

How to make preschool champions through the Whole School Food Approach (WSFA)

The Whole School Food Approach (WSFA) is a transformative method designed to foster a healthy and sustainable food culture within preschools and schools. This evidence-based intervention enhances education, health, promotes sustainability, and reduces inequalities. The WSFA positions preschools as pivotal agents of sustainable food system change.

The WSFA framework for preschools is developed across four key pillars: Policy and leadership; Food and sustainability; Education and learning; Community and partnership. Within each pillar there are criteria on bronze, silver and gold levels that help the preschools to set targets and monitor and evaluate their work. The WSFA concept has been tested by schools and preschools in eighteen European cities and regions.



It is never too early to start working on WSFA in a preschool setting. This fact sheet is focusing on our smallest citizens – babies, toddlers and preschoolers.

The term preschool includes here both daycare, nursery schools and kindergarten for young children between the ages of 0 – 6 years old.

Key Objectives of the WSFA for Preschools

- 1 Promote healthy eating:** Develop policies on food in the preschool to ensure access to nutritious, fresh, and sustainably sourced food tailored to the needs of young children.
- 2 Educational integration:** Incorporate age-appropriate food education into the curriculum, teaching children about food origins, production, and healthy eating habits through play and interactive activities, such as school gardens and kitchen labs.
- 3 Community involvement:** Engage the whole preschool community, including parents, caregivers, teachers/educators, and local food producers, in promoting a sustainable food culture.
- 4 Support vulnerable groups:** Make healthy food accessible to all children, including those from low-income families, ensuring no child is left behind.

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WSFA in Milan, Italy: Inspiring Food Education for the youngest

The SF4C project in Milan has been implemented in nurseries (0-3 years), kindergartens (3-6 years), and primary schools (6-10 years), with age-appropriate methodologies. Promoted by the city of Milan and Milano Ristorazione – the in house service provider of school meals – the project includes several key activities:

- **Educator Training:** Two in-person meetings focused on the school meal program, healthy standards, and tools for promoting food education.
- **School Gardening Workshops:** Conducted by an external NGO, these workshops involved six hours of co-design with educators and six hours of classroom activities with children.
- **Classroom Activities:** Children prepared tables for meals and had mid-morning fruit breaks to promote self-awareness and autonomy. These activities taught them cooperation, table setting, and counting. The fruit breaks introduced new tastes like homemade orange juice, improving their preference for fruits and encouraging them to ask for these at home.
- **Kitchen Visits:** All classes visited the kitchen centre to meet cooks and learn about how the food is prepared and delivered to the schools.
- **Farm-to-School Twinings:** Visits to local farms focused on food production, urban gardening, and animal feeding, with a special emphasis on rice and honey production.

From 2023 to 2025, twenty-one kindergartens and four nursery schools participated. The project has strengthened the cooperation within the administration department and increased the interest on crosscutting issues such as education, food environments and participation. The project has also brought some innovation and changes related to the pedagogical role of food and strengthened the links between kindergartens/nursery schools and families, promoting trustiness and the good examples toward healthy and sustainable diets. Last but not least, the project gave the opportunity to the families to know more about farming and local production in Milan and to get the idea of the importance of the Food Policy strategy of the City.

Further Reading and Resources

[The guideline on how to implement WSFA for babies, toddlers and young children \(0 – 6 years old\).](#)

The guideline above should be seen as a supplement to [the Practical guide How to WSFA.](#)