

How various farm-to-school programs got their start

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Here's how farm-to-school and nutrition programs across the country got their start:

The Edible Schoolyard -- Seasonal food guru Alice Waters pioneered a one-acre organic garden and educational kitchen at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Berkeley. The non-profit program has its own gardening and culinary teachers. Significant funding comes from Waters' Chez Panisse Foundation, which has also helped eliminate 95 percent of the processed food in the district's school lunch program.

On the Web: school lunchinitiative.org/about/index.shtml; edibleschoolyard.org/

- **Farmers market salad bars** -- California's Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District has salad bars at each of its 15 schools that feature products purchased at local farmers markets, which enjoy a year-round growing season. Initial grant money, city funding and parent labor have helped sustain the program. The school district, which uses its own trucks to pick up the produce, also invested in additional staff to coordinate and prep the salad bars.

On the Web: foodsecurity.org/f2s_case_santamonica-malibu.pdf

- **New North Florida Marketing Cooperative** -- A group of farmers who began selling to a handful of schools in one county now supply 300,000 students in eight school districts. They focus on a handful of seasonal items, such as sweet potatoes and collards. Grant funding helped purchase refrigerated trucks and storage facilities. Farmers have the ability to wash, chop and bag their products, which requires no extra work on the part of school kitchens.

On the Web: foodsecurity.org/f2s_case_florida.pdf

- **Santa Fe Farm-to-School** -- A federal community food project grant six years ago gave the school district \$10,000 each year for three years to purchase salad mix, carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes and other produce from New Mexico farmers. The state Department of Agriculture funded a half-time coordinator position. The district found money in its budget to continue the program after the grant ran out.

On the Web: farmtotable.info/

- **Portland's Abernethy Scratch Kitchen** -- A Portland elementary school was retrofitted with an old six-burner commercial range and other kitchen equipment to make home-style school lunches from scratch. A parent who was a classically trained chef was instrumental in launching the program. With an outdoor "Garden of Wonders" and classroom dedicated to the food program, students learn about seasonal vegetables and how to prepare them. Nearly all of the cafeteria's food comes from local providers. Labor costs have been significant, and the program has received numerous grants. But the amount of fruits and vegetables kids chose increased in the first year -- from 1.24 servings to 2.26 servings.

On the Web: gardenofwonders.org/; www.ecotrust.org/farmtoschool/Abernethy_Kitchen_Assessment.pdf

- **Eat Better, Feel Better in Seattle** -- In 2005-06, a foundation grant helped pay for staff at T.T. Minor Elementary to integrate nutrition into everything from math classes to vocabulary lessons on how sushi tastes.

Until this year, funding through the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program enabled the school to provide healthy snacks and expose students to unfamiliar foods like pomegranates or persimmons. Obtaining local produce was a logistical challenge. A federal nutrition education grant, with numerous partners, has expanded the model to four new schools. Emerson Elementary now receives the additional funding for fresh fruit and vegetables.

On the Web: http://depts.washington.edu/uwecor/docs/eat_better_exec.pdf

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