



LET'S TALK

"Cultivate Charlottesville's Farm to School work is centered on a commitment to address racial inequities, promote systems change, and center the voices and choices of people experiencing food inequities."



Carlton Jones Charlottesville City Schools Coordinator of Nutrition Cultivate, Jordan Johnson Cultivate City Schoolyard Garden Program Director, and Shamera Banks Cultivate Farm-to-School Coordinator participate in presentations and a garden tour at Charlottesville High School as part of the 2022 Virginia Farm to School Conference

"Cultivate Charlottesville's Farm to School work is centered on a commitment to address racial inequities, promote systems change, and center the voices and choices of people experiencing food inequities." So begins a spotlight of Cultivate Charlottesville's farm-to-school work written last year for the recently released Virginia Farm to School (F2S) Toolkit. [The original spotlight](#) was prepared by invitation from the Virginia Farm to School office in 2021.

Over the past few years, Cultivate has been collaborating with VDOE F2S by sharing models of our Harvest of the Month work, presenting at Virginia Farm to School conferences, and participating in proposal reviews. This year, however, as the state began to roll out their final version of the VA F2S Toolkit, we were asked to edit our profile; requested edits included taking out all of our references to race and equity. Why this shift to exclude direct recognition of the role of race and equity in farm-to-school work? Well, on the first day of his administration, Virginia's new Governor Glenn Youngkin signed [Executive Order Number One addressing so-called Divisive Concepts](#).

It seems that this Executive Order is designed to restrict discussion of the underlying systems that contribute to the need for farm-to-school efforts. But acknowledging the reality of race and its connection to disparities across racial groups are key components of our work. The tools and context we use include the use of historical data, acknowledging the impact of racist policies and practices, and equity-focused solutions. Those tools provide context of racial discrimination in systems in the same way we see height, width, and depth as demonstrable properties of reality. It means that we can't talk about solutions to racial disparities without talking about race and equity any more than we can talk about farming without considering sun, soil, and seeds. Progress toward a genuinely equitable system cannot occur in the absence of the whole truth, and so we invite you to consider the following facts that guide our actions:

- [Fact 1](#) – In our schools, nearly 55% of the student population is eligible to receive free- and reduced-price meals; and in some neighborhoods, that number runs as high as 86%. The Charlottesville City Schools with the highest rates of free- and reduced-meal eligibility also have the [highest percent](#) (73%-80%) of students of color.
- [Fact 2](#) – Nearly 27% of Charlottesville third- and fifth-graders are classified as overweight or obese, and this number is 48% for African American youth (in 2014).
- [Fact 3](#) – In 1920 there were 31,000 Black farmers in Virginia (17% of total). Today there are 1,865 (4% of total).

We cannot ignore these facts. If you believe these disparities are uncomfortable to learn about, imagine what it must feel like to live with them.

The City Schoolyard Garden (CSG) team decided to pull the Cultivate spotlight from the Virginia Farm to School Toolkit rather than eliminate language that is at the very core of our mission. Here is the [original spotlight](#) without the requested edits.

Cultivate Charlottesville was also asked to present at the Virginia F2S Conference being held in Charlottesville October 18 and 19. Because we were not asked to restrict our inclusion of the words race and equity in our remarks, the CSG team participated in the conference. The day before the presentation, attendees from all over the Commonwealth were invited to tour the garden at Charlottesville High School as well as the farm plot at Charlottesville Albemarle Technical Center (CATEC). In this way Cultivate was able to amplify the need for farm-to-school programming that centers racial equity.



TAKE ACTION

Tips for centering center racial equity in your farm-to-school work!

1. **Practice anti-racism** – Cultivate has been training around and implementing anti-racist organizational practices since 2013 and still has

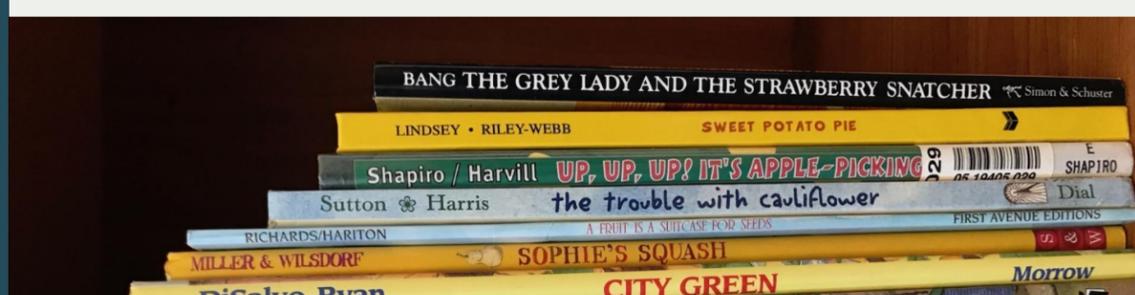
areas to grow. Learning to practice racial equity is long-term commitment. Start now!

2. **Center youth voice and choice** – By building leadership into our programs from the youngest students through to our internship program, the City Schoolyard Garden program strives to center youth ideas and preferences. Students, for example, came up with the idea of launching a Youth Food Justice Intern summer cohort when they wanted to continue to work and learn more in the gardens.
3. **Build and engage partnership** – Farm to School is part of a larger food system. To create equity across this system, it is critical to build partnerships. For example, consider specific outreach to local Black farmers.
4. **Work at multiple levels and intersections** – While Cultivate Charlottesville started by focusing on one schoolyard garden at our middle school, our shift to center racial equity expanded our understanding more about other systems that affect students’ ability to engage. For example, without transportation, some students were not able to stay for after school garden club. Work with partners to fill those gaps.
5. **Embrace learning and adapt** – There is always more to learn and practice around building equity into a Farm to School program. Make time for reflection and learning, and adapt with humility.
6. **Cultivate broad base support** – Multifaceted work requires multifaceted support.



#1 STUDENT NUTRITION EDUCATION	Engage students in hands-on garden experiences, nutrition education, and leadership development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schoolyard gardens classes • Cooking in the garden • Food Justice Interns (paid) • Student Nutrition committees
#2 STUDENT VOICE & CHOICE	Ask students what they like and want in school meals and design solutions together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taste tests • Student choice items • Veggie-Cook Off • Student recipe development • Student advocacy events
#3 FRESH, FROM-SCRATCH, LOCAL	Increase access to healthy food options in school meals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvest of the Month • Local on the Line • Veggie Market Table • School Food Pantries
#4 STAFF CAPACITY & KITCHEN EQUIPMENT	Build school capacity to prepare and serve healthy meals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition staff training with Culinary Concepts (paid) • Upgrade deli cases, coolers, and other equipment and kitchen tools
#5 EQUITY THROUGH ACCESS	Increase student meal participation which increases resources to invest in healthy meals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student marketing campaign for healthy food options. • Schoolyard gardens • Cooking in the garden • Food Justice Interns

CULTIVATE SOCIAL JUSTICE BOOK CLUB



These is some of what we are reading, watching, and listening to as we think about the connection between racial equity and Farm to School:

["The Kids Are Just Happier," Could California's Universal School Meal Program Start a Trend?](#), Victoria Namkung, The Guardian

[Advancing Equity in Farm to School](#), James Kwele, excerpt of keynote address at Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Conference, February 12, 2020

[Shifting Power in the Food System](#), Krystal Oriadha, National Farm to School Network Community Gathering, June 23, 2021

[Growing Racial Equity & Food Justice With School Gardens](#), Helen Dombalis, Betti Wiggins, and Dorothy Grady-Scarborough, National Farm to School Network Coffee Chat, April 20, 2021

[A Practitioner's Guide for Advancing Health Equity](#), CDC

FARM-TO-SCHOOL RESOURCES

[Farm to School Equity Trainings](#), Center for Environmental Farming Systems, North Carolina

[National Farm to School Network](#)

[National Black Farmers Association](#)

[Black Farmers Directory](#)

[Virginia Farm to School Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026](#)

[VDOE Virginia Farm To School](#)

[Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger](#)

CULTIVATE IN THE NEWS

Teaching Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with Farm to School

USDA Food and Nutrition Service sent this bulletin at 03/29/2022 08:00 AM EDT



Volume 8, Issue 6, March 2022

Title: Teaching Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with Farm to School



Teaching Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with Farm to School



Charlottesville, Virginia is a foodie town. There are acres of rolling farmland that sell to local gourmet restaurants and weekly farmers' markets overflowing with fresh vegetables, local meat, and delicious pastries. Even with this abundance, Charlottesville struggles with food equity and access. Prior to the increased strain on food access brought on by the COVID-19 crisis,

Virginia's rate of food insecurity was 11%, while in Charlottesville that rate was 17%.

To change that narrative, nonprofit [Cultivate Charlottesville](#), a Fiscal Year 2021 USDA Farm to School Implementation grantee, engages youth and the community in building equitable and sustainable food systems through garden-based experiential learning, growing and sharing healthy food, amplifying community leaders, and advocating for food justice.

[CLICK TO READ THE ENTIRE ARTICLE](#)

At Cultivate Charlottesville we believe that working together to grow gardens, share food and power, and advocate for just systems cultivates a healthy community for all.

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