

# GREAT KIDS FARM



BALTIMORE CITY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## ANNUAL REPORT SCHOOL YEAR 2024-2025

**Operated by the department of  
Food and Nutrition Services,  
Great Kids Farm is the hub for  
Farm to School programming at  
Baltimore City Public Schools.**

# OVERVIEW

## OUR MISSION:

The Baltimore City Public Schools Farm to School (F2S) program promotes experiential education that connects students to nature and food systems. In every grade band, our programs and services focus on three core areas: (1) food education for lifelong healthy habits, (2) nature-based exploration for wholeness and academic enrichment, and (3) food system engagement for active citizenship, leadership development, and career skills.

## DIRECT EDUCATION

The core of Farm to School (F2S) programming is a menu of educational experiences offering students in grades K-12 nature-based, hands-on opportunities for learning, social emotional growth, and leadership development. In schoolyear 2025 (SY25), **14,237 students** experienced the farm through field trips, special events, or programming in their classrooms. A team of six education staff led programs both on the farm and in classrooms throughout the city. The chart below shows the growth of our programs over the last three years. Although we reached fewer overall students through Farm to Classroom programs in SY25 than SY24, we experimented with offering more in-depth programming, with the number of total program hours in SY25 exceeding that of SY24.

Program	Total Students SY25	Total Students SY24	Total Students SY2023	% Change in student numbers in last 2 years
Field Trips	5,883	3,384	3,047	+93
Farm to Classroom	5,080	6,936	4,398	+16
FaceTime the Farmer (Virtual Visits)	1,376	1,336	548	+151
Summits	487	556	316	+54
Community Events	769	412	538	+43
Summer Camp	632	105	87	+626
Youth Employment	10	12	13	-23
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,237</b>	<b>12,741</b>	<b>8,947</b>	<b>+59</b>



# OVERVIEW

## BUILDING CAPACITY

In addition to direct education with students, the F2S team works to build capacity and advocate for farm and food programming by supporting school gardens, food education, and nature-based learning across the school district. This is done by:

### Strengthening School Garden Clubs:

The F2S team partnered with four schools in SY25 to provide regular garden support. At Beechfield Elementary, William Paca Elementary, John Ruhrah Elementary/Middle, and Baybrook Elementary/Middle, F2S staff led weekly after-school garden club activities. In addition, staff delivered a classroom series for an entire grade over six to ten lessons. The content for this series was custom-made for each school and ranged from examinations of the biological underpinnings of agriculture for middle school science classes to lessons on the cultural and historical significance of food for fourth grade social studies. These four schools also received funds to support their garden, technical assistance, and in some cases, help building or repairing garden beds. In addition to these partnerships, the team offered individual consulting and guidance to 13 other schools.

### Creating Professional Development Opportunities

- The F2S team led 12 professional development sessions in the past year for 150 total participants, including a four-part series on maintaining school garden programs as part of the district's systemic professional development days.
- In December, F2S staff launched the Education Outdoors Working Group, a small peer-to-peer learning group of educators that convened quarterly to share ideas and strategies to further outdoor education.

### Distributing Educational Materials

- The F2S Ag-tivity Kit program allows teachers to request materials to conduct planting or composting lessons in their classroom, and enables F2S programming to reach even those students who do not directly experience a classroom lesson or field trip.
- In addition, the farm hosts an annual seedling give-away to support spring garden plantings.

Materials	Number distributed	Number of Schools Served	Estimated Number of Students Served
Ag-tivity Kits	284	59	8,631

### Online Toolkits

#### School Garden Toolkit

[Bit.ly/BCPSSGardenToolkit](https://bit.ly/BCPSSGardenToolkit)

#### Classroom Cooking Toolkit

[Bit.ly/classroomcooking](https://bit.ly/classroomcooking)

#### Outdoor Learning Toolkit

[Bit.ly/BCPSSOutdoorLearning](https://bit.ly/BCPSSOutdoorLearning)



## LEARNING JOURNEYS

Great Kids Farm hosted **5,883** students on **99** field trips during the academic year.

Elementary schools select from a menu of six curriculum-aligned learning journeys: *Animal Encounter*, *Plants are Magic*, *Taste the Rainbow*, *Trail and Stream*, *Kindergarten Exploration*, or *Seasonal Sampler*. Each journey features three hands-on learning activities, such as cooking with farm-fresh produce, harvesting crops, scouting for pollinators, building a worm habitat, or petting the goats. The most popular journey, the Seasonal Sampler, allows farm staff to choose the best stations or topics to highlight the season on the farm.



Students record observations about the goats during an Animal Encounter field trip



Students plant greens in raised beds on a farm field trip.

Learning Journey	Number of Trips	Number of Students
Animals	13	951
Plants	20	1,187
Taste	15	917
Trail & Stream	7	453
Kindergarten	12	753
Hybrid "Seasonal Sampler"	30	1,495



## HANDS-ON LEARNING

Surveys conducted with 192 school staff after the field trips reveal that the experience is highly valued. Teachers praise the hands-on, engaging, and interactive nature of Great Kids Farm field trips and appreciate the organized and skilled staff.

- 98% say program was well organized.
- 99% say the content was “just right” for the age group.
- 94% say farm educators were very knowledgeable.
- 93% say the majority of their students had a positive experience in nature.
- 92% say the farm educators had a strong ability to engage the students.
- 66% say that their students display a **greater level** of engagement than in a typical classroom lesson.

While 33% of respondents did not have a specific curricular connection they were seeking when booking the trip, among those that did, 68% hoped for a connection in the sciences. 94% of those respondents felt the trip had a strong science connection.



## WHAT TEACHERS SAY:

“The staff were well prepared, and extremely skilled at working with students.

Their sessions were engaging and structured. I especially loved the use of translanguaging with some Spanish words! All staff was friendly and informative. Extremely thankful!”

“I loved watching the kids try different things.”

“Just amazing. Greatest field trip experience I’ve had.”

# FARM TO CLASSROOM

## BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN

In SY25, we ran 195 classroom programs for 5,080 students at 52 different schools. As with field trips, teachers select a program theme when booking – cooking, plants, healthy eating, or food waste – and the F2S team creates a lesson to meet their needs. Cooking programs remain the most popular, reaching 2,169 students.

In SY25, the team piloted a lesson series at four partner schools. These schools all received weekly lessons for their after-school garden clubs, and a school-day series for a selected grade level. This meant that 430 students at these four schools received in-depth experiences throughout the year, rather than a one-off lesson. While this resulted in a 27% drop in Farm to Classroom program student numbers between SY24 and SY25, total Farm to Classroom program hours actually increased slightly from 307 to 319.

Program type	Number of programs	Number of students
Cooking	36	2169
Animals	3	290
Plants	14	658
Food Waste	7	576
Garden Party	9	862
Garden Club Lessons	84	70
Partner School Lesson Series	35	360
Other	7	95



# FARM TO CLASSROOM

## WHAT TEACHERS ARE SAYING:

Teachers and other school staff were asked to complete a short survey after Farm to Classroom programs. Here's what respondents (39 total) say:

- The top two objectives of teachers and staff when they book the program were hands-on learning opportunities (94%), and enhancing student appreciation of healthy eating (72%).
- 100% of respondents say staff were very prepared, and had a strong ability to engage the students.
- 92% said that the content was "just right" for their needs.
- 67% of respondents said their students were more engaged in this program than a typical classroom lesson.



*Top: A student practices knife skills during a cooking lesson. Lower left: Students at ConneXions learn about plant propagation.*



**"My favorite part was seeing students apply science concepts through hands-on cooking activities."**

**"Students who typically disengage, engaged throughout the entire lesson."**

# SUMMER PROGRAM

## A NEW MODEL FOR 2025

After four years of hosting a science-themed day camp, the F2S team piloted a new model for summer programming. City Schools summer programs were offered a fully funded opportunity to visit the farm for a full-day field trip, with morning lessons focused on farm fresh cooking, animals, and nature exploration, followed by an afternoon of farm crafts, games, harvesting, and stream play.

This model created opportunities for many more students to experience the farm this summer. Over 632 students visited from 17 different City Schools summer programs. The program was supported by the work of ten high school interns who practiced their leadership skills by guiding younger students through the afternoon activities.

35 school staff responded to a survey on their experience and highlighted favorite aspects of the trip, such as farm fresh cooking experiences, and interactions with the animals.



“Great experiential learning were prepared by the organizers and facilitators. Excellent Experience.”  
School Staff Feedback



## COOKING EVERY DAY

Summer programs offer the opportunity to combine food-focused lessons with nature play. Every student visiting the farm this summer had a chance to explore the trails, harvest produce, and prepare food fresh from the farm.



Summits are youth conferences that bring together small groups of students from several schools to explore a topic in depth. In SY25, 487 students from 38 schools visited Great Kids Farm for four distinct summits. These events are meant to inspire students to dig deeper into their interests and to explore topics that go beyond what may typically be taught in the classroom, while still connecting to academics.

*"I loved all the hands-on activities. I was able to make connection to what we are doing in the class, what we have already done and what we will do soon or next year. Some of the participants were Green Team members as well so it will be great for them to be able to explain the activities to the team or the class when we do it ourselves at school. Love to see my students engaged and have so much fun."* – Teacher who attended Climate x Food Summit with students



*Farm educator Veronica shows students how to make a grow-light stand for indoor seed starting during the School Garden Summit*

Summit	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Target Audience	Content Highlights
<b>Good Food Fall</b>	12	139	5th - 8th grade	Workshops focus on cooking and preparing fresh food.
<b>Climate x Food</b>	5	113	5th - 8th grade	Workshops explored the complex links between climate and food. Topics included soil management, food waste warriors, and the connection between pollinators and food.
<b>African American Foodways</b>	9	113	9th - 12th grade	Topics addressed the cultural connections and history of food with an eye to the future. Students learned about how to start a food truck business, explored Baltimore food culture, and made their own Johnnycakes.
<b>School Garden Summit</b>	12	122	2 - 5th grade	Designed for school garden clubs, this summit gives students the tools and knowledge to maintain their garden. Workshops included "Good Bug, Bad Bug," Indoor Seed Starting, and Fertilizer Frenzy.

# YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Great Kids Farm hosted ten high school students for six weeks of a paid summer internship. Upon applying, students selected a focus area: farm work or educational programming. While the farm crew spent the bulk of their time maintaining plantings, building new gardens, or weeding, the educational interns spent their days as assistants for field trips. All interns, however, were able to experience all aspects of work at Great Kids Farm, from driving the tractor to guiding younger students through an activity.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

On an end-of-year survey, interns highlighted the following skills that they learned:

- People management
- Adaptability
- Learning how to operate new machines
- Handling criticism
- Using power equipment
- Classroom management



## NEW EXPERIENCES

Interns respond to: "What's something that you did this summer that surprised you?"

**"I worked with equipment I never thought I would work with before. For example, a tractor."**

**"I took initiative starting a fire and taking charge of a group [of students]"**

**"I held a snake"**



# KITS & VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

## AG-TIVITY KITS

Kits and virtual programs provide a key strategy for reaching additional students beyond those that visit the farm. These kits range from simple, short-term projects like sprouting microgreens in the classroom, to more involved endeavors such as raising composting earthworms, hatching chicks, cultivating mushrooms, or growing with aquaponics. Each kit comes with materials, instructions and lesson ideas for teachers, and kits are used by teachers for everything from conducting classroom experiments and engaging an afterschool club, to helping students practice teamwork and communication in language classes. For the second year, microgreens kits were distributed to all kindergarten classes through a partnership with the science department. These kits were used for the kindergarten students' engineering design challenge.

## VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

The Facetime the Farmer program offers short, interactive, virtual "field trips" for classes to link their curriculum to the farm. While this program is open to any interested class, the Facetime the Farmer program is offered as an optional activity as part of the science curriculum for the third grade students studying insects and kindergarten students studying plants and animals. Approximately **1,376 students** participated in 44 Facetime the Farmer sessions in SY25.



Ag-tivity Kit Type	Number Distributed
Microgreen Kits	147
Herb or Salad Garden Kits	76
Vermicompost Kits	26
Aquaponics Kits	25
Chick Hatching Kits	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>284</b>

**"The kids loved learning from the farm, and the visuals. Thank you for answering their questions."**  
- Teacher feedback on FaceTime the Farmer.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## FAMILY FARM HOURS



In SY25, we worked with 1,167 participants at family engagement events, including Family Farm Hours events. About 66% of these participants were students. These events provide a self-paced opportunity to explore the farm: harvest produce, meet the animals, create nature-based crafts, or assist a cooking demonstration.



## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are essential to the success of many of our programs. In 2025, **83 volunteers** contributed a total of **1,902 hours** to ensuring the success of field trips, Farm to Classroom programs, Ag-tivity Kits, Summits, and Family Farm Hours. Great Kids Farm volunteers help lead groups of students on field trips, deliver supplies, visit classrooms to assist with school-based programming, and keep the gardens weed-free. With diverse backgrounds, volunteers bring their own ideas and knowledge to the programming.

*Top left: School staff pick up seedlings for school gardens during an annual seedling give-away during Family Farm Hours. Lower left: Volunteer Laurie helps a student with a seed scavenger hunt. Above: Staff and volunteers transplant seedlings in the greenhouse.*





## RECOGNITION:

For its innovative F2S programming, City Schools Food and Nutrition Services received a **Healthy Meals Incentive Recognition Award** from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service and Action for Healthy Kids.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The F2S team is grateful for the work of non-profit partner Friends of Great Kids Farm, which provides critical support -- including funding for bus transportation, student stipends, and classroom supplies -- for F2S programming. More information on Friends of Great Kids Farm can be found at [www.FriendsGKF.org](http://www.FriendsGKF.org).

The F2S team also deeply appreciates the contributions of volunteers, school staff (in classrooms, cafeterias, and outdoors), and partners who help build capacity for sustained commitments to F2S education and student wholeness.