



Farmer Classroom Visits

The Importance of Farmer Classroom Visits

Farmer classroom visits are an integral and important component of a successful farm to school or farm to preschool program. For many schools and preschools, taking a farm field trip is unrealistic due to regulations and logistics. Bringing the farmer and parts of the farm to the classroom is an effective way to help children connect to local farms. Children come away from farmer classroom visits connected to their community. They form relationships with the people who grow their food and gain a deeper understanding of rural ways of life. Through the hands-on experiences of farmer classroom visits, children explore new ideas, discover their own strengths, and awaken new interests.

Planning Your Classroom Visit

Guided Questions for Planning the Visit

Good communication with the teacher planning the visit is key. Prepare a list of questions to ask when you call or email and be prepared to call several times (teachers are as busy as farmers!).

Initial Questions for the Teacher:

- What in particular could I bring from my farm to show the children? Is there an activity that I could help with and connect to my farm?
- What would you like your students to learn? How can the visit be connected to other things they are learning in class?
- What date or time of year works best for you?

Communicating With Teachers: What to Discuss

Have a thorough phone conversation with the teacher and follow up with an email to make sure communication is clear. Clarify the timeframe and logistics of the visit and how you can work together to make sure the students experience a hands-on activity. Have the discussion well in advance of the classroom visit so that both of you have time to prepare. Laying out expectations and clarifying details will make visit run more smoothly and be more enjoyable for everyone involved. Teachers, like farmers, are busy and often hard to reach by phone. Ask the teacher what the best number to reach them is and when the best times are to call.

It is useful to discuss the following issues with the teacher:

- **Number of students:** Ask how many students are in the class and if there are any students with special needs.



- **Age of students:** Ask the age of the students so that you can prepare appropriate activities for the age or grade level.
- **Rules during the visit:** Are you bringing an animal? Is there anything the children should or should not do when handling the animal? Be sure to share this information ahead of time with the teacher so that he / she can prepare the students.

Potential Topics and Activities for Farmer Classroom Visits

- **Vegetable Tastings:** Bring whole vegetables you grew so that the teacher can wash and prepare them for a snack or tasting to do with the children while you visit. Talk about how you grew the vegetable. Why do you grow that vegetable? Where do you sell it? How much do you sell it for?
- **Market Stand:** Bring 20-30 small portions of whole fruits or vegetables and set up a small "market" table. Give the students paper "market bucks" and let them buy their vegetable from the farmer.
- **See Animals:** Bring one, two or three animals from the farm for the children to see (and touch with good hand washing after!). Be prepared to talk about caring for the animal.
- **See plants in different stages:** Do you have a seed, seedling, plant, and final vegetable that you can share with the children?
- **Garden with the children:** Who better than a farmer to help children garden? Ask the teacher if the school has a school garden. Plan a garden activity that enables you to share your expertise with the children.