

Farm to School: Stories from the Field

In Greater Vancouver



April 2013

FARM to SCHOOL DIG IN!

Farm to School Greater Vancouver is running in six schools in 2012-13 and four new schools have embarked on their planning process.

The goal of Farm to School BC is:

To ensure children have access to fresh, local, nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate foods while at school. Farm to School programs aim to improve student nutrition, and to provide students with educational opportunities about foods and the local food system, while supporting local farmers and the local food economy

Program objectives are....

- To increase fruit and vegetable consumption amongst participating school-aged children.
- To increase student knowledge about the local food system, local foods, and nutritional health.
- To enhance student skills in the areas of food production, processing and serving.
- To strengthen local farm, school, and aboriginal partnerships.
- To strengthen the local food economy.
- To develop promising practice models that are self financing, eco friendly and have the potential to be implemented elsewhere.

Thank you to the Public Health Association of BC for their administrative support.

Thank you to Vancity enviroFund for the financial support of this initiative.

Vancity



Public Health
Association of BC

Aldergrove Community Secondary School

Aldergrove Community Secondary School provides a hot lunch every day for \$1 to \$5 that includes local produce from the school garden when possible. Partners supporting the program include Fraser Health Community Health Specialist, Langley Environment Partners Society, Glorious Organics Farm, Krause Farms, Kwantlen Polytechnic University and the Township of Langley. Grade 11/12 Sustainable Resource Teacher leads the initiative at the school in terms of student involvement, links to curriculum, overseeing the garden growing, maintenance etc.

What We Provide

We provide 5% local produce from farms, up to 70% produce from BC, and 25% from outside of BC.

Successes

ACSS Farm to School has created a wonderful collaborative partnership which has been its greatest success in the growth and development of this project. Cafeteria staff is flexible and adaptable, willing to utilize local and school-grown produce into recipes. "Farm to School has increased our knowledge about growing, eating more vegetables, and post secondary farm to school career opportunities."

Highlights

"We took some of our work experience students out to the school garden to pick some fresh herbs and lettuce. This allowed them to taste what fresh herbs are like and one commented that she had no idea that this is what parsley looked like. When we went back to the kitchen, we and the students used the fresh produce in chocolate beet cakes and zucchini loaves. The students really enjoyed the fact that they harvested the product and then used it. They couldn't believe these cakes were made with vegetables... and how good they tasted." Interest from other schools in Langley has increased and led to a Farm to School Presentation at a recent Professional Day to 19 teachers.

Challenges

- Not having a coordinator for the program
- Getting local produce at a reasonable cost
- Funds to look after the maintenance of the green house, and for other expenses.

Contact John Pusic, Principal



Bowen Island Community School

Bowen Island Community School provides a hot lunch with fruits and vegetables and a fruit and vegetable recess snack once a week for \$7. We have had many garden and healthy eating activities such as visits to local orchards, farm visits, community events (Applefest, Farmers' markets, and community seed exchange and sale) and visits from farmers/growers in classes. The students have had a lot of opportunities to learn about nutrition through seed harvesting, garden tasting, making jam, winter greens, zucchini cake, and soup from vegetables from the school garden. Currently we are developing a new partnership with the Heritage Preservation Association to expand our capacity for food for the school in their already established organic garden.

What We Provide

We provide 5-10% of our produce from farms, 85-90% from BC, and 0-5% from outside of BC.

Successes

Connecting students and the curriculum with nutrition classroom activities and agricultural activities at local farms, gardens, and the school garden has been a great success. Community engagement has been growing and local growers are gaining more recognition including having feature pages in the upcoming Bowen Phonebook.

Highlights

On the first week back to school, the students harvested and tasted purple carrots, beets, lettuce and beans for the Farmers' Market. They observed what lettuce looks like when it's going to seed and collected chervil, kale, cabbage, and bee balm seeds.

Challenges

- Keeping up with the paperwork, communication, information, and changes to the F2S funding parameters.
- The time it takes to align with local growers to figure out their capacity and our needs in alignment with the BC growing cycle.
- Not receiving full funding but expected to meet full set of goals for the program.

Contact Sarah Haxby, Community School Coordinator



Churchill Secondary

Churchill Secondary offers a hot lunch five times a week for \$5.25. We have Foods/Cooking Labs for grades 8-12 and will be renewing the School Garden in the spring.

Successes

Farm to School has allowed us to cook and serve fresh vegetables from the garden and to have a greater variety of local products available. Coordinators have been patient and persistent with school staff and the supervisor has received good and timely information about the program.

Highlights

Chef Ian Lai came by to show the ladies in the kitchen how to make use of the vegetables from the garden.

Challenges

- Menu planning using school garden produce
- Educating staff on the program and how to use the produce in more creative ways
- Growing season is not synchronized with school calendar
- Costs tend to be a bit higher which affects the cost of delivered foods.

Contact Pauline Tinka and François Clark, Teachers



Graham Bruce Elementary

Graham Bruce Elementary offers a soup and salad bar once a week, \$3.50 for students, and \$5 for adults. Students have participated in food-related activities during lunch time.

Successes

Students have been enthusiastic about soup and salad and show positive feedback in regards to their experience of new lunch meals. Thus far, salad bars have always run smoothly.

Highlights

This past fall, our local secondary school's Culinary Arts Program was unable to provide salad bar lunches for the elementary school for a few months. However, as soon as we were able to get the salad bar up and running we managed to spark enthusiasm within the school very quickly. The first day the salad bar was back in action, children crowded in for their delicious meals and one child even skipped in to the room exclaiming, "Welcome back salad bar!"

It is amazing to see the efforts that the salad bar has put in to this school and the great response we have had back. The implementation of the salad bar began with weary children placing a single carrot on their plate but with our consistent efforts, within three months the children were loading their plates and coming back for seconds. It is amazing to see the shift from non interested children to students impatiently waiting for the day that salad bar comes back.

Challenges

- Getting the word out to parents, teachers, and students.
- Organizing a time for volunteers with their availability.
- Communication between volunteers, schools, staff, etc.

Contact Deirdre Buryk, Program Coordinator



Grandview Elementary School

Grandview Elementary School offers a hot lunch five times a week and salad bar once a week. Our students regularly graze directly from plants growing in the school food garden and prepared fresh foods during their scheduled garden times. Many farmers are supplying food to the school: SOLE Food; Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society; and Farmers' Markets. We've visited the Fresh Roots Urban Farm with 9 classes of students (K-7) and are regularly having breakfast clubs, healthy fresh food snacks during the day, afterschool programs that provides a not meal, food prep workshops, school garden program that involves all of the 9 classes and an Earth School Committee that is currently drafting the healthy food school policy and discusses food and nutrition. We are also part of BC School Fruit & Vegetable Nutritional Program that Provides BC farm direct produce throughout the year.

What We Provide

During the growing season we provide up to 100% directly from farms and our own garden. While in the winter months we may only have 5% directly from farms, 25% from BC and up to 70% from outside BC.

Successes

Farm to School has helped create and nurture relationships between participating schools, farmers, and chefs. The funding that we have received has been fundamental in getting our salad program going and in providing opportunities to do school to farm fieldtrips.

Highlights

Our whole school has been able to participate in the Farm to School fieldtrip. All classes participate regularly in garden-based activities throughout the school year, maintaining their own food garden plot and are engaged in full-cycle food production from growing food, harvesting, to composting. We have three bin composters, as well as an Earth tub. Our students learn about native plants and their uses in our Ethnobotanical Garden. The students gain knowledge and appreciation of fresh, healthy and local foods along with knowledge and skills to grow the food and prepare it.

Challenges

Sourcing fresh local produce can be difficult. Having a list of local farmers or a school buying club can be helpful to purchase foods at wholesale prices.

Contact Zarah Martz, Garden Program Coordinator



Sexsmith Elementary School

At Sexsmith Elementary, students prepare a hot lunch once a week for \$4.00 and 180 students participate. This year we had 30-40 volunteers supporting farm to school. Students have been involved in a variety of food and nutrition activities including cooking lunch once per week, classroom teaching, growing herbs and vegetables both in our outside planter boxes and in our inside lighted frame, nature crafts and running pocket markets. We're planning to have farm field trips in the spring.

What We Provide

Up to 10% of the produce we use comes from Farmers Markets, 60% from BC, and up to 30% from outside of BC.

Successes

With this program, students have become very enthusiastic about growing and cooking their own veggies. Parents wholeheartedly support the cooking and gardening program, and students are trying a larger variety of foods.

Highlights

On one of the hot lunch days, a grade 7 student asked for one of the lunch recipes because he wanted to cook it at home. One of the grade 1 students said "This is making me healthy" while he pulled up his sleeve and flexed his muscle.

Challenges

- Finding a farmer who is willing and able to supply us with our lunch program purchases
- Reliability of parent volunteers
- Recipes which can be prepared in 1 hour that children like to eat

Contact Cheryl Davison, Resource Teacher

