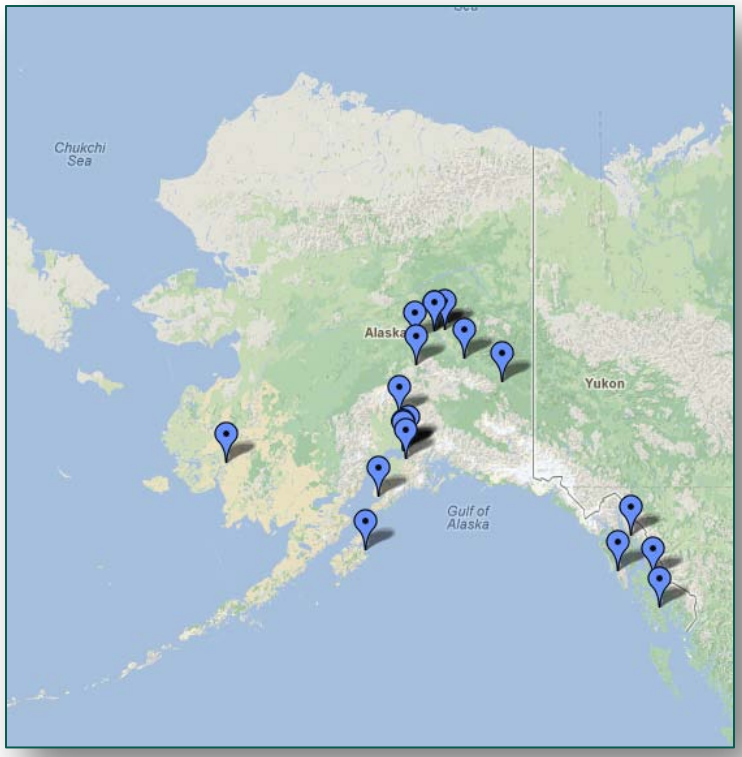
Alaska Farm to School Mini-Grant Projects

2012-2013

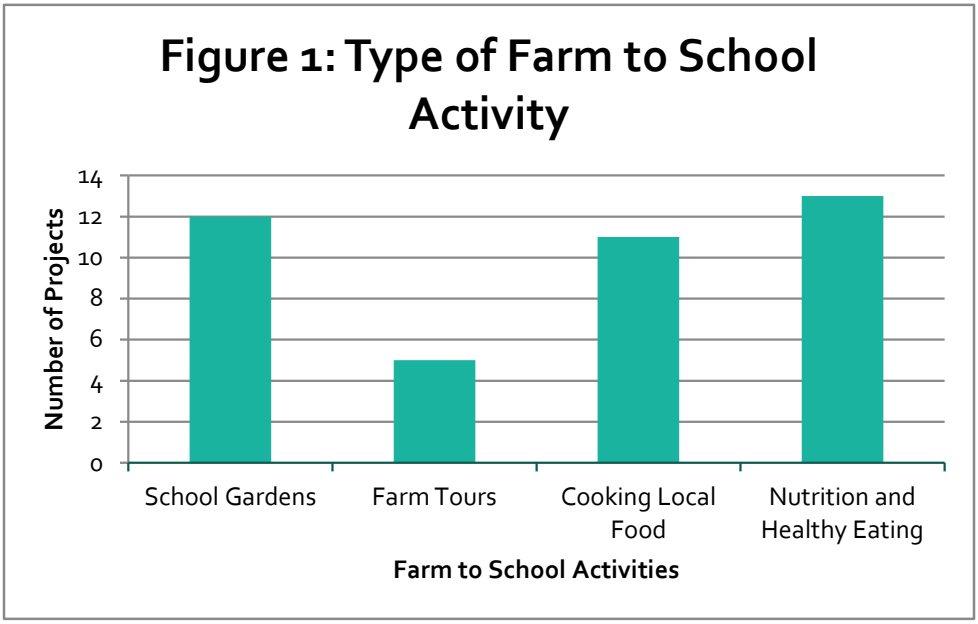
The Alaska Farm to School (FTS) program works to educate our youth about where food comes from and how their food choices affect: their bodies, the environment, and the community. The Division of Agriculture awarded grants for FTS projects that would promote activities connecting students, teachers, and school food service staff with product grown and produced in Alaska. Applicants were required to have a project coordinator, a representative from the school food service, and a community expert, specialist, or mentor.

The 2012 Farm to School mini-grants were awarded to 18 projects that spanned the state from Thorne Bay to Bethel. The projects involved 35 schools from 17 different communities. The projects involved 1,400 students directly and over 3,000 indirectly. Funding from the mini-grants came jointly from the Alaska Farm to School Program and the State of Alaska Obesity Prevention and Control Program. The projects were recognized in 9 different newspaper articles, 51 newsletters, 47 school announcements and multiple mentions on the radio and social media. The following is a listing of the funded applicants and a description of their work.

Geographic location of communities funded by the 2012 Farm To School mini-grants



As seen in Figure 1 most common projects were about nutrition and healthy eating, school gardens, and cooking with local food! The top food items students either learned about or grew were potatoes, carrots, lettuce, broccoli, kale, and beets.



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Fairbanks: Summer Food Service Garden

Project Overview: Joel's Place is a faith based youth center that provides a positive environment for youth aged 10-20 to come and hang out or develop various skills. [They run an after school food service program to serve youth meals after school hours.] This year alone they served over 2515 meals and the program continues to grow. This project aims to (1) supplement the summer food service program with fresh fruits and vegetables from their garden, (2) feed youth who might not have enough food during the summer months due to lack of accessibility and reduced school lunches, (3) teach youth in the program how to plant and grow a garden, and (4) use the garden, vegetables, etc. to teach good nutrition choices.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 25

Additional Students Reached: 262

Project Type: Cooking Local Food, School Gardens, and Nutrition & Healthy Eating.

Pounds of Product Produced: 150 lbs. of vegetables.

Media Hits: N/A

Project Results: The garden exceeded expectations; [the food produced was a much higher quantity than expected and youth participation was also higher.] The youth were engaged by learning how plants grow and how to grow a garden for themselves. Most meals during the summer at Joel's Place were supplemented with fresh vegetables and many were preserved for use in the winter months. The project has been incredibly successful and there has been a lot of pride taken in the program. There have been many compliments as well as impressed parents and visitors.

Project Conclusion: The community at Joel's Place loves the new garden and was tremendously supportive along the way. Though the project started with very little in way of supplies, funding, and interest the support from coworkers snowballed and by the end of the season there were many people who became excited about what was happening. The best moments of the project included when the youth took initiative and ownership of the garden and produce; like a youth at dinner asking, "Are these OUR carrots?" As for next year, expansion and modification of the nutrition portion of the program is necessary, possibly by having classes in the garden and making the link clearer. Overall the results were positive and the project earned 'high marks' for food production, positive nutritional benefits, and youth participation/education.

Juneau: Farm to School Project

Project Overview: Johnson Youth Center (JYC) is a state operated medium security facility for teens from around the state. Some residents of the facility are considered long term which is a 12-24 month stay. The school program within JYC is run by the Juneau School District. JYC began a garden in 2005 but expanded production with a second crop of seedlings in a second rack. This projects main goal is for the students to understand the science behind properly preserving garden produce and/or meat/fish for long term storage and how to use the preserved food in a nutritious diet.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 10

Additional Students Reached: 15 (1 school)

Project Type: Cooking Local Food and School Gardens.

Pounds of Product Produced: 200 lbs. produce including; potatoes, carrots, squash, lettuce, broccoli, beets, radish, and kale.

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 3 and school announcements – 1.

Project Results: With the money from the grant JYC was able to purchase the equipment needed to teach food preservation including water bath and pressure canning methods as well as jelly making. The project was also able to purchase a stand and lights which increased production by creating more space to start seeds in January in the classroom. The students were particularly excited about their veggie-caribou soup; everything in the pot except water and spices were from their own efforts. Staff and visitors alike are very excited about the gardening efforts; students were proud that the last of the year's bounty was donated to a local food bank.

Project Conclusion: The expectations of the first year of this project were definitely met and more production is anticipated for the coming years since the equipment is already in place. [To further the program next year the goal will be to work with the chef and have canning start earlier while using the items canned in later teaching lessons and dishes.] The students are eager to participate and being teen boys they are at the peak of their eating ability and enjoy cooking. The project has had great impact and has even become an example for other 'start up' gardens in the area.

Petersburg: Cooking Up Some Fun in the Garden (Projects 2nd year of funding)

Project Overview: This is a continuation of Petersburg School Districts Farm to School project started in 2011-2012. The overarching project goal was to teach students to plant, grow, harvest, and cook vegetables and fresh fruit. The students were taught how food gets to the table, and learned about healthy eating habits and better food choices. [In expanding the project this year will teach students will learn how they can cook and prepare the produce they grow as well as the seafood they catch.] This project will also serve as an outreach to local fisherman to begin a Fish to School component to the districts Farm to School Program.

Project Results: Although there was a major challenge with the initial plan of providing cooking classes to the students the project was still able to instill knowledge of growing food and the opportunity to eat the produce they had grown. The students were interested and excited about seeing product from 'their' garden in the salad bar. Local residents had differing views about the overall plan for this project which created the opportunity to work through some community perspectives.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 200

Additional Students Reached: 200 (from 3 schools)

Project Type: School Garden

Pounds of Product Produced: 100 lbs potatoes, 20 lbs lettuce, 10 lbs peas, 10 lbs onions, 5 lbs herbs, and 1 lb of beets.

Media Hits: SchoolNewsletter - 5

Project Conclusion: The final outcome was completely different than the initial thought but in the end the students did receive the benefit of eating produce that had been grown in the school garden as well as the addition of a salad bar for the school meal program. Gaining the support of every member of the community early on is important for a projects success.

Sitka: Fish to Schools (Projects 2nd year of funding)

Project Overview: The "Local Fish to Sitka Schools" project was coordinated by the Sitka Conservation Society. The Fish to School project goals were to increase and broaden youth understanding of local seafood resources by integrating locally-caught seafood into the school lunch program, introducing 'Stream-to-Plate Curricula', and fostering a connection to the local fishing culture. This year, in addition to these goals the program will also taught students about food-based systems and environmental stewardship as well as create local economic opportunities. Prior to this project, local fish were absent from school lunches, even though Sitka is the ninth largest seafood port in the United States. Through the "Local Fish to Sitka Schools" project, the Sitka school lunch program serves locally harvested fish twice a week.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 200

Additional Students Reached: 1100 (4 schools)

Project Type: Cooking Local Food and Nutrition & Healthy Eating

Pounds of Product Bought/Donated: Over 1000 lbs of fish

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 2, Newspaper – 2, school announcements – 2, on the radio and blog posts (http://blogs.worldwatch.org/u-s-food-day-25-innovations-in-25-u-s-states/)

Project Results: The program was successful for its 2nd year and was able to increase its reach by adding Pacific High School and Mt. Edgecumbe High School increasing the total number of students served by 400. The project also developed a new system for fish procurement through direct fishermen donations, increasing the resilience of the project. The 'Stream-to-Plate-Curriculum' portion of the project was very successful this year with the third grade receiving praise from the teachers for the engaging, hands-on, and community minded approach of the lessons.
Some statistics from the curriculum include;

- Over 16% of students who claimed to not like fish before the program now enjoy it
- 45 out of 69 students have tried local fish lunches, showing a 9% increase after the educational component.
- 90% of students show an increase in their understanding of nutrition (why fish is good for you)
- And 37% showed an increase in understanding the benefits of eating locally.

While there have been some challenges including a decrease in participation rates at some schools the results of the project are positive in several ways.

Project Conclusion: Overall, the project and its success are embraced by the community. Everyone is proud of the fact that local fish is served in the schools. Although participation rates at Keet and Blatchley schools have dropped, these decreases are considered to be consequences of the "normal" ebb and flow of student preference. To battle these decreases the project will continue educating all students on the benefits of eating local fish and increase outreach efforts to educate parents and community members on the value of these locally-sourced lunches.

Sitka Fish to School Pictures:

Above – students in a cooking class focusing techniques using local products.

Left– Students in the Sitka Schools love local fish lunch!

Nenana: Kitchen Garden Project (Projects 2nd year of funding)

Project Overview: The Nenana Kitchen Garden Project planted a plot with potatoes, cabbage, broccoli, carrots and winter squash. It also established a compost pile using local materials. After harvesting the produce in September, it sponsored a fall workshop on how to make sauerkraut from cabbage. The program developed a sustainable garden for the Nenana City Public Schools that supplements the foods used by the Nenana Schools' food service program. The project also worked to increase youth and community understanding of the food system and encourage better food choices and a preference for locally grown food. In addition, this year the program will work with the Head Start program to start squash family plants as well as have a field trip to Fairbanks to visit the farmers market and other places selling locally grown produce.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 20

Additional Students Reached: 80 (1 school)

Project Type: School Garden

Pounds of Product Produced: 6 lbs cabbage, 16.5 lbs bok choy, 14 lbs chard, 10 lbs broccoli, 5 lbs beets, 25 lbs turnips, 198 lbs pumpkins/squash, 8 lbs greens, 250 lbs potatoes, and 25 lbs carrots.

Media Hits: N/A

Project Results: This project, after two years of funding, is making impressive strides to sustainability. The second year of funding only required half as much as the first and after this year the projects has even made a small profit that will be reinvested into the garden next summer. The Nenana Kitchen Garden doubled in space this year and expanded their selection of vegetables to include bok choy, chard, beets, and turnips. The Head Start program helped start the squashes and pumpkins in May for a fun agriculture lesson. Produce that was grown was sold in a new Saturday market in Nenana and also the school lunch program. Potatoes and Pumpkin/Squash had the largest yield. The school lunch program was able to purchase nearly $800 worth of product to serve in the meals.

Project Conclusion: The garden has obviously been a great success. The kids really seemed to enjoy the experiences of managing a garden. However for the future the project will increase its outreach and try to get other organizations involved to make this a true 'community' project. Also, with feedback from the school food staff we will devote more space in the garden to the "greens" and "oranges" required for the menu and less to the easily grown potatoes that aren't needed and difficult to store.

Healy: Harvesting Alaska Farm to Plate

Project Overview: [Like many Alaskan villages fresh produce is not usually available.] The closest market place is over 100 miles away from Healy. This project provided educational experiences to promote a deeper understanding of local food systems. This project aimed to (1) provide students with the knowledge, through hands on experience, about Alaskan agriculture and how it moves from the farm to their plate, (2) teach the students about the health benefits of fresh food, and (3) teach the students to identify or describe which local produce is available in Alaska.

Project Results: The project exceeded expectations and demonstrated the incredible interest both students and the local community have in Alaska Grown foods. Despite inclement weather the night before the farm visit students were able to see a variety of produce in the ground and were able to harvest peas and carrots. To further the experience students were able to taste test several more varieties during the 'market'. A pseudo market was held during school hours where students selected a healthy snack for their class. Before and after the farm visit the students were asked to describe what a meal would look like if distribution was cut off from out of state. The results showed that students had a much larger understanding of the diversity of food in the "Alaskan" meal; which included vegetables, grain, dairy and meat as well as wild game, fish and berries that were used to describe the meal before the farm visit.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 89

Additional Students Reached: 30 (1 school)

Project Type: Farm Tours, Cooking Local Food, and Nutrition & Healthy Eating.

Pounds of Product Purchased : 2 lbs beets, 10 lbs lettuce, 2 lbs brussel sprouts, 20 lbs carrots, 10 lbs potatoes, 10 lbs onions, 10 lbs zucchini, 9 lbs kale, 1 lb turnips, 6 lbs kohlrabi, in addition to a dozen eggs and 16 oz. of honey.

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 12, Newspaper – 1, and school announcements - 2

Project Conclusion: While students had a good idea of what could be found in Alaska before the trip their knowledge of local food was greatly expanded as a result of their farm visit. Families were impressed by their children's enthusiasm for vegetables and the school staff received a lot of praise from students and parents for making the event happen.

Bethel: Farm to School Project

Project Overview: Bethel Alternative Boarding School (BABS) provides a chance for students who have not experienced success with traditional education options. Many students come from surrounding villages and have no experience with local farming. This program will encourage healthy eating by beginning a farm to school program. The goals of the project include; starting the farm to school program, providing education to the students through guest speakers and classroom nutrition activities, and adjusting the school menu to be healthier using local, organic, and nutritious ingredients.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 25

Additional Students Reached: 7 (1 school)

Project Type: School Garden, Cooking Local Food, and Nutrition & Healthy Eating

Pounds of Product Produced: 20 lbs vegetables

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 1 and school announcements - 5

Project Results: The project was successful although it did not go as planned due to some unforeseen circumstances. With the help of some students, the construction teacher, and maintenance man at the school they were able to build a garden. The students were able to plant and then at the end of the season harvest some vegetables. The students were also able to visit Meyer's Farm during peak harvesting time and learn about which vegetables are grown in the area. There was also a successful 'in class' portion of this project which involved studying and eating a different vegetable each week. [However due to higher numbers than expected in school enrollment the money did not last for a higher number of students for as long as projected.] While the farm visit didn't fulfill the expectations of the project coordinator the amount of vegetables the students were familiar with doubled because of the farm tour component.

Project Conclusion: The expectations of the project were met on some levels and not on others. The amount of vegetables they were able to buy and the educational 'in class' portion was very successful and will be a part of this project in the future. However, the garden will be left out of the grant project in the future due to the difficulty in getting students to work on the garden during the summer months. Whereas the garden portion of the project was meant to be a learning experience for the students it became the teacher's job. For a future garden idea the project will focus on a smaller number of vegetables, perhaps even just having a potato garden.

Delta Junction: Carrots! (It's what's for lunch)

Project Overview: This program included a few goals; (1) creating recipes that incorporate local carrots as a menu item in the school lunch program, (2) involving students in education about carrots, how they are grown and harvested while (3) providing ample opportunities for students to taste carrots prepared in several ways, and also (4) to improve the healthiness of the students school meals while teaching them about sustainable eating.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 87

Additional Students Reached: 90 (from 1 school)

Project Type: Cooking Local Food

Pounds of Product Purchased: 80 lbs of carrots

Media Hits: Newspaper – 1, and school announcements - 5

Project Results: There were 87 students in the taste test. They tried eight dishes in total and voted for their favorites including; three side salads, two soups, and three styles of raw carrots. After testing and voting it is doubtful that any of the side salads would be successful in the school lunch menu however both soups were well liked and would be a great addition to student lunches if used in a way that could meet regulations. As far as raw carrots students mostly want the option of dipping the carrot (in ranch dressing) and therefore showed preference to the stick 'cut' of the carrots as opposed to crinkle or coin cut.

Project Conclusion: [Initially the project was supposed to involve the kitchen staff and done in the food service kitchen, however, the school had major renovations of the kitchen and it was not complete in time.] Because of this change in plans the cooking had to be done by the coordinator of this project in the culinary arts classroom and therefore had to target high school students instead of the original elementary aged students. Although some of these problems were unforeseen and changed the direction of the project the information found was still useful and the students involved really seemed to enjoy the process and being involved in school food choices.

Two-Rivers: Bite-Size Alaska

Project Overview: Two-Rivers School – Bite Size Alaska program had the goal of increasing awareness in students about Alaska Grown products. Planning and implementing six tasting events, each of which focused on an aspect of growing food in Alaska. The taste test and educational component were as follows; (1) using apples to illustrate the life cycle of trees and factors that affect growth in Alaska, (2) using potatoes and identifying what part of the plant is eaten along with nutritional benefits, (3) using honey and herbs and observing the medicinal and nutritional properties of each, (4) studying dairy and its different uses, (5) using grains and examining local barley and determining what part is eaten, and (6) using meat to talk about sustainability of raising different animals in Alaska while examining the benefits and costs.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 92

Additional Students Reached: 10 (1 school)

Project Type: Cooking Local Food and Nutrition & Healthy Eating

Pounds of Product Purchased: 30 lbs vegetables and 10 lbs of meat

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 1 and school announcements - 1

Project Results: The Bite-Size Alaska project was a great success. The project was able to give the students from two different classes four separate lessons about Alaskan Grown food; Vegetables, Fruit/Grain/Honey, Meat (local beef and reindeer), and Dairy. Each lesson was very successful, especially the vegetable lesson which included a trip to a local farmers market and making stew with the purchased vegetables. Students were then able to go to different classrooms throughout the school and present "Buying Local" points of interest to the other students. The other teachers from these classrooms reported that the presenting students did a nice job and sparked great discussions.

Project Conclusion: The project was a great success and met all the goals it had initially set out to accomplish. The farmer's market field trip and follow-up took the most preparation and planning but was an integral part of the project. The lessons were fun, engaging, and informative and could have only been improved with more time. Discussing foods, especially Alaska Grown products was helpful in creating informed consumers out of the students which in turn will impact their family's food choices and also enable the students to make nutritional, healthy choices for themselves. The Bite-size Alaska project was a good start to this but would benefit from more planning in the future.

Thorne Bay: Interactive Math Garden

Project Overview: Thorne Bay School incorporated a Math Garden to their already existing "Linking Logs Nature Trail". The combination of the two projects encourages kids to eat healthy and local. The goals of this project included (1) encouraging students to eat healthy for themselves and their planet, (2) guiding students through a season of food production – from seed to table, (3) incorporating interactive math lessons with the local food shed, (4) exploring why a smaller food shed is healthier, (5) creating an outdoor classroom with hands-on math lessons that target state learning standards, and (6) to help the students foster appreciation for healthy food choices.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 15

Additional Students Reached: 120 (9 schools)

Project Type: School Garden, Nutrition & Healthy Eating, and developing a map of the food shed.

Pounds of Product Produced: 15 lbs potatoes, 3 lbs radishes, 2 lbs kale, 5 lbs lettuce, 10 lbs carrots, and 3 lbs broccoli

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 1 and school announcements - 2

Project Results: The Math Garden project has been a success. The students included in the project incorporated many different academic areas in the development of the garden; math, shop, horticulture, and science. All of the students scored 70% or higher on the design portion of the garden (perimeter and volume). The students are using the woodshop to cut lumber over the winter for the bed walls of the garden. This portion of the project has been delayed because the lumber order got lost. Due to this delay the beds will be installed in the coming spring. While the project cannot be fully evaluated until complete the hopes are high for the end product.

Project Conclusion: The community has been very supportive of the project and excited about how many learning opportunities are being presented to the students. There has been an increased awareness of healthy eating and students have an appreciation of eating local. The project, although not yet completed, has met most of the initial goals set for itself and will continue to aspire to reaching those goals for the duration of the project.

Tok: What Does Your Garden Grow? (Projects 2nd year of funding)

Project Overview: The 4th and 5th graders at Tok School participated in an educational project that focused on fruit and vegetable consumption. The group maintained the garden and harvested the vegetables in the fall, learned preparation skills, and helped prepare snack for the students using the harvested veggies. As well as the hands on education there were lessons about nutrition and health provided to the students.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 25

Additional Students Reached: 80 (1 school)

Project Type: School Garden and Nutrition & Healthy Eating

Pounds of Product Produced: very little

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 1, Newspaper – 1, and school announcements – 3

Project Results: The project went well. The students were eager to work in the garden, planting and harvesting the food. The lessons regarding growing, plants, nutrition, and soil were well received. After each lesson the students were given a quiz and they answered the questions 85% accurately. The main issues for this project were: 1) The garden was new and so putting it together took time away from actually having fun with soil, planning and planting. 2) The school year ends just when the weather is nice enough for planting the vegetables outside. 3) The growing season is during the summer and no kids came back to the school to actually help. 4) The school needs to have a plan to "take over" the project as it was started by district office people. While this seems like a lot of issues, the project had many highlights and the kids loved to learn about the plants.

Project Conclusion: The garden project is a positive one. It provided hands on links between various science, nutrition, and even social lessons to the students. The kids learned about soil, nutrients and nutrition, and also about how to work together to create a successful garden. During the coming spring months the project will continue and hopes to have visits from local gardeners to help the kids. The project coordinator hopes to see increased community involvement and is excited to make some changes in the future to help the project become an even greater opportunity for future students.

Hope: Nutrition & Preservation Class
(Projects 2nd year of funding)

Project Overview: Hope School is a small k-12 rural school without a USDA lunch program. Last year with funds from a variety of sources and the Farm to School funding, the school provided a hot lunch program with local foods for the students one day a week. In addition this year they will provide a successful nutrition and food preservation class to students. The goal of the class is to teach the following, (1) healthy food choices, (2) that healthy food choices can be delicious and fun, (3) where "real" food comes from and how to grow it themselves, (4) food preparation skills; learn to read recipes, make nutritious substitutions, measure quantities, and use kitchen appliances, (5) life-long food safety habits, and (6) how to process and preserve fresh food, important in a village setting like the one these children live in.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 15

Additional Students Reached: 6 (1 school)

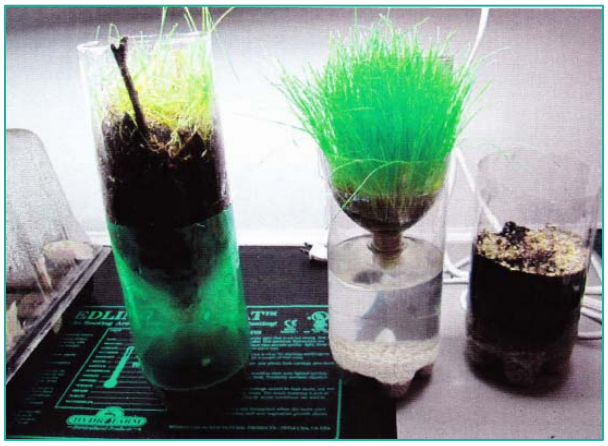
Project Type: Growing food indoors using hydroponics

Pounds of Product Produced: Garden starts for potatoes, carrots, squash, lettuce, broccoli, beets, radish, and kale.

Media Hits: N/A

Project Results: The project did have a late start so the results have not yet been calculated. The intent of the project is to combine earth science curricula with a local community garden project as well as nutrition education. The science in a bottle projects have been a huge success, with appropriate lights and good soil, the seeds have been slow to germinate for the hydroponics portion of this project.

Project Conclusion: Hope School serves as the local community center; the school is used to hold monthly movie nights, weekend exercise classes, and monthly dinners. The students proudly show off their Farm to School projects and they have been well received by the community members. In the future, changes to the project would include having the volunteer who teaches the hydroponics classes use their own lights to start the seeds so that during the time allotted for the project they could actually begin planting the seeds. This would allow the project to get moving more quickly and cover more information topics.



Talkeetna: A Healthy Taste of Alaska Project (Projects 2nd year of funding)

Project Overview: The Talkeetna Elementary School PTA's Healthy Lifestyles Committee implemented a project with goals to: (1) support local farmers and food producers, (2) improve student nutrition and knowledge of nutrition, and (3) facilitate communication between food services, the school administrators, and the Talkeetna Elementary School PTA.

Project Results: This year of the project was even more successful than the last. The students were able to go to a local farm and experience potato harvesting. There were many educational components ranging from local food art to the science behind composting and how that works. Students ages preschool to 4th grade were able to participate in the farm to school activities. Results from the event showed that more people "intend to purchase and eat locally grown foods whenever possible" than before attending the event. Nearly 100 % of students accurately picked the healthier food choice when given the option between two foods. There will be post-event questionnaires this spring after all the events are complete to compare to the pre-test given last fall for more comparative data.

Project Conclusion: The project this year, unlike the previous year, was able to provide more opportunities for hands on experience for the students. The addition of the salad bar to the lunch room has been a tremendous success and for the first month was exclusively supplemented by the local Birch Creek Farm. The students love having the salad bar and continue to make healthy food choices. The program will continue throughout the school year with the salad bar and bread making in the spring. Overall the project has been a success at Talkeetna Elementary School.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 80

Additional Students Reached: 15 (1 school)

Project Type: Farm Tours, Cooking Local Food, Nutrition & Healthy Eating and Community Involvement & Education.

Pounds of Product Produced: 100 lbs potatoes, 50 lbs carrots, 10 lbs broccoli, and many other vegetables in the 20-30 potluck dishes.

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 3, school announcements – 2, radio – 2 (interview and story can be found at : http://ktna.org/2012/09/17/field-trip-to-birch-creek-ranch/

Kodiak: Farm to School Project

Project Overview: The Kodiak Farm to School Program was launched in 2011 to get students excited about healthy eating habits. In 2012 the project expanded to rural schools and small villages that have limited access to fresh vegetables. The goals of this program were to (1) foster a creative learning environment to encourage healthy food choices and understand the value of eating locally grown produce, and (2) provide students with the skills needed to make informed decisions about how their food choices impact their bodies and the environment.

Project Results: Each of the projects five participating schools had a successful 2012 garden harvest or planting season. A couple hang-ups included; lack of garden volunteers in the summer months and the delivery of garden materials to the rural school site, Ouzinkie. Despite these setbacks, four out of the five school garden sites reported that their 2012 garden harvest produced the best quality of vegetables yet! All of the schools provided a hands-on learning experience for some, if not all, of their students. Also, all the schools have plans in place for the coming years for volunteers and intend to continue the school gardens. From these and some other statistics the project leaders think it has exceeded expectations.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 185

Additional Students Reached: 586 (5 Schools)

Project Type: School Gardens, Farm Tours, Nutrition & Healthy Eating, and Farm to School classroom curriculum.

Pounds of Product Used: more than 360 lbs produce

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 9, Newspaper – 1, school announcements –5, mentioned at the Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation Potluck, School District Website, and the Kodiak Farm to School homepage.

Project Conclusion:

The Kodiak Farm to School program had an extremely successful 2012 planting and growing year. Some of the highlights include; winning three first place ribbons and one grand prize ribbon from the Kodiak Fair and Rodeo, having children excited about making and eating Chard Chips and 'Green Smoothies', using potatoes grown in the garden during a school's annual "Soup Fest", hosting the first-ever Farm to School Learning Intensive, and the planning, building and construction of two new school garden sites. In the future growing season, the Kodiak Farm to School Project hopes to engage more summer volunteers for the gardens.

Homer: Greenhouse & Garden Project

Project Overview: The Paul Banks Elementary Greenhouse was built last spring and with the help of students has already been through a planting and harvesting season. With a year of experience under their belts the school staff made improvements to the greenhouse and added an additional raised bed. These additions provided students an opportunity to experience first-hand gardening, harvesting, and eating what they have grown. The produce was distributed to classrooms as part of the PTA's Healthy Snacks Program.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 200

Additional Students Reached: 15 (1 school)

Project Type: School Garden and Nutrition & Healthy Eating

Pounds of Product Produced: 150 lbs carrots, 100 lbs tomatoes, 20 lbs snap peas, and 8 lbs cucumbers

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 3, Newspaper – 2, and school announcements – 2

Project Results: The project went well and everything was built in one day. Students planted the last week of school before summer break and harvested upon their return to school in September.

Project Conclusion: The kids loved the garden and word spread to the local newspaper who wrote an excellent article on the garden and the greenhouse. The vegetables all grew very well and the project has thus far been a success.

Anchorage: Farm Visit & Alaska Grown Produce

Project Overview: Airport Heights Elementary School has had a school garden for the past two seasons which is tended by the schools garden club. To add to the students knowledge the program extended from the garden into the classroom with these three goals; (1) a farm visit for the students to gain knowledge of plant and farm ecology, (2) the school purchased and prepared Alaska Grown produce, and (3) strengthening student relationships across grade levels the project involves a 6th grade class and their 2nd grade buddies. The project aimed to provide students with information about where their food comes from and how it is made.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 50

Additional Students Reached: 300 (2 schools)

Project Type: School Garden , Cooking Local Food, and Farm Tours

Pounds of Product Used: 4 lbs honey, 10 lbs barley flour, 30 lbs snow apples, 8 gallons milk **Produced:** 100 lbs potatoes, and 80 lbs carrots

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 2 and school announcements – 2

Project Results: The farm tour trip to Palmer was the highlight of the project. The students were able to visit Don Berberich at Palmer High School, where he and his students showed them chickens and their beekeeping operation. The tour then took them to Havemeister Dairy with a tour of the milking operation and lastly a visit to Glacier Valley Farm to explore vegetable production. The only glitch in this portion of the project was the inability to conduct the planned pre-trip survey because of school being canceled due to inclement weather. Because of this we were not able to ask the students what they were expecting and therefore have nothing to compare their observations with. However the feedback from after the trip was great with lots of excitement from the students and renewed efforts in the school garden.

Project Conclusion: This project generated a lot of interest and positive comments from the community, photos were posted on the school website and facebook page! The farm visit as well as supplemented Alaska Grown food and cafeteria lessons were thoroughly enjoyed by the kids and the 6th grade class even taught a lesson on plant ecology. The timing of the trip and subsequent weather were great. The timing provided enough time to prepare for the trip after the school year began. The only thought for the future would be to think of possibilities for raising the money themselves to continue these educational farm trips each year.

Airport Heights Elementary School Farm to School Project Pictures;

Above: Local Farmer educates some students during the Farm tour.

Left: a student displays a harvested strawberry.

Chugiak: Color Me Healthy (Projects 2nd year of funding)

Project Overview: The Chugiak High School Family Consumer Science program used the mini-grant to increase awareness of the importance of healthy foods. According to the project leader, students at the high school had poor eating habits and low interest in pursuing diets that would prevent future serious health issues. The goals of the project were: (1) to introduce students to the variety of local produce options available in Alaska, (2) to give students an opportunity to meet a local farmer in the classroom, (3) to teach students about the influence of local agriculture on food choices, (4) to introduce teens to nutritional information associated with local produce through the support of a dietician or nutritionist, (5) to develop new food preparation options utilizing local produce, (6) to provide a school-wide opportunity for teens to sample local produce items, and additionally this year (7) to have teens from the high school connect with the students and parents of Birchwood Elementary by teaching them about the value of Alaska Grown produce.

Project Statistics:

Students Involved with Project: 90

Additional Students Reached: 150 (2 schools)

Project Type: Cooking Local Food and Nutrition & Healthy Eating

Pounds of Product Produced/Used: 200 lbs russet potatoes, 150 lbs carrots, 100 lbs Yukon Gold potatoes, 50 lbs broccoli, 50 lbs zucchini, 50 heads of romaine lettuce, 50 lbs onions, and 35 lbs Duram Gold Wheat.

Media Hits: School Newsletter – 2 and school announcements

Project Results: Although the availability of diverse produce was low due to inclement weather and scheduling, the project was still able to continue and be successful. Students and families were able to experiment with many new recipes, flavors, and presentations using the produce which was available. Students in foods class were evaluated on the nutritional value of some locally grown products and demonstrated a clear understanding of this and the economical value of using locally grown produce when possible. The results met the expectations of the project.

Project Conclusion: Students and parents alike showed enthusiasm in learning more about the nutritional and academic benefits of sharing meals together and using locally grown foods. The project was a great bonding and learning time for the families involved. Word about the program was spread which encouraged new families to join the dinner and educational presentation. This program will continue in the future and hopefully expand to more families. Another way in which the program hopes to expand is in the diversity of local products available to be used.

2012 Farm-to-School Mini-Grant:

Lessons learned and Recommendations for the future

- **Plan ahead for any 'Pre' tests in case of unforeseen dilemma's like weather.**
- **Be sure to consult with relevant community members about the project to address unanticipated challenges early on in the process.**
- **Stick to easy garden crops, especially when initially starting a new garden, this will allow you to 'test the waters' with time investment and community support.**
- **When planning your project think about how much volunteer time and effort you will need. It is always better to have too much help than not enough. (For school gardens this seemed to be a thematic problem during the summer months.)**
- **Stay visible: celebrate your accomplishments through school announcements, newsletters, etc. This will build your community support.**
- **Take pictures and talk to the students to find out what they liked and did not like. This will be helpful when writing your report; quotes from students are very powerful.**

If you have any questions, comments, or would like more information about this report please contact Jamie Peterson at Jamie.peterson@alaska.gov or (907)374-3715

If you have questions or want more information about the Farm to School Program please contact Johanna Herron at Johanna.herron@alaska.gov or (907)374-3714