How to Use Nourish in the Classroom

A plan for one class period, one week, or a full unit, with every tool the curriculum offers.

Introduction

Start Where Your Students Are

Every student eats, so every student already has a food story. Nourish helps them read it: where their food comes from, who grows it, how it reaches them, and what they can do to change the system it belongs to. This guide shows how to fit Nourish into the time you have, whether that is ten minutes or a full unit.

Who This Guide Is For

Classroom teachers of grades 4 through 8, and anyone who teaches about food: garden, farm-to-school, culinary, and 4-H educators, nurses, librarians, and after-school leaders. School nutrition staff and community organizations that bring food programs into schools use Nourish too, and so do high school teachers, often in English, science, social studies, and health classes.

Free to Use

Everything outside the Nourish Store is free. Read any lesson on the web, or download a lesson or a whole unit from its page.

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What Nourish Offers

RESOURCE	WHAT IT IS	WHERE
The curriculum	Fourteen lessons in two units of seven: elementary (grades 4–5) and middle school (grades 6–8). Each lesson takes one to four class periods and is mapped to NGSS, Common Core, C3, and NHES standards.	Teach
Short films	Fifty-two films, one to three minutes each, in six themes. Every film has three discussion questions on its page.	Videos; the Short Films Guide
The film	*Nourish: Food + Community*, the 26-minute PBS special, in four segments.	The Film; the Film Discussion Guide
Visual Glossary	Every vocabulary term the lessons teach, each with a photograph, ready to show as a slide.	Teach
Standards Map and Scope and Sequence	Every standard the lessons meet, filtered by subject and grade, and where each lesson sits from kindergarten to graduation.	Teach
Quizzes	Four quizzes of ten questions, about four minutes each.	Explore
Food System Map	Twenty-five topics in two domains and five systems, showing how soil, water, climate, health, and economics connect.	Explore
Exhibits	Maps, charts, a timeline, and a working model of a regenerative farm, each readable in five minutes or teachable in an hour.	Explore
Perspectives	Conversations with farmers, cooks, doctors, writers, teachers, and organizers, in their own words.	Explore
Act	Six themes of action, from something to do tonight to something bigger.	Act

Plan by the Time You Have

Ten Minutes

- Show one short film and pose one of its three questions. Ask students to write or turn and talk.
- Open a class with a Visual Glossary term as the word of the day.
- Warm up with a few questions from a Nourish quiz, then reveal the answers together.

One Class Period

- Show *Nourish: Food + Community* (26 minutes) and discuss it with the Film Discussion Guide.
- Show two or three short films from one theme, such as Farm to Fork or Food and Health, and compare what each speaker says.
- Read one exhibit as a class, such as the Cod Catch chart, and hold a short data talk: What do you notice? What do you wonder?

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One Week

Choose two or three lessons that fit together. For example:

	GRADES 4–5	GRADES 6–8
Where food comes from	Lesson 1, The Story of Food, and Lesson 2, Seasonal, Local Food (four periods)	Lesson 1, The Story of Food, and Lesson 5, Know Your Farmer (three periods)
Food and culture	Lesson 3, Food Traditions, with a family interview	Lesson 3, Food Traditions, with a family interview
Food and data	Lesson 4, Food Waste, with a cafeteria audit	Lesson 4, Food Data Talks

Open the week with the film or a short film, and close it by asking each student to choose one action from the Act themes.

A Full Unit

Teach all seven lessons in order. The elementary unit runs about sixteen class periods, plus a week of data collection, and ends with a Food System Expo for families and other classes. The middle school unit runs about fifteen periods and ends with Food System Action Projects that students plan and carry out. Launch the unit with the film, and return to its final segment, Be the Difference, as students plan their projects.

All Year

Show a short film each week, and let students keep a food journal of what they notice. The Scope and Sequence shows how the same five questions return at every grade, so colleagues above and below you can build on the same unit.

Go Further

- **Visit.** A farm, a farmers market, or a school or community garden. In the middle school unit, Lesson 5, Know Your Farmer, prepares students to meet one.
- **Read.** Use a Perspectives conversation as a nonfiction text: a farmer, a doctor, or an organizer explaining the food system from where they stand.
- **Research.** Let students choose a topic on the Food System Map and trace its connections to two others.
- **Taste.** Bring in something seasonal and local. A tasting turns a lesson into a memory.
- **Invite families.** The Food Traditions interviews, the Expo, and the free Table Talk game all bring the conversation home.
- **Go school-wide.** Share student projects at an assembly or a family night, and invite your cafeteria, garden, and wellness teams.

Across Subjects

Nourish lessons are written to meet standards in four subjects at once. Use the Standards Map to find the lessons for yours.

- **Science:** ecosystems, matter and energy, soil, and human impact (NGSS).

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- **English language arts:** informational reading, research, argument, and presentation (Common Core).
- **Social studies:** geography, economics, and civic action (C3).
- **Health:** nutrition, decision making, and advocacy (NHES).

Teaching Tips

- **Begin with what students ate.** A label, a lunch, or a family recipe is a better start than a statistic.
- **Ask, don't tell.** The lessons are built around questions; let students find the connections.
- **Make it local.** What grows near your school, and in which season? Who grows it?
- **Let students lead the action.** A small action they choose matters more than a big one they were given.
- **Be sensitive to different home lives.** Food is personal. Invite stories, and let each student choose what to share about their family's food.

Share Your Story

Taught a lesson that landed? Tell us what happened. Stories from classrooms like yours appear in Nourish in Action, where other teachers can picture doing it themselves.

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