

Introduction to FoodCorps

What Is FoodCorps?

Our mission: FoodCorps partners with schools and communities to nourish kids' health, education, and sense of belonging.

Our vision: Every child, in every school, experiences the joy and power of food.

Why Schools?

School is where kids grow and learn—physically, academically, and emotionally. For many kids, it's also the place where they eat as many as two out of three of their daily meals, and where they build relationships with food that will last a lifetime. Too often, systemic racism and classism impact both kids' access to food and their opportunities to learn about it, though access to nourishing meals is a foundation for every child's ability to learn. We can set kids up for greater success—at school and throughout their lives—by ensuring that schools provide them with nourishing meals, comprehensive food education, and culturally affirming experiences with food.

FoodCorps works in schools to get kids excited about eating fruits and veggies, support school nutrition staff in getting nourishing meals on the lunch tray, and create welcoming school environments for kids of all cultures and identities. FoodCorps provides hands-on food education to more than 40,000 students each year. Our hands-on, place-based education and culturally responsive teaching help to meet the needs of all learners, support kids' social and emotional growth, and help teach academic concepts, too.

What Is a Nourishing School Food Environment?

A nourishing school food environment has three things: hands-on learning, nourishing school meals, and a culture of health.

What Is Staying Power?

Staying power means that a nourishing school food environment stays strong after FoodCorps leaves that school. Staying power is strongest when people from all parts of the school community work together to create a nourishing food environment for students.

FoodCorps' Three Areas of Service

We partner with district and school communities to help create nourishing school food environments with staying power. The FoodCorps program centers on three areas of service. Each area includes activities and practices to guide FoodCorps service members in their work with students and schools. Together, these practices create and sustain a nourishing school food environment. It is important that service members engage the broader community to build and sustain change through the three areas of service. Below are example activities for each of the three areas of service:

Hands-On Learning

- A. Ongoing cooking, tasting, and garden-based lessons
- B. Before- and after-school clubs and programming
- C. School leadership and project-based learning
- D. Field trips and farmer & chef visits
- E. School garden development & maintenance

Nourishing School Meals

- F. Salad bar & meal line design
- G. Creating a joyful and inclusive mealtime experience
- H. Taste tests that elevate student voice and choice
- I. Cafeteria role modeling
- J. Local sourcing & culturally relevant recipe development
- K. School- or District-wide school meal promotion
- L. Expanded meal program offerings (e.g. breakfast, snack, supper, backpack programs)

Culture of Health

- M. Celebrations, events, rewards & snacks
- N. Staff training
- O. Family & community engagement
- P. Nourishing school food champion & team support

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Throughout this guide, you will find tips and resources on how to serve in schools with a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This content includes the following:

- Getting to know your school community, its assets, and its goals
- Practicing culturally responsive teaching and classroom management
- Customizing lessons to climate, culture, and students' needs

Through your service using these and other approaches, you will be working to build an inclusive, meaningful experience for students, families, and school staff—and an equitable school food system for all children.

Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In pursuing our vision of connecting all

children to nourishing food, FoodCorps embraces antiracism and social justice as moral imperatives in our work. We recognize and understand the structural inequalities and the cycles of discrimination based on place, race, and class that both reinforce and are reinforced by the problem we are trying to solve. And we are convinced that for FoodCorps to be effective, we must not replicate the inequities we see in society at large, but to the extent our resources allow, we must become a model for the change we seek. Accordingly:

FoodCorps will strive to create an environment that reflects the diversity of our partner communities and in which everyone can show up and feel brave, supported and valued for the contributions they make to this organization regardless of ability, gender identity, nationality, race, religion, and sexuality. Our program and vision of one's nourishment will be one that celebrates all bodies and cultures. And we will work to recreate our leadership and decision-making structures to center the voices and act upon the direction of people most impacted by our work in the world and systemic oppression writ large.

FoodCorps will work to shift power, access, and resources within our sphere of influence in order to help create more justice in the world for those most impacted by systemic oppression. We will do this by committing our resources to national, state, and local efforts to create a more equitable school food system—prioritizing indigenous communities and communities of color—and by centering the needs and perspectives of those most impacted by food injustice when making decisions about how to move forward. We will revise our organizational policies related to compensation, budgeting, recruitment, promotions, and leadership development in order to reduce internal inequities in access to power, resources, and opportunity, and we will cultivate a sense of shared collective and

individual accountability for upholding our policies and priorities.

At FoodCorps, we recognize that systemic racism is one of the root causes of the problem we are trying to solve and that without actively dismantling it, we will never succeed at creating more equitable access to nourishing food in schools. It is impossible for us to be neutral on this front. If we are not actively working to be anti-racist, then we are complicit in perpetuating racism. We know that dismantling racism takes time, that we have and will continue to make mistakes, and that it is work that will never be finished. But this cannot be used as an excuse not to do our part.

We will start by working to rid ourselves of our saviorism impulses and of the expectation that our staff of color can or should take disproportionate responsibility for fixing us. We will provide our staff and service corps with the education and tools to recognize and interrupt internalized, interpersonal, and systemic racism and set an expectation that they will put the tools to use as a measure of success. We will name and frame racism when we see it, change ways of working that are embedded in white supremacy culture, and challenge public policies and internal structures of power that reinforce racial inequality. We will regularly review and hold ourselves accountable to the commitments above and we invite anyone reading this to do the same.

