



GARDEN TO CAFETERIA

Planning steps for getting your produce to your cafeteria

This document will help your Garden Team explore the option of featuring produce grown in your Learning Garden in your school's cafeteria. This document is to be used as an overview in tandem with additional regional support materials that are more specific to your school district. Reach out to your Big Green Garden Educator for more information on district policies.

Consider these steps to feature garden produce in your cafeteria:

- 1** Reach out to the cafeteria manager and staff at your school. Your cafeteria manager will have information about important contacts at the district level and they can offer insight into what is and isn't feasible at your school's cafeteria. The cafeteria staff and manager will play an important role in preparing and offering your Learning Garden produce to students, so it's important to include them in the process and get them excited your school's garden!
- 2** Identify key district-level contacts. District-level contacts will have important information regarding garden to cafeteria protocols that need to be followed to safely harvest, prepare, and serve Learning Garden produce. District-level contacts may include: nutrition services, food procurement departments, or farm to school coordinators.
- 3** Research your district's requirements regarding safety and procurement for garden to cafeteria programs. Some districts have in depth food safety manuals that pertain to harvesting and eating produce grown in gardens, while other districts provide less guidance. It's important to have a grasp on what the requirements will be for your Learning Garden produce before you are ready to harvest and feed students.
- 4** Start small! Talk to your cafeteria manager about using one crop from your Learning Garden and incorporating it into the lunch selection. For example, plan to have carrots be your featured cafeteria vegetable and communicate with cafeteria manager when he or she should expect them to be ready to harvest and serve. With clear communication, the cafeteria staff will be ready to receive and prepare the carrots so they can be added to lunch selection. Having clear expectations and open lines of communication will be key to ensuring your Learning Garden produce is effectively used in the cafeteria.
- 5** Advertise the produce that will be served in the cafeteria! Get the word out to administrators, teachers, students, and parents in your school community. You can add simple signage in the cafeteria designating what dishes were wholly or partially sourced from the Learning Garden and consider including a short announcement over the PA system or in the cafeteria. If students helped to harvest the produce, have them help with the announcement or signage. This is a great way to keep everyone involved and proud of their school's Learning Garden!

