



— What is Pilot Light? —

Pilot Light is a Food Education nonprofit founded in 2010 by Jason Hammel, Paul Kahan, Matthias Merges, and Justin Large, four award-winning Chicago chefs who were inspired by Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Campaign. Pilot Light believes that all students deserve access to Food Education that celebrates the central role food plays in their lives and prepares them to become knowledgeable and engaged changemakers for a better food system.

Through our first-of-their-kind Food Education Standards and educator-centric approach to classroom learning, we give educators the tools they need to bring customizable lessons and experiences into their classrooms.

— What is Food Education and Why Does it Matter? —

Food touches every part of our lives, yet our relationship with it is rarely part of a standard PreK-12 education. Food Education looks to change that through a comprehensive educational approach that brings the power of food into the classroom, exploring it through a social, cultural, nutritional, and environmental lens. Food Education is not about teaching “right” or “wrong” when it comes to how food fits into our lives, and we fit into the food system; it's teaching “why” and “how.” If we want the next generations to be thoughtful about the challenges and opportunities we face within our food system, Food Education should be as integrated a part of our PreK-12 curriculum as computer science or media literacy.

— How is Pilot Light's Food Education Model Different? —

Pilot Light knows that if we want to see real progress toward widespread Food Education, we have to make it simple to implement. That means removing as many of the barriers that educators face as possible through adaptable standards and easily accessible resources. Pilot Light is an educator-centric approach to give them the tools they need to bring Food Education into their classrooms and find community partners to enhance their students' learning.

Pilot Light's first-of-their-kind Food Education Standards provide teachers with comprehensive and customizable building blocks to create lessons and activities that fit both their class and existing state and district education standards. These standards were developed for educators by a multidisciplinary team of experts, including teachers, school administrators, chefs, farmers, medical experts, and psychologists, who all used their specialties to shape the content.



Its Food Education Center™ (FEC) offers a free digital hub of over 200 easy-to-access lesson plans designed for all grade levels that can be integrated across multiple subjects and adapted by teachers to best fit their unique classroom. Beyond just learning at school, Pilot Light's materials can be accessed by students asynchronously and include resources designed specifically to do alongside their families, bringing the Food Education Standards into their very own kitchens and grounding them in students' lives.

— Where Does Pilot Light Operate? —

Pilot Light is active in 26 states and nationwide through its online Food Education Center™. The organization is headquartered in Chicago, where it was founded, and is launching its first formalized chapter in New York City this fall.

— Is This a Health and Nutrition Program? —

Pilot Light's model seeks to celebrate the central role food plays in students' lives and prepares them to become knowledgeable and engaged changemakers for a better food system. It wants students to come away with the tools they need to be inquisitive and engaged in their relationship with food. This isn't about teaching "right" or "wrong"; it's teaching "why" and "how."

We believe that health is determined by a variety of factors: social, emotional, environmental, biological/heredity, and more. We believe that individual foods do not hold moral value, and that health cannot be easily defined by metrics like weight, BMI, or individual food choices. We are rooted in understanding the impact of dietary patterns on health and disease alongside food's relevance to other areas of life.

— Can Anyone Access Pilot Light's Lessons? —

Pilot Light provides resources and lessons that are completely free and accessible 24/7 through their FEC. It features over 200 easy-to-access lesson plans designed for all grade levels that can be integrated across multiple subjects and adapted by teachers to best fit their unique classroom.

The FEC also includes recipes, videos, and other resources for parents and students, allowing them to interact with Food Education in the kitchen, at the dinner table, or during weekends.



— Pilot Light has already been partnering with the New York Public School District. What's different about this announcement? —

For the last four years, Pilot Light has been one of just two Food Education organizations with a formal partnership with New York City Public Schools, working with over 100 educators across the city to help them implement Food Education in their classrooms and connect them with community partners. This chapter launch, the first formalized Pilot Light chapter outside its Chicago headquarters, allows Pilot Light to build on this success to reach even more students.

It comes as NYC Public Schools begins to roll out its own Food Education standards, modeled after Pilot Light's Food Standards. By using Pilot Light's first-of-their-kind standards as pillars, NYC was able to design its own to best fit the unique needs of its schools.

This is a great model that can be replicated around the country.

— Who would be available for interviews? —

If you would like to discuss Pilot Light, its programs, and its impact, we'd be happy to connect you with Pilot Light staff, partners, or educators.