JERSEY FRESH™ Farm to School

A Quarterly Newsletter from the NJ Department of Agriculture

BEST OF FARM TO SCHOOL AWARD 2025- 2026

Delaware Township School

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture presented Delaware Township School, the "Best of Farm to School Award" during a visit to the school. The award recognized exemplary efforts to connect local food into the cafeteria while also integrating agriculture into the learning experience for students. The presentation took place during the celebration of the 16th annual *Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week.*



"Delaware Township School benefits from being part of a rural farm community. Our local farm, Sweet Valley, has been instrumental in supplying us with fresh produce for our school cafeteria. We also are fortunate to have many volunteers who help maintain our gardens and supervise our students with their recycling and TerraCycling efforts," said Delaware Township School Assistant Principal Valerie Wheatley. "The food waste that we collect is shared with home flocks and farm animals as well as composted for our gardens. We have been utilizing a hydroponic tower to grow greens and starter plants and our newest effort, which is being supported by the NJ Department of Agriculture, is to have a greenhouse in the Kitchen Garden to extend our growing season."

The school highlights Jersey Fresh items on their menu, often partnering with neighboring farms, and participating in taste-testing events, chef events, and other educational opportunities for students to gain the full seed-to-table experience. Through a Green Team comprised of parents, teachers, volunteers, and Board members, the Delaware Township School is able to remain committed to incorporating agriculture into the everyday life of students, while simultaneously emphasizing community relationships and focus on nutritional Jersey Fresh ingredients.

Want to see what makes this Farm to School program one of the best? Explore our highlights through photos, quotes, and snapshots of the activities, and impact that bring the application to life. Click here to take a closer look!

JERSEY FRESH FARM TO SCHOOL FARMER RECOGNITION AWARD

Fairgrown Farms

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture presented Fairgrown Farm in Hopewell with the "Farmer Recognition Farm to School Award" during a visit to the Mercer County town. The presentation took place during the celebration of the 16th annual Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week and Fourth Annual Ag Literacy Week being held September 22-26.



"As first-generation farmers James and Alex have built a modern operation that emphasizes collaboration, innovation, and community engagement and embraced the opportunity to enhance our local food systems," said New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Ed Wengryn. "Their dedication to connecting and educating students about agriculture is building an understanding where food comes from, can both inspire the next generation of farmers while educating students what keeps agricultural the heart of New Jersey alive and growing."

"When I became a vegetable farmer 10 years ago, I thought my role was pretty simple: grow good food for the people in my community. Over the years, as I started spending more time working with local schools and students, I realized that growing the food was only part of the job," said Fairgrown Farm owner James Klett. "As farmers, we also have an opportunity to be ambassadors for agriculture—to help kids understand where their food comes from, meet the people who grow it, and feel a connection to the farms and farmland around them. Somewhere along the way, **Farm to School became my favorite part of being a farmer,** and I genuinely love every moment I get to spend sharing what we do with the next generation. Receiving this recognition means so much to Fairgrown Farm because it celebrates not just the food we grow, but the relationships we're building between New Jersey's farms, schools, and communities."

Fairgrown Farm has expanded this commitment through its Community Share Pilot Program, partnering with local schools to increase access to fresh, locally grown produce. The program gives 10% of proceeds from farm shares purchased for pickup at a partner school directly back to that school to support farm field trips, agricultural experiences, food tastings, and local food in school lunches.



Cream of the Crop
Bridegton School District

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture presented Bridgeton School District in Cumberland County with the Cream of the Crop Award during a visit to the school's classrooms, hydroponic and outdoor gardens, and cafeteria. The presentation took place during the celebration of the 16th Annual Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week and the Third Annual Ag Literacy Week being held September 21-25.



"Congratulations to the Bridgeton School District on being awarded the Cream of the Crop Award and for their continued successful efforts to connect the importance of agriculture with nutritious and high-quality food," said New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Ed Wengryn. "Through innovative and hands-on learning experiences, the Bridgeton School District demonstrates thoughtful and creative ways to incorporate agriculture education into their curriculum and recognizing the importance of New Jersey grown food by establishing community partnerships with local farmers."



Kristine Pepe is the Coordinator of Bridgeton's Farm to School program, leading over 200 garden lessons incorporating ag. education, nutrition education, social emotional lessons, social studies and more. The garden's impact within the community is documented on Pepe's Instagram page

"Receiving the Department of Agriculture's Cream of the Crop Award is such a meaningful honor for all of us at Bridgeton Public Schools. Bringing garden and agricultural education directly into our classrooms isn't just an extra project for us—it is a core part of how we support student wellness and curiosity. When kids get to see, touch, and understand where their food comes from, learning really comes alive", said Bridgeton Farm to School Coordinator Kristine Pepe. "We love finding fun, memorable ways to get students excited about healthy choices. Whether they are planting and harvesting in our gardens, trying new items during cafeteria taste tests, or competing for the absolute loudest crunch on Apple Crunch Day while sampling local varieties, these hands-on moments build habits that last. None of this would be possible without incredible community support. Thanks to our local farm-to-school partnerships with The Common Market and Seashore Fruit & Produce, we can bring fresh, regionally grown produce straight to our students' lunch trays every day. This recognition belongs to our entire school family, food service team, and partners who work together to keep Bridgeton's students nourished, engaged, and inspired."

Storybook Cafe

Universal Human Rights Month

Page 1
Growing Food

Where our food comes from.



Page 2
Sharing Food

How communities help make food available.



Page 3
Food for Everyone

How school meals support students and learning.





A new resource with stories, lessons, activities and recipes!

Explore the Resource

Jersey Tastes! Monthly Activity Center

December



January



February



NJ DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
DIVISION OF FOOD & NUTRITION
JERSEY FRESH FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

P.O. BOX 334
TRENTON, NJ 08625
PHONE: 609.292.8662
EMAIL: NEWJERSEYF2S@AG.NJ.GOV

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NEWJERSEYF2S@AG.NJ.GOV