a short tour.

Cost for a visit

Coordinating a successful trip takes a lot of time, energy, and resources: Transportation costs for school districts, teacher's or coordinator's time in crafting engaging activities for students, communicating with district transportation, chaperones and volunteers and consideration for the farm's time, participation and use of facilities-- all adds up. Keep this in mind when looking at farm education programs that charge for their visits, and when planning your own trip. Some farms and Farm to School programs seek grant funds to help subsidize the cost of field trips, while others charge a per student flat rate to cover their costs. Grants are typically only given to nonprofit entities, but some farm businesses have formed nonprofit educational programs to receive grants. The nonprofit arm of your farm will need a board of directors, completely separate books and accounting processes as well as a federal nonprofit status. Fees for visits may range anywhere from \$3 - \$10 per student/visitor depending on the length of the visit, activities and snacks.

Size of group activities

CAFF's Farm to School program typically coordinates farm field trips with two classes (about 60 students to fill a school bus), while some farms work with smaller groups. Whatever the overall numbers of students, it is imperative to divide them up into smaller groups for individual stations and activities. Four groups of six to fifteen students is ideal, but size is ultimately determined by the number of parents chaperones to manage the group and station leaders to lead the group activity. Having small groups makes it easier to work with tools, divide materials, and helps students focus on the task at hand.

Facilities on the Farm: bathrooms, water, and hand washing

It's important to think about details when planning a farm field trip—including things like port-o-potty use and available drinking water. You'll need to make sure bathrooms are available and that a few extra gallons of water are out at a refreshment station so students can refill their water bottles or have a cup of water. Place sunscreen and first aid kit in the same location. Students will usually be tasting things throughout their visit, so it is important to coordinate hand-washing stations accordingly. For instance if students have been milking goats, make sure they visit the hand washing station before making a farm fresh snack. Hand washing stations can be as simple as a few buckets of water and soap. This is preferable over just using hand sanitizer because actually getting hands dirty is part of the experience of being on a farm!

Language Abilities & Bilingual Interpretation

Farm field trips can be wonderful experiences for students learning English, since the farm can be a great place for hand-on vocabulary lessons. If you're planning a trip for English-language learners, inquire about the language ability of the students. Making necessary arrangements for bilingual interpretation keeps everyone engaged and makes the trip run much more smoothly.

Weather

The group visiting the farm will likely be outside for the duration of the trip, so making sure visitors are comfortable and prepared for all types of weather is key. Decide ahead of time if heavy or light rain cancels the trip, or if the group is prepared to come in inclement weather. Keep in mind that canceling a trip prearranged with a school district's transportation department needs to be done as soon as possible to avoid incurring charges. Make sure to distinguish who is responsible for monitoring weather, communicating with transportation, and deciding on the cancellation of the trip. Also, if it's very sunny and hot students will need a chance to sit down and cool off in the shade during their visit. It's important to have a water and rest station where students feeling ill can go.

Insurance

It is important for farms to be aware of insurance liability requirements for hosting groups on their farm, and for groups visiting farms to understand their coverage. Typically school groups are covered by their district's insurance when out on any school sponsored field trip. This means that the students are covered under the school district's liability insurance in case of injury or illness resulting from the farm field trip. It is important for the lead teacher, the person coordinating the trip, or the farm to find out about the districts' insurance policy. Note that a school's insurance does not cover parent volunteers or chaperones. A good idea for farms hosting any groups is to take out a separate liability policy for when they open their farm for visits. This policy will protect them in case someone incurs an injury or illness as a result of their visit, though some farms have found these policies to be difficult to obtain. If you ask your insurance company to protect you for public visits, be prepared to shop around!

Nametags

Using nametags is very handy in managing groups of students. Providing name tags (a sheet of sticky labels works just fine) before the visit, and having students and adults arrive to the farm with nametags on helps the day run a lot smoother.

PRE-TRIP CLASS VISIT: PREPPING THE STUDENTS

We recommend a visit to meet the students and teachers in the classroom before the field trip. This gives the farm a chance to communicate expectations, set rules and prepare students for their visit. Of course, this isn't always possible and a teacher packet can accomplish similar things, though not nearly as effectively. In-class visits are also a convenient time to button up any last minute details with the teacher. Students should be informed about where the farm is, what to bring/wear, rules of conduct and the importance of our local farms. A pre-trip class visit can last between 20-45 minutes depending on the class availability and what topics need to be covered. Below is a list of things CAFF usually covers with the students and teachers we will be taking out on farm field trips.

Presentation to Class:

- **Questions to ask students:** Who has been on a farm? What kind of things do you find on a farm? Make the food connection: What do you eat that comes from a farm?
- **Explain where the farm is and what is it like--** Let students ask questions.
- **Go over the expectations and rules on the farm:**
 - Rule #1 – Watch your feet!* That means not running, and most importantly watch where you are stepping. Show students the proper way to walk through rows and fields to minimize damage to the farm's crops.
 - Rule #2 – Pay attention!* That means using all of our senses to listen to instructions, use our eyes and ears to explore the farm, and keep an eye out for potential dangers. Listen to the chaperones and the farm guides. Listen to the farm and the sounds you may not usually hear if you live in a city.
 - Rule #3 – Respect!* Students need to understand that farms are places where people live and make their livelihood. Harvesting and tasting things with out permission, damaging crops, or not listening to instructions is disrespectful. It is important that they respect each other, their chaperones, instructors, the farm & farmer on their trip.

What to bring and wear:

- Sunscreen and hat
- Close toed shoes that can get dirty
- Water bottle
- Rain gear (if rain is likely)
- Layers of clothing for changing weather

Optional:

- Notebooks, art paper, pencil/pen
- A bag lunch (minimal waste) if eating on the farm

Things to go over with the teacher:

- **Name Tags:** Either give the teacher blank name tags during this visit or request that the school provide them for the trip.
- **Lunch:** Will the students make it back to school in time for lunch? If not, have the teacher make arrangements with the cafeteria to pack out lunches, and remind students about sack lunches for the trip.
- **Photo Waivers:** If pictures of students will be used, parents must give permission first. See section three of this manual for a mock waiver to send home with students.
- **Any Extras:** Double check on transportation arrangements and exchange "day-of" contact numbers.

SECTION II: ON THE FARM

Once all the arrangements have been made and all the details behind planning the trip have been taken care of, it is time for fun on the farm! This section will cover activity ideas and more tips on making the visit easy and smooth.

Here is an example of a farm field trip schedule:

9:30am 9:30-10:00am	Students Arrive Introduction Circle Did you bring your tools? Overview of Plan for the day/ Rules on the Farm Introduction To Live Earth Farm (w/ staff member) Break into 4 groups
10:05-10:25am 10:30-10:50am 10:55-11:15am 11:20-11:40am	Station Rotation Station Rotation Station Rotation Station Rotation
11:45-11:55am 12:00-12:25pm 12:35pm	Closing Circle Students eat lunch and clean up Bus Pick Up

Station Rotation Order:

Station 1: Composting & Goats → **Station 2:** Beneficial Insect Hunt & ID →

Station 3: Farm Fresh Apple Snack & Nutrition Lesson → **Station 4:** Farm Ecosystem

Riddle Tour (rotates clock wise 1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 1 →)

Note that each group of students will rotate between all the stations.

SAFETY & GROUP MANAGEMENT ON THE FARM

Hopefully, you've had a chance to explain the trip and go over the rules of the farm before the students ever set foot on the farm. We strongly encourage you to set rules ahead of time, or ask teachers to do this for you in order to ensure a safe and fun farm visit. Farms are working places, so it is essential to make students aware of potential dangers to themselves, and how they could negatively impact the farm. Hearing the rules in class, then again out on the farm really helps the kids understand the rules and follow them better.

Once the students arrive on the farm, you should quickly review the rules again as part of your introduction to their field trip. This may seem redundant, but it helps with group management and you can turn it into a kind of memory game for the students. Ask them,

“Who remembers one of the three rules on the farm?” and take the opportunity when they answer to talk briefly about the importance of the rules.

Rule #1 – Watch your feet!

Rule #2 – Pay attention!

Rule #3 – Be Respectful!

Smaller groups and supervision

Breaking classes up into smaller groups is key to a good experience. Try to recruit enough parent chaperones and volunteers to have one adult for at least every ten students.

Safety considerations

Knowing about and preparing for potential health and safety risks on the farm is a part of planning a successful farm field trip. Allergies to insects, plants and food, prolonged sun exposure, and potential wildlife on the farm are safety issues to keep in mind while visiting a farm. For farms that have regular visitors it is wise to have a well-stocked first aid kit, sunscreen and drinking water available at a designated location. It is both the farms and the visiting groups responsibility to make sure everyone is prepared for the visit and any life threatening allergies are communicated and planned for (i.e. EpiPens for bee stings, or nut/seed allergies for snacks).

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND ACTIVITIES ON THE FARM

Farm field trips are great experiences that make agricultural, environmental and nutritional concepts come to life. When planning the activities on the farm keep in mind the importance of meeting the educational requirements of the groups visiting. Each grade level has different curriculum goals that teachers are required to meet. It is important to make farm visits as relevant to other classroom topics as possible to ensure participation, interest and relevance to teacher’s lesson plans. You can investigate the curriculum standards for each grade level published by the state department of education, or you can enlist the help of a friendly teacher who’s familiar with these standards.

Farm visits can easily meet curriculum requirements based on the following concepts:

Science & Math: Food webs, life cycles, habitat, soil exploration, watershed health concepts, photosynthesis, collecting data, measuring, problem solving and counting etc.

Language Arts & English Language Development: scavenger hunts, letters to farmers, vocabulary development

Nutrition and Health: farm fresh snacks, label reading, physical activity

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Ask Your Students Questions

It is important to ask a lot of questions of each student group that you work with in order to assess their level of knowledge (slow down the lesson or back up if they’re not following, or move faster if they get it) and to keep students engaged. Instead of

lecturing young students about the lifecycle of a bean plant, for example, you'd want to ask things like, "Does anybody know about the first thing a farmer would do to start a bean plant?" Let a couple students answer the question and then clarify with the correct answer or take the concept further if they answered correctly. For example, if the students said, "You plant a bean seed and water it," you could respond with, "Good. Where would you plant that seed? In the field? What time of year?"

Planting/Transplanting: This lesson expands students' knowledge of the life stages of a plant and gives them some experience with a typical farm task. Explaining the process of starting seeds in a greenhouse and then transplanting them to the fields offers opportunities to discuss plant anatomy as well as the effect of climate on plants. The lesson is reinforced if students are then able to take seedlings or plantings home or back to school to revisit daily. Supervision is required. Older students may be able to plant in the field. If they do take starter plants home with them, they must be told how to care for them.

Equipment: Seeds, starter plants, or bulbs, plastic/paper cups, markers for labeling.

Harvesting: Students love to harvest! They love harvesting to feed themselves and they love harvesting when they're helping the farmer fill an order. There are many lessons to be learned while harvesting, including identifying parts of plants, plant functions, seasonality, when different plants are ripe and life cycle lessons. Having each student participate is essential.

Equipment: Harvesting implements, if needed. Be cautious of sharp implements.

Gleaning: This enriching service-learning project benefits all ages and teaches students about growing cycles and community projects. Even very young students can glean a remarkable amount in a very short time. Gleaned produce may be donated to a local food bank, soup kitchen or sent home with the volunteer group. This project really brings home the message of how much work is involved in bringing food to their table.

Equipment: Harvesting tools, boxes for produce.

Tasting: Eating produce straight from the fields is often the highlight of everyone's farm experience. You'll be surprised at how willing they are to try new thing—they'll even eat things like onions, garlic greens and other produce items that are not thought to be kid friendly. Fruits are popular, of course, because they are sweet. Introducing students to ripe produce and fruits may be one of their most remembered experiences. You can also make a salad, tea, or provide these items for a snack or during lunch. Make comparisons between crops in the same family. Have them notice what is different and what is similar. Make the connections from seed to table. Have them identify parts of the plant they are eating (i.e. leaf, stem, root, fruit, seed, etc).

Equipment: Hand washing station, utensils, knives and cutting boards etc.

Farm Animals: Contact with animals is without a question the favorite farm activity for most kids. If the farm you are visiting has animals consider having students visit them or even participate in their day-to-day care and management (like feeding, milking, or

brushing). Note that these types of activities with live animals need extra adult supervision from leaders and parent volunteers, but most importantly from the farmers who are used to handling the animals.

Equipment: Feed, hand washing station (soap and water).

Composting / Soil Exploration: It is great to have students explore the different stages of compost, and it is possible to involve them in helping a farm build its compost pile! Annie Main at Good Humus Produce created a year round farm visit theme based on compost, following the composting cycle from vegetable scraps back to the field. These activities explore nitrogen and carbon cycles as well as decomposition. Students are fascinated by the critters living and working in compost piles, help them identify the good and the bad.

Equipment: Digging tools, magnifying glasses.

A yearly schedule for compost:

January: Preparing soil for planting in the greenhouse.

February: Planting/seeding in the greenhouse with compost.

March: Weeding the garden and starting to build the compost piles.

April: Weeding the garden and building compost piles.

May: Building and turning the compost piles.

June: Turning the compost piles. Planting the seedlings into the garden. July: Turning the compost piles. Cultivating the seedlings.

August: Turning the compost piles. Cultivating plants and watering.

September: Applying compost to the garden.

October: Harvesting pumpkins and winter squash.

November: Mulching the garden.

December: Slow compost time. Not much activity.

Other Ideas for Activities include salsa making, canning and preserving, dried flower arrangements, constructing a compost or vermicompost system for the classroom, aquaculture activities, spinning or weaving, apple harvesting and cider making, bee hive observation and lessons, bean sorting, milking goats or cows, learning about beneficial insects, watershed lessons and cover cropping. There are many books that provide excellent farm and garden-based curriculum.

SECTION III: WAIVERS, FORMS, EVALUATIONS & FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

EXAMPLE FARM VISIT WAIVERS

The following two forms, one in English and one in Spanish may be modified and used as permission slips and photo release forms for your visits. Parents must give their signed permission to use any photos of their children for promotional reasons. Students and classes need to have permission slips signed in order to leave the school during the day. Teachers are typically very familiar with the field trip permission slip process and may have their own slips that they use. Photo release can be incorporated into permission slips. It is important to provide the parent waivers in different languages depending on the community.

FARM VISIT WAIVER

Permission to Display Work, and or Image Name for _____ promotional purposes

I understand that my son/daughter, _____, will be participating in a Farm Field Trip to YOUR FARM. Information, photos and videos about this project may be utilized for advertising farm visits (something we provide free of charge to the school district), reporting, fundraising, Web, publicity and generally supporting YOUR FARM. By signing below, I give my permission for my child's work, photo, name and/or video image to be utilized by YOUR FARM. For more information, please call XXX XXX XXXX or email XXXXXXXXXX.

As the child's parent/guardian, my signature authorizes release of my child's work, image and name exclusively for the purpose described above.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

FORMA DE PERMISIO PARA VISITAR LA GRANJA

La clase de su hijo/a planea un paseo a una granja. El paseo es parte del programa "De la granja a la escuela" de YOUR FARM. El programa informa a niños/as sobre los ciclos de vida de frutas y verduras, desde la semilla a la mesa. El programa además, fomenta la importancia de practicar diariamente una dieta saludable. La participación de Padres y Madres es muy importante. Si Usted desea acompañarnos en este paseo, favor de indicarlo en el formulario de permiso. Así será una experiencia aun mas divertida para todos. Favor de completar y devolver el permiso del distrito escolar y el permiso para las fotografías. Avisenos si su hijo u hija tiene alguna condición de salud como el asma. Si Usted tiene preguntas o quiere participar en el programa comuníquese YOUR PHONE NUMBER. Durante el paseo, sacaremos fotos o haremos filmaciones. Favor de firmar abajo si podemos usar fotos de su hijo/a.

YOUR FARM NAME mi permiso para usar fotos o filmaciones de mi hijo/a, _____, tomadas mientras participó en las actividades del programa.

Firma Padre/Madre _____ Fecha _____

EXAMPLE FARM VISIT EVALUATION

Having teachers complete evaluations is key in keeping our farm field trips relevant to classes, fun and engaging.

Teacher's Name: _____

Name of Farm: _____

Date of Visit: _____

1. What was the most useful element of your visit?
2. What was the least useful element of your visit?
3. Do you feel that your class was prepared for their farm visit? How long before your visit did you begin talking to your class about their trip?
4. What could better prepare your class for their visit?
5. Additional comments or suggestions about your visit?
6. Is there anything that could be done to make your visit more educational and useful?
7. Would you be interested in going on another visit in the coming year?
8. What follow up activity do you plan on doing with your class? (Follow up activities are an important element to a visit and further reinforce lessons learned).
9. How have your students/visitors related to their farm visit? What were key take home lessons?
10. Any other comments:

POST-FARM Field Trip ACTIVITIES

Follow up activities help reinforce what students learned on the field trip to the farm. There are many fun, engaging, standards-based agricultural education resources. We have listed a few good websites and activity ideas below:

Online Resources:

California School Garden Network—www.csgn.org (Check out their “curriculum” page!)

National Farm to School Network—www.farmtoschool.org

California Farm to School Program—www.cafarmtoschool.org

Harvest of the Month—www.harvestofthemonth.com

California Foundation for Ag in the Classroom—www.cfaitc.org

UC Cooperative Extension—cemonterey.ucdavis.edu

Life Lab Science Program—www.lifelab.org

The Food Project—www.thefoodproject.org

Follow up activities ideas:

- **Write a thank you letter.** Have each student in the class write a letter to the farmer they visited, detailing what they liked / learned about the visit. They are always appreciated!
- **Food Celebration.** Bring in different local fruits and veggies and sample them.
- **Explore Seasonality.** Agricultural education teaches students about where their food comes from, when it’s in season, the difference between fresh foods and processed foods. Highlighting fresh and seasonal products at school in connection with school lunch or meals helps students and visitors alike see how integral farming is to their daily life. As Wendell Berry, an American poet, novelist, essayist, philosopher and farmer has so eloquently and simply stated, “Eating is an agricultural act,” which may be the grandest of all take home lessons.

WANT MORE HELP?

We hope this guide gave you a sense of the basics of putting together an educational program for your farm, but it is by no means comprehensive. CAFF offers in-depth farm education program design help that’s based on our ten years of Farm to School program experience. If you’d like our staff’s help in building an educational program that’s tailored to your farm, easy to manage and popular with students and teachers, please contact us by emailing farmtoschool@caff.org.