



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Farm to School Programs Thriving in Vermont

For Immediate Release: Oct. 31, 2012
Media Contact: Communication Office
Vermont Department of Health
802-863-7281

BURLINGTON – Ferrisburgh Central School has a “how much does our butternut squash weigh?” contest. Thetford Elementary School cultivated a blueberry hill. In White River Junction, older students mentor Kindergartners as they navigate their way through the salad bar line.

October is National Farm to School Month and Vermont, the first state in the nation to support Farm to School legislation, has been leading the way in bringing nutritious, locally grown foods into the school system.

Thetford Elementary School has three “themed” garden beds where fresh greens are harvested throughout the summer, bounty from the garden is frozen to supply the cafeteria the entire school year, and seeds are cared for by students in classrooms during the winter months.

“I am continually impressed with the creative ways that schools and communities have grown their Farm to School programs,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “Involving students in their own nutrition – following the foods they eat from the farm or garden to the kitchen or cafeteria, and to their own plates – is much more apt to foster healthy eating habits and healthy weight than all the educational campaigns in the world.”

Farm to School was developed in 2006 as a partnership among the Vermont Department of Health, the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Department of Education. Changes within the school can be sweeping, such as the comprehensive wellness policy within the Burlington School district that specifically includes the development and expansion of Farm to School initiatives.

Schools have offered farm field trips. Students interview farmers and research the history or science behind a freshly grown food. Produce is routinely harvested and prepared at schools, with taste tests conducted at lunchtime. Farm to School schools have started gardens, green houses and composting programs, and some schools grow so much food that they share it with neighboring schools.

Peter Allison, director of the Upper Valley Farm to School Network, which is funded in part by a grant from the Health Department, says that more than 20 schools in Windsor County have developed Farm to School initiatives since 2008.

“There are a variety of ways these program start. In some cases we see teachers who want to connect food and farm teams with the curriculum, in some cases it is a food service person who is also a farmer, in some cases it is a local farmer who wants to connect with the local school and community,” Allison said.

Reading Elementary School started with taste tests of freshly grown produce in their school and they now grow enough to participate in the annual event “Trek to Taste,” a celebration of local foods in Woodstock that draws nearly 1,000 people.

“Improved nutrition in the schools is a key component of improving the overall health of the entire community,” said Breena Holmes, MD, director of maternal and child health for the Health Department. “Farm to School has done this remarkably well and in many ways has exceeded everyone’s expectations.”

For health information and alerts visit Healthvermont.gov, follow us on [Twitter](#) and join us on [Facebook](#).

###

Vermont Department of Health | 108 Cherry Street | Burlington, VT 05402
Voice: 802-863-7200 | In Vermont 800-464-4343 | Fax: 802-865-7754 | TTY/TDD: Dial 711 first
Health Care Provider Infectious Disease Reporting: 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374

