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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**ASAP's Growing Minds Publishes New Farm to School Curriculum**

*"I Tried Local..." offers lesson plans and other resources for early care and elementary educators*

**ASHEVILLE, NC (Jan. 18, 2024)**—Growing Minds, the farm to school program within ASAP (Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project), is introducing an immersive curriculum designed around 10 crops grown in North Carolina. *"I Tried Local..." A Toolkit for Engaging Kids with Local Food and Farms* is designed for use in early care and education (ECE) through second grade classrooms across the state. The print toolkit is currently available for free to educators in North Carolina who participate in a virtual training with Growing Minds. A free digital version is available to anyone at [growing-minds.org/publications](http://growing-minds.org/publications).

*"I Tried Local..."* gives educators tools to connect kids with how food is grown and the farmers in their communities who grow it. Each unit includes an overview of a North Carolina-grown crop, lesson plans, recipes, coloring pages, book recommendations, discussion prompts, and a link to the "Meet Your Farmer" video series featuring North Carolina farmers. The toolkit also offers resources for implementing the core elements of farm to school—gardens, classroom cooking and taste tests, farm field trips and farmer visits, and local foods in meals or snacks. *"I Tried Local..."* can be used on its own or as a companion piece to the *Growing Minds Farm to Preschool Toolkit*, which is also available at [growing-minds.org/publications](http://growing-minds.org/publications) in both English and Spanish.

"The mission of the Growing Minds program is to help farm to school and farm to ECE programs thrive by improving systems and building the capacity of educators, nutrition staff, caregivers, and farmers," said Danielle Raucheisen, Growing Minds Program Director. "This new toolkit will engage these leaders so that they, in turn, can inspire the next generation with local food and farms in the classroom, cafeteria, and community."

Children who participate in farm to school activities learn about where food comes from, foster lifelong healthy eating habits, and build connections with their community. Farm to school offers an experiential, holistic approach to engaging students in a wide variety of subjects, including math, science, literacy, art, nutrition, social emotional learning, and cultural awareness.

Growing Minds will offer virtual training to support educators interested in using the toolkit. These sessions will provide an overview of the curriculum components and the opportunity to hear success stories from farm to school champions across the state. The first will be held Feb. 20, from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. [Register via Zoom](#). For future dates, subscribe to the Growing Minds e-newsletter or contact [growingminds@asapconnections.org](mailto:growingminds@asapconnections.org).

*"I Tried Local..."* is made possible in part through support from the North Carolina Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, supported by the N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services with funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service.

*[High-resolution photos [available at the link](#). Contact Sarah Hart at [sarah@asapconnections.org](mailto:sarah@asapconnections.org) for more.]*

**ABOUT ASAP (APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT)**

ASAP's mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. To learn more, visit [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org).

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