Cumberland County Food Security Council USDA Farm to School Grant Goals 2020-2022

Goal A: By June 2022, increase local food procurement for PPS nutrition programs by 5%.
[Objectives include analyzing current purchasing, improving kitchen efficiencies, increasing infrastructure for local food processing.]

Accomplishments:

Consultant Jed Beach of FarmSmart Maine completed an economic feasibility study of different local foods that could be served in PPS. You can find the full report here.

Chef Sam Gasbarro performed observations and provided recommendations to PPS Food Services on ways to increase overall efficiency and quality of school meals. Targeted advocacy based on these recommendations are currently underway.

The grant team conducted research on the best carrot processing equipment to purchase for PPS Food Service so that we could dramatically increase the amount of local carrots being served. This happened in partnership with the Maine Food Convergence's 'Processing Working Group.'

We partnered with Gulf of Maine Research Institute, who was also awarded a Farm to School Grant, to collaborate on strategies for increasing local seafood in PPS meals. For a wonderful resource, please see their Sea to School Toolkit.

Goal B: Launch PPS Food Service branding and marketing campaign that highlights scratch-cooked meals, local food, and local producers.
[Objectives include continuing with branding and marketing campaign work, expanding upon model, increasing opportunities to celebrate local food in school meals.]

Accomplishments:

With the support of Leah Hurley and India Menninghaus of Craft, PPS Food Service underwent an exciting rebranding process that included a new logo, reimagined mission, vision, and values, an updated website and social media presence, communications plan, Food Service 101, and promotional materials such as a postcard, banner, vinyl clings, and new business cards.

FoodCorps and AmeriCorps staff did, and continue to do, a remarkable job creating a robust, informative, and fun virtual platform called Cafeteria Classroom where students can learn all about the foods that they eat at school and about the producers who provide local fruits and vegetables!

Aidan Blum-Levine, Arsinna Diora Ndagano, Hannah Leaticia, and Anna Behuniak were four high school interns who, with the support of Lauren Hickey, conducted a School Lunch Survey of students and parents and received over 800 responses! They analyzed the data and presented this information to the Food Fuels Learning network and PPS Food Services. We are using their results to guide the work of the grant moving forward. You can see their presentation slide deck here.

Goal C: Increase opportunities and support for food and agricultural education in PPS.

[Objectives include activities to promote student engagement and excitement about school meals and local foods, expanding experiential learning opportunities, service projects that support farm to school.]

Accomplishments:

With collaboration from the Cumberland County Gleaning Initiative, PPS high school students participated in a blueberry glean at Jordan's Farm and an apple glean at Boyd Street Community Garden.

With partnership from Maine SNAP-Ed, two fully equipped mobile cooking carts were donated to Gerald E. Talbot Community School and East End Community School. Learn more here.

Four elementary schools hired Garden Ed Techs thanks to advocacy from the PPS School Garden Network, an action group of Food Fuels Learning.