

# 2013 Alaska Farm to School



## Mini-Grant Project Report

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## Introduction

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 their community. The Division of Agriculture awarded grants for FTS projects that would promote activities connecting students, teachers, farmers, chefs, school food service staff and a variety of other community members with product grown and produced in Alaska.

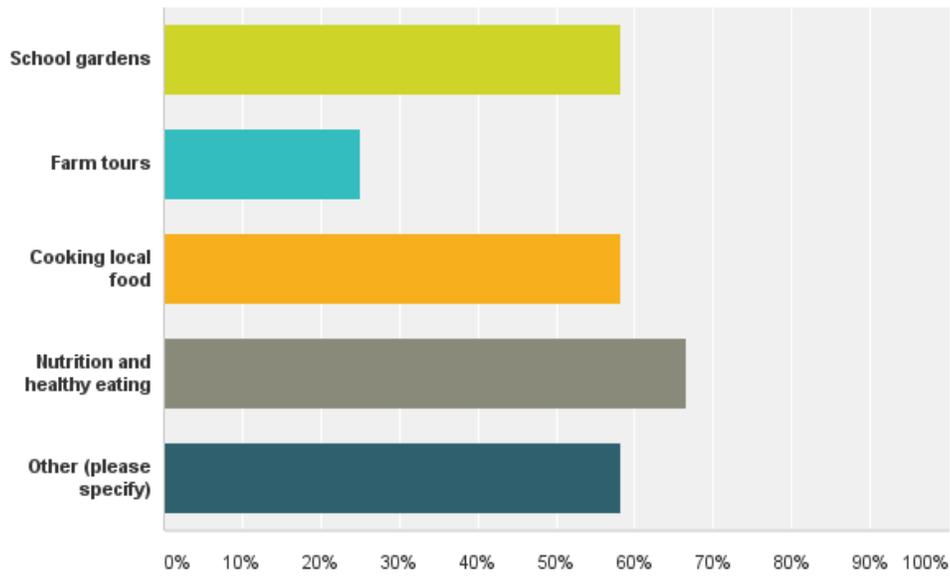
Applicants were required to have a project coordinator, a representative from the school food service, and a community expert, specialist, or mentor.



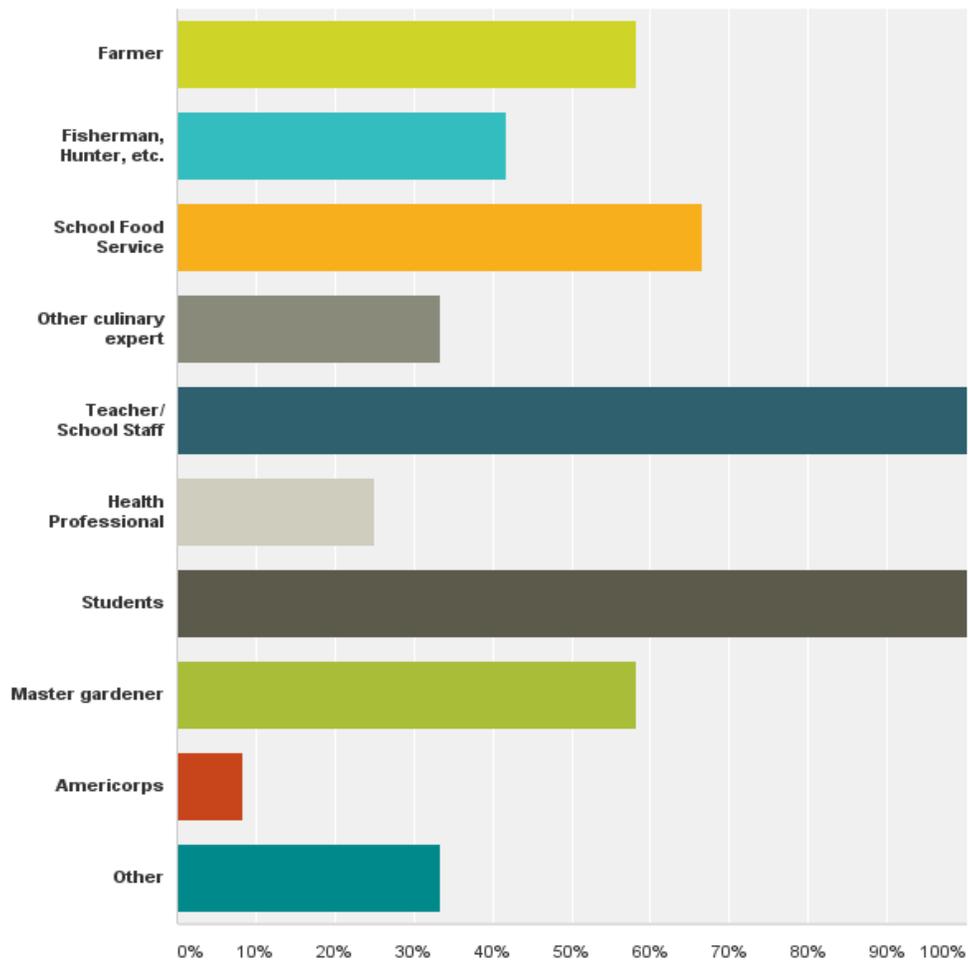
### 2013 Farm to School Program Overview

- 13 Projects
- Schools involved: 29
- Direct student involvement: 832
- Indirect student involvement: 1,920
- Communities reached: 17
- **Pounds of product harvested or purchased: 3243.5**
- Total media references: 158

### Type of Activity



### Experts Involved



# Palmer: Louise's Farm School

"Louise's Farm 2 School 2 Fork Project"

## Background

The specific goals and objectives of this project were to highlight the importance and benefits of eating locally harvested foods. Our objectives in doing so will entail helping our students to understand the progression of food from our farm to their fork and what this means on a global scale. Megan Rock, Louise's Farm School principal said *"With the loss of valuable farm land in Alaska to development and retail stores we would like to teach our students that without our local farms we may not readily have access to fresh food in their future. By promoting healthy food choices we will encourage a preference for food grown and harvested in Alaska."*

## Project Outcome

These goals of promoting local foods and healthy food choices were met and exceeded. The project was able to reach the communities of Palmer and Wasilla, where the students were very well received. A broad range of community members were involved, including farmers and agricultural experts, teachers, health professionals, students, culinary experts and local homesteaders. Due to limited storage space, not as much food was able to be stored as the school had hoped. Despite this challenge they were still able to produce an abundance of homemade sauces, soups, and veggies late into the year. In addition to their project being a big success, Louise's Farm School also won first place in the 2013 Alaska Farm to School Challenge for the second year in a row!



*"I am proud to write on our menu boards that the food I am preparing for our students is local or homemade. It tasted better and I get more compliments too!"-Megan*

## Future Plans

Louise's Farm School is working to secure funding to expand their cold storage capacity in order to carry more product through the winter months.

### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: School garden, nutrition
- Students involved: 25
- Total students reached: 55
- Community reach: 100
- Pounds of product harvested: 395.5
- Media references: 26 through newspaper, newsletters, television, school announcements, and radio

# Anchorage: Goldenview Middle School

“Goldenview Garden”

## Background

The Goldenview Garden was created this year and was built from scratch. The focus was to utilize indoor space for food production in arctic environments to teach nutrition and healthy eating to the students; the students also track energy and water consumption. *“We have a core group of twenty students that run nearly every aspect of the garden. Teachers use it for experiments and we share our crops when we can.” -Lee*

The project aimed to align with Alaska state math and science standards, and also hopes to reap the social and health benefits of producing fresh, local foods. At the formation of the project, the continued expansion of the gardens into an outdoor garden was a long-term goal.

## Project Outcome

Since there is not currently any dedicated class time for the garden, students dedicate their lunchtime to working on the project. The students have grown enough produce to give samples to over 200 people. Participants were able to overcome aphid problems by creating food-safe organic sprays to maintain infestations. The community hugely supports the project and has nominated the garden for funding to continue expansion.

## Future Plans

The Goldenview Garden has many new things on the horizon. Lee Butterfield is working with both the feeder schools to Goldenview and the schools that are fed by Goldenview in order to have the program values reinforced throughout a student’s education.

The funds administered by the state were matched by the Goldenview Middle School PTSA and will be used to expand the project to include an outdoor garden this spring. With the expansion, the cost of the fencing was covered by Donor’s Choice supporters. There will be two more indoor growing tables constructed as well. If these first stages of garden development are an indicator, this project will see amazing growth in the next few years!

### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: Indoor school garden, nutrition
- Students involved: 175
- Total students reached: 275
- Community reach: 700
- Pounds of product harvested: 20
- Media references: 46 through newsletters, television, school announcements, and social media

# Glennallen Growers

“Glennallen School Garden Project”

## Background

The overall goal of the Glennallen School Garden Project was to have a school based garden system that allows for gardening, horticulture, economics, and healthy living to be incorporated into the curriculum of the 280 students in Glennallen K-12 School. They aimed to provide classrooms and the school lunch program with locally produced foods of high nutritional value. These foods would also help offset the high cost of shipping foods to the school.

## Project Outcome

Due to unforeseen circumstances related to fund dispersal, the community was unable to begin the project until late summer. To accommodate for that delay, much of the project will take place this coming spring. With the time available they were able to build six raised beds and prepare them for the coming spring planting. Coordinator Tamara Hamby stated *“The day the kids took their class started seedlings home they were all so excited to see who had what plant and if it was still alive. A real light went off. The community is excited about the prospect with people always asking for updates.”*

## Future Plans

As soon as the ground is ready this spring, the Glennallen Growers plan to continue where they left off with their school gardens.



### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: School garden
- Students involved: 20
- Total students reached: 320
- Community reach: 100
- Pounds of product harvested: 150
- Media references: 3 through newspaper and school newsletters

# Haines: Takshanuk Watershed Council

“Garden Gate to School Plate Kick-Off”

## Background

The Takshanuk Watershed Council (TWC) works with the Haines Borough Public School, Haines Borough Government, local agricultural producers, fishermen, and local master gardeners to develop a comprehensive food security initiative called “Grow Strong.” The Garden Gate to School Plate Program, launched in 2013, is one of the four components of that initiative; the purpose being to streamline the connection between local gardeners and the school cafeteria. Recruiting local gardeners to participate and increasing student knowledge of where their food comes from are the main goals of the program.

## Project Outcome

The project was able to bring in two local producers to supply most of the school’s needs from fall through mid-October. Food security coordinator for TWC Meredith Pochardt stated *“Although only having two producers may seem like low participation, this enabled us to work out the “kinks” of fulfilling the produce needs of the school without overtaxing the staff or leaving them without the produce they needed.”*

Since it was the pilot year, the expectation was mainly to get the project established and lay groundwork for the next phase. The community seems to be reacting positively to the growth and work happening, and has shown support for the project in multiple community meetings.

## Future Plans

New producers are already showing interest in partnering with Garden Gate to School Plate for the 2014 growing season. The project is planning their plantings around the produce needs of the school for the coming academic year.



### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: School garden
- Students involved: 45
- Total students reached: 311
- Community reach: 250
- Pounds of product harvested: 450
- Media references: 7 through newsletters and social media

# Talkeetna Elementary School

“A Healthy Taste of Alaska”

## Background

Talkeetna Elementary Farm to School Program strives to increase student and family awareness of nourishing food choices, and to increase awareness of the availability of local healthy food. They work to introduce students to local farmers and the variety of foods grown, harvested and hunted locally, and to give them the opportunity to be a part of the local harvest. The Farm to School Program is a part of the school’s Healthy Lifestyles Initiative, which aims to change student’s lifestyles regarding healthy eating, exercise, and reduced television and computer screen time.

## Project Outcome

To increase student and community awareness of local foods, the program planned to host “A Healthy Taste of Alaska” dinner with a local potato bar event. As a fellow school group had planned for the same type of event, Talkeetna Farm to School adapted their event to a potluck. Event attendees were asked to bring dishes made from local foods, and Anita Golton, the owner of the Flying Squirrel Bakery Café, prepared soups (Salmon Chowder, Pumpkin Moose Chile and Broccoli Cheddar) for everyone.

Outside of the event, 85 students from Talkeetna Elementary School visited Birch Creek Ranch. The students took part in a farm tour with the owners of the farm (Al, Lalani and Brian Kingsbury) and learned about



its 31 year history and farming practices. The children helped with the harvest and searched for golden tickets in the field (a Charlie and the Chocolate Factory connection) that the students could use to buy vegetables to take back to school. Their veggies were used to prepare for the community potluck!

The curriculum also included a composting lesson, where the students were able to feed their food scraps to red wigglers.

### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: Nutrition and healthy eating
- Students involved: 85
- Total students reached: 178
- Community reach: 100
- Pounds of product purchased: 196
- Media references: 26 through newsletters, school announcements, and radio

# Tok: Alaska Gateway School District

“Putting Food By”

## Background

In order to solve the problem of sourcing affordable nutritious foods during winter months, Alaska Gateway School District is learning about safe food preservation and determining if it is economically feasible to grow potatoes instead of purchasing them at the store. The goal is to engage students from kindergarten to fifth grade in the interconnected relationship with health and food supply.

## Project Outcome

Despite enthusiasm from the students, the project fell short of expectations due to an unusually late spring and changes in coordination staff. Much of the garden labor was done by a small number of students and staff. Students were able to see first-hand how dependent Alaskans are on fluctuations and inconsistencies in weather.

## Future Plans

The Alaska Gateway School District was awarded a \$44,000 from the National USDA Farm to School Program, and the funds are going towards the construction of a greenhouse! When the greenhouse is complete, the program won't need to worry about late spring weather- the plants can stay in a regulated environment until outdoor conditions are suitable for planting.

### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: School garden
- Students involved: 25
- Total students reached: 55
- Community reach: 60
- Pounds of product harvested: less than 25
- Media references: 2 through newspaper

# Noorvik Schools

“Noorvik School and Community Gardens”

## Background

The aim of the community gardens was to get children and adults involved in growing fresh foods and edible flowers in the rural village of Noorvik. Many students in this remote area of Alaska have never grown their own produce, as it is shipped into the village from outside sources. The project wants to put the first ever fresh salad bar into the school and work with school food service workers to supply the cafeteria with fresh, local foods to students.

## Project Outcome

The garden was planted near the river in the city of Noorvik. Students and volunteers planted radishes, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, potatoes, kohlrabi, lettuce, raspberry bushes, and even corn. Unfortunately the foods grown in the garden were not allowed into the school due to unforeseen restrictions, but the students were still able to harvest the produce and eat the veggies straight out of the garden.

## Future Plans

Despite normal first-season hiccups, there is a lot of excitement for the next growing season. Students and teachers are planning to continue the work and make their way into the school food system.



### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: School garden
- Students involved: 10
- Total students reached: 20
- Community reach: N/A
- Pounds of product harvested: N/A
- Media references: N/A

# Kodiak Island Borough School District

## Kodiak Farm to School Program

### Background

The Kodiak Farm to School Program has seen a lot of success since it launched in 2011. Last year they were able to harvest over 360 pounds of vegetables from the five schools involved in the program. They also incorporated Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom curriculum.

This year, the project aim is to foster a creative learning environment to encourage healthy food choices, encourage a preference for healthy, local, Alaskan foods, and to provide students with the skills needed to make informed decisions on the foods they put on their plates.

With those goals in mind the program wanted to construct new garden beds where necessary, amend depleted soil, build protective barriers around the garden sites, and build proper storage for the garden tools and supplies. To encourage hands-on learning, the schools planned to conduct activities including planting, tending and harvesting, as well as veggie taste tests, school festivals classroom activities.

### Project Outcome

In addition to their proposed activities panning out, the school also incorporated composting into the 2013 growing season. The gardens produced 240 pounds of a wide variety of produce. Students, parents, and community members were all enthusiastic and engaged in the gardens. Birds eating the veggies and keeping up with watering during the unusually hot summer were challenges met by participants, but not major setbacks. The program was still able to meet all their goals and objectives!

### Future Plans

The Kodiak Farm to School Program plans to continue building the program, particularly by planning more volunteer help, creating a supplemental indoor growing system, and starting the growing season earlier.

#### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: School gardens, nutrition
- Students involved: 213
- Total students reached: 477
- Community reach: 410
- Pounds of product harvested: 240
- Media references: 6 through newspaper school announcements, and social media

# McGrath School

## “The McGrath School Garden Project”

### Background

McGrath is located in interior Alaska off the road system, which makes supplying food to the town expensive. Produce is not readily available and there is a huge need to get kids to eat more vegetables. The McGrath School Garden Project wanted to do just that, as well as sell the produce grown in the garden to the school. They planned to build the garden, including a protective fence, and have the students measure crop yields.

### Project Outcome

The project was seen as a huge success! The garden and fence construction were done on time and under budget, allowing the project to expand with a hydroponic indoor growing system. Many students, visiting youth and community members actively tended the garden, and coordinator Kellie Pierce has enjoyed seeing the community come together through the process. School staff, community members, parents, the superintendent, and the McGrath Native Village Council all worked together to support, maintain, and further grow the project’s success.

### Future Plans

The hydroponic system is in process. Judging from the support of the community, the McGrath School Garden Project will see success for years to come.

#### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: School garden, nutrition
- Students involved: 60
- Total students reached: 80
- Community reach: 200
- Pounds of product harvested: 115
- Media references: 7 through school announcements, and community website



# Montessori Borealis

Juneau, Alaska

“Growing Local Foods, Growing Local Kids”

## Background

Montessori Borealis is an optional public program within the Juneau School District. Their past school garden efforts include building ten raised beds and two cold frames at the school that the students filled with potatoes, carrots, kale, and rhubarb plants. With their Farm to School grant, they planned to incorporate curricular programs to bring the school garden into the classroom. Their Microeconomy class is designed to support a student-run business called “Juneau Grown,” where students create and sell locally grown products such as jams and jellies. A bimonthly home-grown and prepared lunch as well as continued maintenance and growth of the garden are also incorporated into the curriculum.

The project wants to have students develop a stronger understanding of business operations, learn how to incorporate local foods into their meals, maintain the gardens, learn how to grow produce, and learn the science of botany through gardening.

## Project Outcome

Most of the project involved students in Montessori Borealis’ Adolescent program. The students were able to harvest 75 gallons of rhubarb and rose hips into 250 jams that were sold at the Thanksgiving Public Market! They were proud of their work and were able to convey what they learned to market patrons. The students also made five meals through the winter that used local ingredients, and served the meals to school faculty and other students. The garden showed great results, with over 70 gallons of produce harvested!

## Future Plans

Much of the garden work is taking place this coming spring, 2014. The school is incredibly pleased with the progress thus far and is looking forward to expanding the program further in the coming years.



### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: Cooking local foods, nutrition
- Students involved: 37
- Total students reached: 119
- Community reach: 100
- Product harvested: 145 gallons
- Media references: 3 through newspaper, school announcements, and class blog

# College Gate Elementary School

Anchorage, Alaska

“Farm to School with the Little Red Hen”

## Background

College Gate Elementary School Librarian Dona Helmer worked with 60 second grade students. The goals of the project were to improve the students’ knowledge of local food sources, improve nutrition and health, and learn basic cooking skills.

## Project Outcome

The project brought over 80 pounds of local produce into the school to have the students prepare into nutritious snacks and meals. The students learned how to make two simple soups that were hugely popular! Part of the grant funds went to purchase each student a crock pot, which they were able to take home. Despite a few small roadblocks involving the government shutdown last fall, the project was able to complete the objectives it set out to achieve. Ms. Helmer said *“I was surprised at the number of students who said they would not try new vegetables. I was also amazed at the number of students who had not tried certain vegetable like broccoli. At the end, I was delighted that so many tried new vegetables and found that they liked them and would eat them again.”*

## Future Plans

Ms. Helmer plans to continue the project to next year’s second grade classes, and possibly expand into the other grade levels. She also said *“We wanted to invite our state representatives and elected officials but could not work out their schedules. After the project is over, we still intend to reach out to them. Students are going to write letters to them which I intend to take to Juneau.”*

### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: Cooking local food, nutrition
- Students involved: 60
- Total students reached: 70
- Community reach: 200
- Pounds of product purchased: 85
- Media references: 12 through newsletters, school announcements, Anchorage School District website and social media



# Chugiak High School

Chugiak, Alaska

“Code GREEN”

## Background

The Chugiak High School Family and Consumer Sciences program involved culinary arts students in the production of a school-wide Alaska Grown salad bar for the month of September. Also in the fall, the class hosted an Alaska Grown baked potato bar. With these two main projects, the goal was to educate students on the benefits of local foods. This includes nutrition, the taste difference in local foods, and economic benefits. This was to be supplemented by the student’s classroom hands-on work with food preparation.

## Project Outcome

The students spend two weeks trying out recipes with over 575 pounds of local produce. They picked which recipes to use in the school-wide salad bar and prepared them during class before lunch. Both the salad and potato bars saw huge success, with sales doubling every day from the previous day. They were also able to host a Soup and Salad Luncheon, where the students prepared a large-scale meal for Chugiak High School faculty and friends of the program.

## Future Plans

This was Code GREEN’s third year with Alaska Farm to School, and they hope to continue partnering with the state to bring fresh, local foods to the Anchorage School District. They hope to expand the salad bar operation to be a more regular item on the school menu.



### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: Cooking local food
- Students involved: 75
- Total students reached: 725
- Community reach: 140
- Pounds of product purchased: 575
- Media references: 14 through newspaper, newsletters, and school announcements

# Alaska Center for the Environment (ACE) & Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA)

“AYEA Fall Planning Summit”

## Background

AYEA is a statewide program that inspires and trains diverse youth leaders to impact environmental issues through community action projects and campaigns; skills training in leadership, environmental education, civic engagement, and community organizing; and green jobs that sustain our communities and future. Students from AYEA in rural Alaskan communities travelled to Spring Creek Farm in Palmer, Alaska to participate in a fall planning summit centered on the topic of local food systems and related issues facing Alaska.

## Project Outcome

Seventeen teenage youth organizers travelled to the summit, where they discussed the issues mentioned as well as a student-chosen current events issue campaign. Coordinator Claire Pywell described the results, saying “AYEA Staff is very happy with this year’s Summit and the reactions from participants after the training was over.

*Overall, everything ran smoothly. The teens are now off to a successful campaign... Two hiccups we encountered were 1) related to space limitations at the Farm, and 2) operating the cob oven for pizzas. These challenges seemed entirely insignificant, however, once we reflected on how well everything else went over the course of four days!*



## Future Plans

The students continue to branch out and further their campaign through an extensive social media outreach unit.

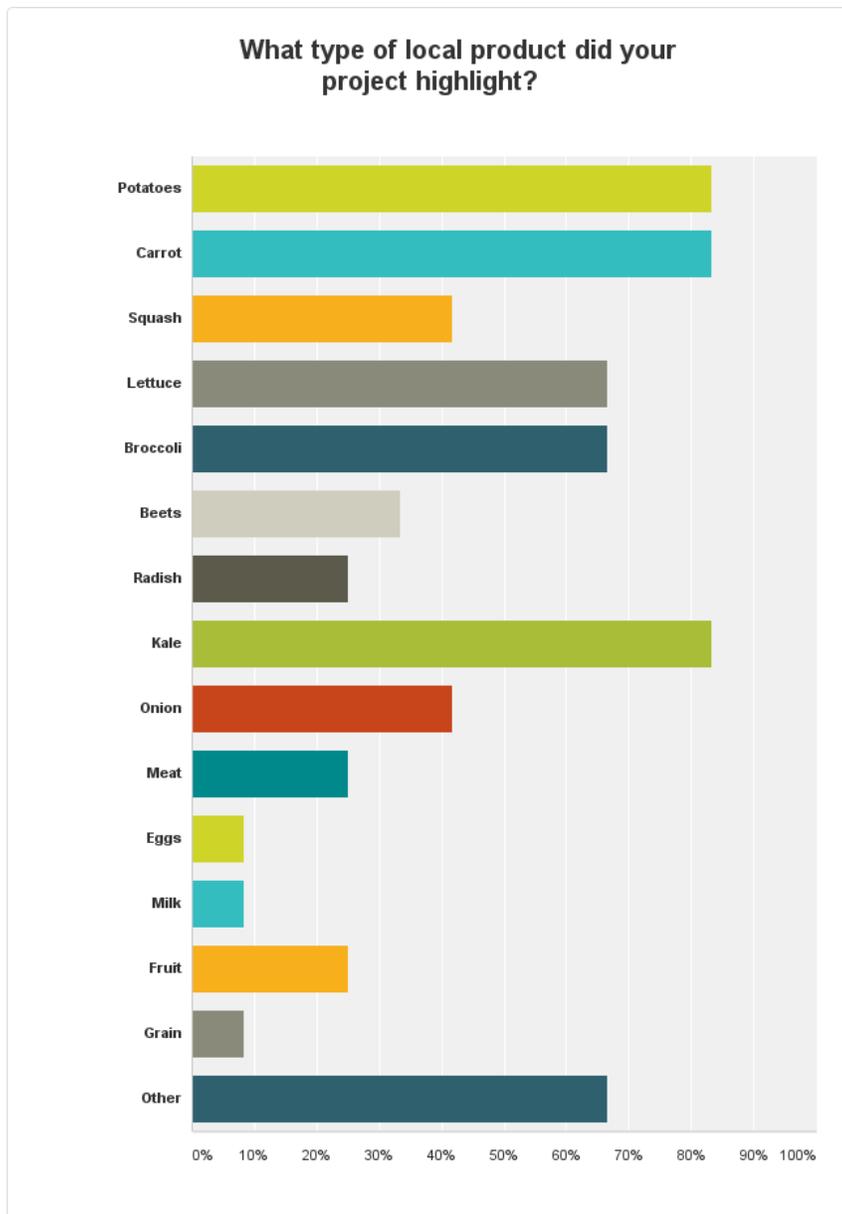
### Project Quickfacts:

- Type: school garden, nutrition
- Students involved: 17
- Total students reached: 117
- Community reach: 600
- Pounds of product purchased: 50
- Media references: 6 through newsletters, school announcements, and social media

## Conclusions

The 2013 Alaska Farm to School Mini-grant projects were overall a great success. The feedback received from project coordinators as well as the various community members involved has been overwhelmingly positive and supportive. Whole towns and communities found themselves entirely involved in the school gardens, taking turns watering and weeding through the summer. Students became aware that food does not come from a bin at the grocery store- it comes from the precious soil outside their doorstep. They learned that the farmer twenty minutes down the road has an invaluable role in the food chain.

Alaska Farm to School is not just a program to give schools money to garden. Farm to School empowers the next generation of Alaskans to play an active part in their food system.



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