

THINKING OUTSIDE THE LUNCHBOX

FRESH APPROACHES
TO LOCAL FOOD EDUCATION
IN ONTARIO



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PLANTING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

From the the classroom to school ground to field trips, local food education can take place almost anywhere. Giving kids the opportunity to learn about local food through a variety of avenues can unlock knowledge and skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives.

TELLING THE STORY OF FOOD

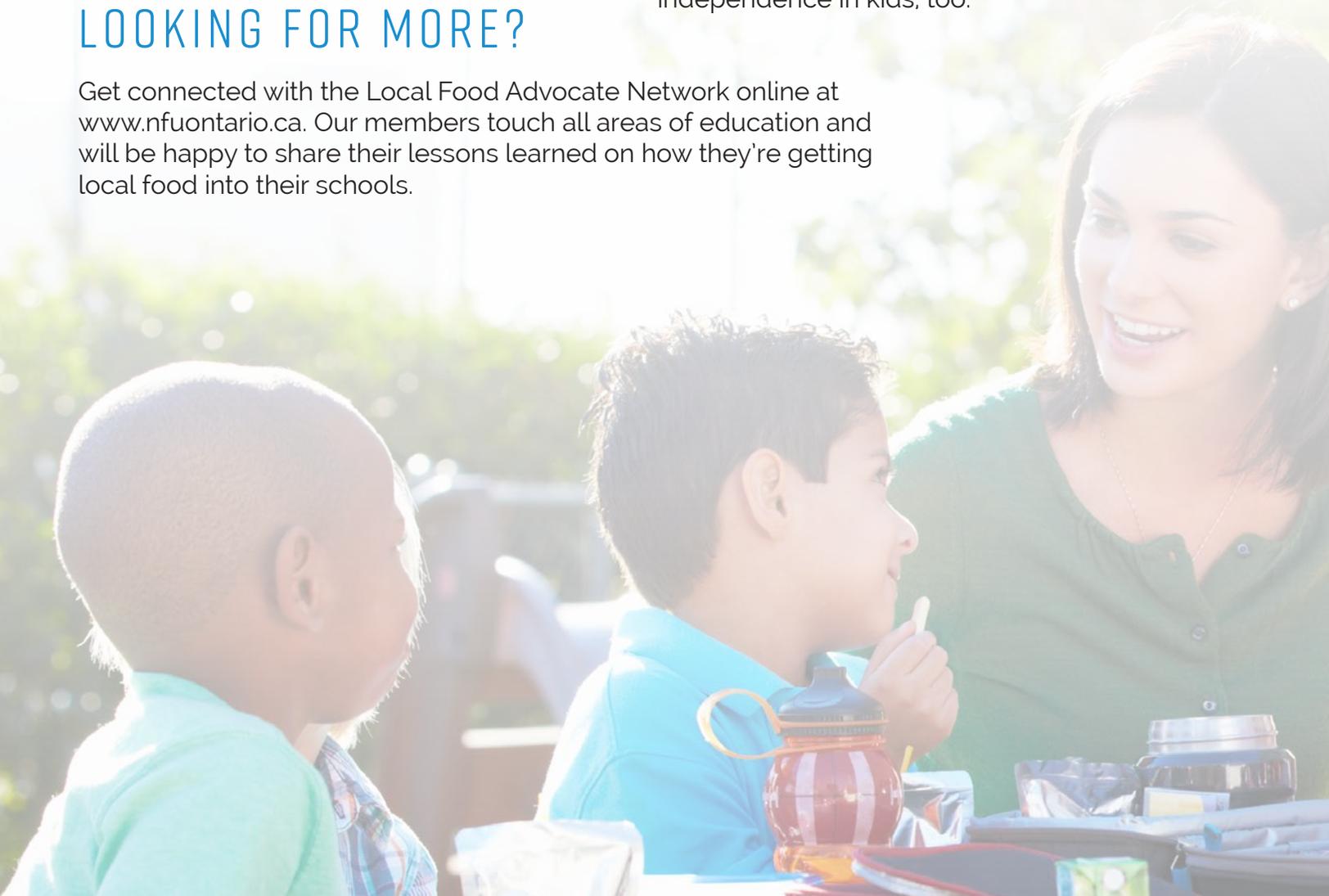
One of the best ways to connect pieces of the puzzle together is through storytelling. As Ontario farmers are starting to tell the good story behind the food they grow, bringing farmers' stories into the classroom can have a big impact on how kids connect with their food. Storytelling can be a great tool to increase understanding of food production and also the important value of local food in enriching rural livelihoods and every other facet of the economy, environment, and society it touches.

LOOKING FOR MORE?

Get connected with the Local Food Advocate Network online at www.nfuontario.ca. Our members touch all areas of education and will be happy to share their lessons learned on how they're getting local food into their schools.

SCHOOL GROUND GARDENS

Many schools across Ontario have seen the benefits of cultivating vegetable gardens on the school ground. From spring planting to fall harvest, getting kids up close and actively involved in the cultivation of food can go a long way to building lifelong learning. As we know, many kids are only exposed to fresh fruits and vegetables in the grocery store and have a misunderstanding of where food comes from. Connecting them directly to the agricultural experience of growing their own food can cultivate a deep understanding of how food gets onto their plates and help support a healthy sense of accomplishment and independence in kids, too.



LOCAL FOOD MATTERS

Local food affects us all. By supporting local farmers, you're contributing to local economies that help to build thriving rural communities. You're also voicing your support for a food system that is considerate of transportation and the environment. And at the end of the day, you're getting safe, healthy food, from farm families to yours.

FUNDRAISING WITH LOCAL FOOD

Chocolate bars and other sweet treats are passé when it comes to school fundraisers. While there's been a transition to healthier alternatives, there's no better substitute than swapping out the sugar for local food. Many farmers can work with your school to provide fresh foods direct from their farms. Fundraisers like this help contribute to the overall health of your school population and makes the impact of increasing local food in schools go beyond the four walls—it brings local food home for the whole family. We've all got to eat, and fundraisers that sell something parents actually want to feed their kids is a win-win for everyone.

FARM AND MARKET TOURS

While growing food within city limits is a great approach to teaching kids about agriculture, there's still no rival for taking kids into the real world and seeing the workings of a farm first hand. Many local farms have begun to incorporate elements of agri-tourism into their operations and would be very willing to host school groups. Farmers know that it's important to get the next generation of eaters understanding what goes into growing the good food produced locally, and there's no better way to do that than getting up close and personal with a farmer. If you're not sure which farms to approach about organizing a school tour, you can also check out local agricultural associations that often are already organizing and hosting events that are suitable for all ages.

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER...

There's no action too small to be worthwhile when it comes to local food education. It's a long road to becoming food literate, and every step along the way counts. If you can't get a full school garden up and running, bringing food boxes to grow small-scale in the classroom can be a great alternative. There's no one recipe for local food literacy, each ingredient is an important part of cooking up a healthy future for our kids.



GOOD THINGS GROW...

Everywhere you look across Ontario you can find good news stories of local food making its way into education. Let these great projects inspire your next bright ideas for local food and education partnerships!

FOOD FOR KIDS PETERBOROUGH, ON

With such an abundance of good food growing across Ontario, the Peterborough-based Food for Kids program has found a way to get more local food into student nutrition programs across the region. Food for Kids uses funding from grants and donations from community partners to purchase food from local farmers for their School Food Box program. This helps Student Nutrition Programs to stretch tight budgets and infuse more fresh, and healthy local fruits and vegetables into the meals served. And a little can go a long way – in the 2016-17 school year, 768 local food boxes helped to feed 15,902 students over 2.4 million healthy breakfasts and snacks!



In 2016, The Wolfe Island Community Garden Group teamed up with the Marysville Public School to get students involved in the nitty gritty of local food production. From classroom lessons on why local food is so important to learning hands on what it takes to grow it, the collaboration has seen the fruits of their labour in their weekly hot lunch program. The hot lunch program is able to take what the students grow from the community garden and incorporate this great source of hyper locally grown nutrition and enhance the meals they offer!

BECOME A LOCAL FOOD ADVOCATE

Many of us are connected to communities or professions that have special influence over the decisions made by eaters and institutions. We're bringing together Local Food Advocates in fields like healthcare, education, the arts, and faith communities.

We can have an impact. Teachers and educators influence large numbers of young people and help set life-long habits. By working together, we can support local food and help make our communities healthier, fairer, and more connected. And we can help local farmers to thrive while protecting biodiversity and the climate.

ABOUT THE NFU-ONTARIO

The National Farmers Union-Ontario promotes policies that will revitalize agriculture in Ontario by strengthening family farms. On local, national and international levels, the NFU – O advocates alternative structures and government policies that resist corporate control of food. With farmers and consumers, the NFU-O works to encourage vibrant rural communities, environmentally sustainable practices and the production of safe, wholesome food.



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