



# Learnings from the Field



## DC Public School District

Washington, DC

**District Enrollment:**

43,815

**Production Model:** Contracted

Food Service Management  
Company

**District F/R:** 44.1%

**School Year Implemented:** 2017

**District ADP:** 63.4%

**No. of Grants Awarded:** 4

# Kimball Elementary School

**Age Group:** K-5

**School Size:** Medium (301-900)

**School Environment:** Urban

**School F/R:** 100%

**School ADP:** 91.31%

# Ludlow-Taylor Elementary School

**Age Group:** K-5

**School Size:** Medium (301-900)

**School Environment:** Urban

**School F/R:** 100%

**School ADP:** 76.86%

# Simon Elementary School

**Age Group:** K-5

**School Size:** Small (Under 300)

**School Environment:** Urban

**School F/R:** 100%

**School ADP:** 94.63%

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# Tyler Elementary School

**Age Group:** K-5

**School Size:** Medium (301-900)

**School Environment:** Urban

**School F/R:** 100%

**School ADP:** 90%

## Project Description

DC Public School District has been fortunate to work in partnership with FRESHFARM to incorporate a holistic healthy food education model through a program called FoodPrints. At thirteen elementary schools in the district, FoodPrints programming engages students in lessons on gardening, cooking, nutrition, and communal dining. The program starts in the garden, where students learn about growing their own food. Next, they head to the kitchen with produce from the garden and prepare a recipe together. The district's Project Produce grant has helped supplement produce for these recipes and taste tests at all of the schools. After preparing the food, the FoodPrints teacher conducts a lesson that connects their gardening and cooking experiences to the science, math or language arts curriculum at each grade level.

The final stage of the FoodPrints program is communal dining. The students sit together and enjoy the food they have helped grow, harvest, and prepare. They are encouraged through this experience to have a positive attitude

about the food. Beth Bacon of FRESHFARM explains, “It is a shared activity and an exercise in expressing positive reactions to the shared food. We ask them to let their tablemates enjoy their meal. This creates different food attitudes.” One teacher refers to this as “don’t yuck my yum.”



This multi-tiered approach to incorporating fresh, healthy food into students’ lives has helped create sustainable commitments to healthy eating habits. Students and families have become invested in the food system in a range of capacities, therefore, creating a greater level of understanding and comfort. Growing kale in the garden, then preparing a kale salad in the kitchen, learning about its nutritional properties in the classroom, and enjoying it with their peers, creates several opportunities for students to engage with and familiarize themselves with what may be an unfamiliar vegetable.

At two of the Project Produce schools, students had additional opportunities

to eat seasonal produce in scratch-cooked FoodPrints recipes in the school's lunchroom. In a pilot partnership between FoodPrints and the school district's Office of Food and Nutrition Services, cafeteria staff were trained to prepare FoodPrints recipes and served them weekly in the lunchroom. This helped bring the Project Produce program full circle.

Ms. Bacon explains, "The importance of incorporating opportunities is to not just eat the produce, but to learn where it comes from, to see it growing, and to have a hands-on experience preparing it. When kids know where the peppers come from and how to prepare them, they are more likely to be receptive and enjoy what they are eating." In this way, the FoodPrints program has helped to change students' perspective on what they are putting in their body.

## Successes

- Students loved FoodPrints classes and were very open to trying new foods.
- Cafeteria staff learned how to prep fresh new recipes through FoodPrints programming.
- Fresh produce purchasing increased in the district.
- Project Produce funding allowed more students at high-needs partner schools to prepare and eat more fresh produce.

# Challenges

- Working with new partner schools to schedule FoodPrints classes monthly at all participating grade levels.
- Making meaningful connections between the FoodPrints program and cafeteria staff as they learn how to prepare and serve FoodPrints recipes in the lunchroom.
- Tracking Project Produce purchases in smaller quantities for FoodPrints classes across four schools.

For resources related to Project Produce, visit [www.thelunchbox.org](http://www.thelunchbox.org).

