



# **food fuels learning**

## Food Fuels Learning:

Fourth Quarterly Presentation

January 29, 2020



## Background

Food Fuels Learning is an initiative started by a parent who saw children coming to school hungry. With the support of the Cumberland County Food Security Council and the Portland Public Schools (PPS) superintendent, a community-driven effort was born. To truly understand our school food system, we needed to assess the school food system landscape before taking action. This led to a year-long process of gathering information, that we called “Phase 1”.

The Food Fuels Learning leadership team assembled a research team who met with over 200 members of the Portland, Maine community to discuss their greatest successes and struggles within the school food system. We focused our research on five main categories that we identified as making up the school food system: charitable food programs, federal nutrition programs, school gardens, nutrition education, and sustainable food practices.

After many interviews, focus groups, and surveys, we published our Food Fuels Learning Needs Assessment and presented to the full School Board in August, 2018. This report outlines our findings as pertaining to the five categories within the PPS food system, followed by a series of recommendations identified by community stakeholders on how to improve school food security within each of the five categories.

Since completion of the needs assessment, we have embarked on “Phase 2,” which is the implementation phase of the initiative. In Phase 2, we have invited the Portland community to participate in five action-oriented groups (based off of the five categories). These groups convene regularly to carry out the recommendations outlined in the report through building networks and sharing ideas and resources.

In order to keep the community updated on our work and to celebrate the progress we continue to make, we hold quarterly report events. This has also been our opportunity to make direct asks of the superintendent and broader school community.

It is our goal to have this process be as community-led as possible, in order to create sustainable and institutionalized structures within our school system.



## Goals and Objectives

Food Fuels Learning began the project by articulating goals in five program areas:

1. *Charitable food*

- Ensure that all children at risk of food insecurity have access to adequate, culturally relevant, nutritious food both at school and to supplement their diet beyond school.

2. *Federal nutrition program*

- Increase overall school meal participation and reduce challenges for food service staff.

3. *School gardens*

- Assist every school in developing and maintaining a successful school garden and school garden programming.

4. *Nutrition education*

- Provide schools with the tools they need to coordinate staff and organizational partners working to provide nutrition education to students.

5. *Sustainable practices*

- Support schools in creating procurement, waste management, and other practices that minimize their environmental impact and encourage their investment in local communities.

In pursuit of these goals, Food Fuels Learning conducted a needs assessment to explore the presence and impact of activities within each of these five areas throughout the PPS district.



## Action Group Updates

### Leadership Team

To increase avenues of stakeholder participation, we launched the PPS Food Security Listserv in November. This platform is designed for school food security champions, partner organizations, and invested community members to **learn, share** and **collaborate** with one another about addressing food insecurity in the Portland Public Schools. It is our hope that this network will allow us to create efficiencies (by working smarter not harder) in our school food system and help us work toward sustainable and lasting change.

The Development Committee wrote and submitted a USDA Farm to School Implementation Grant Application to further support the work and recommendations of Food Fuels Learning. The objective of the grant proposal is to support FFL goals on local procurement and nutrition education. The goals set forth in the grant proposal include increasing local procurement for PPS nutrition programs, launching a PPS Food Service branding campaign, increasing and supporting food and agriculture education, increasing student consumption of fruit and vegetables. Additionally, this committee evaluated applications for the PPS Food Fund, and awarded funds to three inspiring school-based projects that bolster food security. In addition to those awarded funding, Food Fuels Learning provided direct support to all Food Fund applicants through connection to community resources and facilitating network building.

We invited three new members to join the leadership team this January. They will bring valuable perspectives to the table and help increase the scope of our work.

### Food Fuels Learning Funding Priorities

- 1) Food Service Manager: The PPS Food Service Department is currently operating with staff shortages. This position is a priority because increasing staff capacity will expand Food Service's capacity for multiple recommendations outlined in the report, including Federal Nutrition Programs Recommendation 3: Cultivate a school culture of healthy and inclusive food practices. The Food Service Manager will be responsible for the management of Portland Public School's nine elementary schools and two contracted accounts. The Food Service Department and FFL is seeking funding from the school budget for this position.



- 2) School Garden Coaches: School Garden coaches are stipended positions at each school to designate one internal staff member or community member to be a point person for garden maintenance and programming. This is a vital component to creating equity and sustainability in a garden-based education program that benefits students on all planes of learning, including learning objectives, confidence and skills, community relations, emotional and physical well-being, connection to nature, and connection and skills with food and food security. We are working towards a district where support for school gardens is internal to the district, which will greatly affect the ability for a flourishing program and integration into culture, education, and students meals.
- 3) District Wellness Coordinator: The Wellness Coordinator would work to further the Portland Promise as it relates to the Whole Child Model. This position would meet the FFL District Recommendation 3 to institutionalize and maintain a PPS Wellness Coordinator position. They would provide support for school health and wellness initiatives, help coordinate school food security efforts, participate in the PPS District Wellness Committee, and provide professional development training and learning opportunities for staff on poverty and food security.

## Charitable Food Programs

There are three models of charitable food programs in Portland Public Schools: food pantries, backpacks (take home bags), and produce distribution tables. Our initial assessment helped us identify the places where programs were needed and since initiating FFL six new programs have been established.

We identified one major obstacle with food access for the schools charitable food programs. Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB) was providing food to the charitable programs in schools that had at least 50 percent of their students income eligible for subsidized school meals. This food becomes available in partnership with a local agency who partners with GSFB and the schools. The Locker Project has been in that role for many years now. The issue was that, while the whole Portland School district has over 50 percent of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch, fewer than half the schools exceeded the 50 percent threshold. Most of the others were within 10 percent of the threshold.

In partnership with the Locker Project, CCFSC asked GSFB if they would consider providing services based on district eligibility instead of by individual school. GSFB agreed that this makes sense and changed their policy to reflect this statewide. Additionally, they lowered the eligibility threshold from 50 to 40 percent. This now makes all Portland schools eligible for free produce



and for significantly reduced costs on purchased items. This applies not just in Portland but throughout Maine.

The MOU (expectations for school charitable food programs involvement) between PPS and the Locker Project has been completed. This will allow for greater efficiencies at each school. This document has been shared with all school food pantry liaisons and principals. The Summer Food Resource Guide was completed and distributed before the end of the school year. An updated Resource Guide made available at the beginning of the new school year.

A PPS Food Security listserv that includes all action groups was launched in the fall. This is particularly important to support communication among charitable food liaisons, school champions, parents, and community members. The Food Fuels Learning website and Facebook page are two other platforms being utilized.

The Food Fund at the Foundation for Portland Public Schools made its first round of grants. Two of the projects funded support charitable food distribution in a middle and high school.

Table 1. Charitable Food Programs Action Group Updates

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1.1 Circulate Portland Community Food Resource Guide and Portland Summer Food Resource Guide to families and all school staff at the beginning and end of the year, respectively	1) Portland Community Summer Food Resource Guide is completed. Circulation will occur in paper form to all elementary schools and will be available on school and district websites	1) Completed & Ongoing
1.5 Strengthen communication and collaboration among organizational partners and liaisons managing charitable food programs	1) Use Food Fuels Learning website and Facebook page as a platform to increase charitable food program communication 2) PPS Food Security listserv in development	1) Ongoing 2) September 2019
2.1 Ensure that there are adequate school liaisons (staff, volunteers) to manage the charitable food programs at the schools and to maintain	1) Complete school site visits to identify what each school charitable food program needs for support 2) Draft of expectations for school	1) Two schools completed; June 2019 2) Completed April 2019



adequate food supply	involvement has been developed  3) Designate charitable food program liaison staff position so that there is a point of contact within each school to ensure charitable food program sustainability	3) Ongoing
3.1 Partner organizations collaborate with schools that do not have an existing charitable food program to prioritize what would serve their school bes	1) Two schools identified and charitable food programs in development	1) Ongoing

## Federal Nutrition Program

Since our last Quarterly Report on September 16th, the Federal Nutrition Programs Action Group has met on two occasions; October 30th and December 17th. We maintain our focus on the priority of increasing participation in school meals of students from families with limited resources. Our meetings have continued to focus on discussing the realities of feeding thousands of students every day and integrating parent requests for menu changes within this context. The Food Service Department has worked hard to make some of these changes a reality.

Central Kitchen has made great strides on introducing a plant based option into the lunch menu. Starting in September, PPS Food Service began serving a daily vegan option at all mainland elementary schools. The roll out of the vegan menu has been complemented with in-cafeteria taste tests to encourage students to try the new items. Over the next several months, the Federal Nutrition Action Group will continue to focus on how to best market, support and monitor these menu changes.

With the additional capacity of Summer Interns and VISTAs we have begun to analyze meal preference data. This data is critical to understanding what students like and where to focus our efforts in menu development. We are also looking at how taste testing vegan meals impacts the number of students choosing the vegan option.

Central kitchen was implemented with an incomplete set of equipment as designed. Through Food Fuels Learning, we have identified other equipment that would create efficiencies in scratch cooking and processing whole foods. The Farm to School Grant application includes



vegetable washing and processing equipment. One goal shared with the Sustainable Practices Action Group is to increase local procurement by five percent.

We have been looking outside the school budget to build additional capacity to increase meal participation. This includes funding proposals, AmeriCorps/VISTA, interns and support from parents and the community. For example, the USDA Farm to School Grant Application includes funding for the PPS Food Service to develop a values based brand message and communications strategy with the support of a branding consultant. The objective of this branding campaign is to increase participation in school meals. We also applied for support from the USM Data Innovation Project to more effectively analyze our school meals production data.

Additionally, Leadership Team member, Kristina Kalolo has been working closely with Food Service Director, Jane McLucas on two different Maine Farm to Institution Innovation grants that will increase the amount of local food being sourced by Central Kitchen.

Table 2. Federal Nutrition Programs Action Group Updates

Recommendation	Action	Deadline
1.1 Launch a professional school meals marketing campaign to attract more students and families	1) Educate ‘student influencers’ about the importance of school meals 2) Update Food Service Facebook page 3) Updated food service 101 document 4) Interviewed marketing firms and solicited bids to work with PPS	1) Ongoing 2) Ongoing 3) Completed July 2019 4) Funding included in USDA Farm to School Grant application. Seeking other resources for this.
1.2 Collect, analyze, and incorporate student feedback on menu options through districtwide taste tests and response forms	1) Cultivating Community/FoodCorps taste tests 2) Analyzing production sheet data	1) Taste testing vegan menu 19/20 school year 2) June 2020 (Data aggregation began July 2019)
1.4 Support and evaluate CACFP meal program and maximize this program throughout district	1) Program in place 2) Staff training 3) Evaluation plan in process	1) Ongoing 2) Ongoing 3) Ongoing





<p>1.5 Develop a summer meals strategic plan that includes monthly stakeholder meetings beginning in February</p>	<p>1) Monthly meetings with great community participation 2) Update summer meals map</p>	<p>1) February -August 2020 2) June 2020</p>
<p>2.1 Continue to encourage registration of all eligible families for free and reduced-price meals</p>	<p>1) Continue with current procedures and identify additional best practices 2) Sign folks up at community events 3) New online F&amp;R app</p>	<p>1) Summer-September 2020 2) September 2020 3) Complete</p>
<p>2.2 Continue to support families completing eligibility paperwork and implement additional best practices</p>	<p>1) Continue with current procedures and identify additional best practices 2) Identify impact on Categorical Eligibility due to SNAP changes</p>	<p>1) Summer-September 2020 2) Now-October 2020</p>
<p>3.4 Exceed federal nutritional requirements by focusing on nutrient dense, minimally processed foods</p>	<p>1) Scratch made: chili, marinara sauce, mashed potatoes, hummus 2) Testing new breakfast items 3) Harvest of the Month Program 4) Daily vegan lunch option</p>	<p>1) Currently Serving 2) Ongoing 3) Began Fall 2019 4) September 2019 rolled out</p>

## School Gardens

This school year we started off the year with 5 elementary schools harvesting potatoes from their garden to be put into a potato salad for school lunch. It was not the first time many of the schools had a garden to plate pathway, but it was the first time communication and recipe was streamlined to Central Kitchen efforts, reducing logistics and staff time for school food services.

In the 2019-2020 school year, we have held monthly meetings, so far rotating between Riverton, East End, Rowe, and Reiche. We have been joined by Lewiston counter-parts to share information and collaborate on the school garden coach model, curriculum bins, and more. We



continue to have Maine School Garden Network, ReTreeUS, FoodCorps, and Cultivating Community be strong partners at our meetings.

Our biggest goal remains to institute a School Garden Coach Model. We finalized the [School Garden Coach job description](#) (Appendix A). We have worked hard to understand how to get this funded through conversations with Roberto Rodriguez, School Board Chair and Carrie Foster, PEA President. So far, neither the school budget nor living contracts seem to be a viable option for 2020-2021 school year. Our current strategic response to this is to look into individual school meetings with leadership teams this spring to use floating funds, and also do more collective advocacy as a School Garden Network. We have also focused on learning more about Garden Team best practices, also known as the entities at some schools comprised of parents and community members to support each garden program.

Lastly, there is a curriculum initiative between Cultivating Community, the district, and FoodCorps. A group comprised of Lily Chaleff (Cultivating Community), Rachel Solomon (FoodCorps), Moriah Brown (FoodCorps), Brooke Teller (STEM Coordinator), and Allison Richards (Riverton 2nd grade/ Garden Coach) is working on compiling school garden-based lessons that tie directly to Next Gen Science Standards (NGSS). This is an essential tool for the district to become more self-sufficient using the gardens after FoodCorps capacity is removed, and will in general enhance the ability for all teachers and schools to have similar resources and connection to using the garden. Allison Richards was awarded \$300 from the Food Fund to create pilot curriculum bins, which is also a part of this project.

We are working towards a district where support for school gardens is embedded in the district, which will greatly affect the ability for a flourishing program and integration into culture, education, and students meals. We have compiled multiple documents to outline the academic and health impact school gardens have on students to help teachers, staff, and school board understand the importance of school gardens.

Table 5. School Gardens Action Group Updates

Recommendation	Action	Deadline
1.3 Provide all teachers with a garden curriculum formulated from existing Maine-based lessons connected to Common Core State Standards	1) Form a curriculum team to compile lessons connected to NGSS	2019-2020 school year



<p>2.2 Convene in person quarterly meetings</p>	<p>1) Hold monthly School Garden Network Meetings with rotating host program:  Sept - Riverton Oct - EECS Nov - Rowe Dec- Reiche</p>	<p>1) Occurring and Ongoing;  Rotating schools, presentations from each school on their model and site</p>
<p>2.4 Increase efficiency of produce distribution between school garden coordinators and liaisons managing charitable food programs</p>	<p>1) School Garden Network, led by Cultivating Community Schools Program Manager, streamlined communication and produce of 5 elementary schools for a school garden potato harvest lunch item</p>	<p>1) September 2019</p>
<p>3.1 Identify and utilize sources of funding for school garden maintenance and programming for all schools</p>	<p>1) Research through conversations with Roberto Rodriguez and Carrie Foster</p>	<p>1) December 2019</p>
<p>3.3 Provide Stipends to School Garden Coordinator</p>	<p>1) Finalize job description 2) Advocate for funding</p>	<p>1) December 2019 2) May 2020</p>
<p>3.4 Create school garden committees at each school with representatives from the school administration, each grade, and the parent community to institutionalize gardening into school culture</p>	<p>1) Hear from Reiche green team and share best practices for community support within network</p>	<p>Ongoing effort</p>

## Nutrition Education

The Nutrition Education Action Group is passionate about ensuring that all students have access to quality nutrition and cooking education that inspires them to make healthy choices to support their learning and growth. A main undertaking of this group is the curation of a comprehensive [Nutrition Education Map](#) that compiles all of the nutrition education content, curriculum, and



activity happening in the district by both partner organizations and school staff. In order to better populate this map, we developed a survey and performed targeted outreach to school nurses, social workers, health, and physical education teachers to better understand the curriculum that educators are using and the barriers they are facing. With support from the Portland's Department of Public Health, we were able to award \$25 Amazon gift cards to every educator that completed the survey. We created a [report](#) of the survey findings from the 24 respondents, which represent nine schools (Appendix B).

Based on the responses from staff and educators to the survey, our group took the following action steps:

- 1) Identified and promoted professional development opportunities that nutrition educators can participate in through Let's Go! and Cooking Matters
- 2) Provided nutrition educators the opportunity for funding through the PPS Food Fund, infrastructure through Let's Go's upcoming cooking cart RFP, and Cooking Matters provided a list of equipment (including prices) necessary for cooking classes
- 3) Created a resource list of child-friendly books that promote healthy eating and nutrition education that was sent to everyone who completed the survey (available on FFL website)
- 4) Provided list of organizations and contact information for partner organizations that provide nutrition education
- 5) Included multiple aspects of feedback into Farm to School grant proposal (such as funding for a cooking cart, funding to survey students on meal preferences, funding to create and print signage that promotes the salad bar and correct portioning, funding for Chef Sam to consult and help establish "Good Food Clubs")
- 6) Let's Go, FoodCorps, and Cultivating Community are developing salad bar and meal line signage to help students choose correct portions and better understand their meal options
- 7) Started discussions about a water station pilot with Sustainable Practices Action Group and Central Kitchen
- 8) Continued conversations with the Locker Project about the best way to support them in providing healthy snacks to teachers, nurses, and social workers

We also developed "2020 School Reports" to send to Wellness Team Champions and Let's Go Champions that includes a wealth of information about their school's contacts, available resources, and an opportunity to provide feedback on how the Food Fuels Learning network can best support their success.

The Nutrition Education Action group was also able to support multiple Food Fund applicants including an applicant from Lincoln Middle School who wanted funding to distribute water bottles and healthy breakfast items to students. In response, Let's Go provided 25 reusable water bottles for this classroom. An applicant from Deering High School who wanted to provide



cooking and nutrition classes to students was connected to Cooking Matters who is now training four of their staff and providing curriculum as well gift cards for groceries so that they can provide valuable, hands-on learning experiences for these high schoolers.

Table 4. Nutrition Education Action Group Updates

Recommendation	Action	Deadline
<p>2.1 Coordinate existing nutrition education efforts by partner organizations, eliminating redundancies and increasing reach</p>	<p>1) Curating comprehensive Nutrition Education Map with partner organizations and school staff teaching nutrition ed</p> <p>2) Updated Nutrition Survey Report</p> <p>3) Outreach to nutrition educators to provide information, resources, and opportunities in response to their survey feedback</p> <p>4) Amanda Hutchins joins FFL Leadership Team</p>	<p>1) Ongoing</p> <p>2) December 2019</p> <p>3) October &amp; November 2019</p> <p>4) February 2020</p>
<p>3.1 Equip schools with the basic infrastructure to teach nutrition education</p>	<p>1) Let’s Go and Cooking Matters have “Cooking Carts” and equipment lists available for interested schools</p> <p>2) FFL applies to Farm to School to request funds to purchase Cooking Cart</p>	<p>1) December 2019</p> <p>2) December 2019</p>
<p>3.3 Foster greater awareness of available nutrition programs, and strengthen student and family participation</p>	<p>1) Let’s Go and Cooking Matters connect with Food Fund applicants who request nutrition education support</p> <p>2) Develop and distribute School Report resource to Wellness and Let’s Go Champions</p> <p>3) Conversations begin around water station pilot</p>	<p>1) November &amp; December 2019</p> <p>2) January 2020</p> <p>3) December 2019, ongoing</p>



## Sustainable Practices

The Sustainable Practices Action Group has continued to focus our efforts on institutionalizing best practices around cafeteria waste separation. We have conducted a site visit to almost every school in the district to ask about challenges and successes around the waste system. We also joined a head custodian meeting to explain what we’re doing and to gain input and feedback about what they see in the cafeteria every day. We have created a custodial survey to ensure that we document the helpful information that the custodial staff shared. We are now working on a PPS best practices guide to cafeteria waste separation to clarify district wide standards for waste separation and engage the whole school community in the composting and recycling program. We would like to work with the district to update the Sustainability Policy (adopted in October 2012) to inform the best practices guide.

In addition to working on district wide best practices, we’re assisting several individual schools on their own sustainability projects. In September 2019, we implemented a reusable silverware pilot at Rowe Elementary School with Jessica Puzak, Cafeteria Team Leader and Karen Gadbois, an Educational Technician. The Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM), gave the action group a grant to purchase the materials to begin the pilot. We Compost It, PPS’s compost service, and a member of the action group, donated silverware to Rowe’s collection. PPS Food Service and Ocean Ave Elementary School are working on a similar project to implement silverware at Ocean.

The King Middle School Moosehead Team’s expedition this year is *Pathway to the Plate and Beyond*. We advised their team on the plate waste audit they conducted in their own cafeteria. Additionally, we helped Riverton Elementary School apply and receive an ecomaine grant to improve their cafeteria waste separation system. We are now helping them identify and build a system that will work best for their students and cafeteria. In 2020 we will complete the best practices guide and continue to work with schools on their individual projects.

Table 9. Sustainable Practices Action Group Updates

Recommendation	Action	Deadline
2.1 Involve custodial and lunchroom staff in trainings and discussions	1) Presented and heard feedback at a head custodian meeting; gave out a survey to all head custodians 2) Collect and analyze custodial surveys on	1) August 2019 2) February



	sustainable practices	2020
2.3 Incorporate composting into education goals, and involve students in composting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Create a PPS composting / recycling guide to inform schools about best practices and the successes of other schools in the district</li> <li>2) Work with Riverton Elementary School to improve their cafeteria waste separation system</li> <li>3) Advised King Middle School on their food waste expedition</li> <li>4) Work with FoodCorps and the cafeteria team at East End Elementary to improve their waste separation system</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) September 2020</li> <li>2) Ongoing; received ecomaine grant in December 2019</li> <li>3) December 2019</li> </ol>
3.2 Purchase compostable or reusable utensils	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Help Rowe Elementary School eliminate plastic cutlery in their cafeteria and replace it with reusable cutlery</li> <li>2) Create a report on the Rowe silverware pilot</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) September 2019</li> <li>2) November 2019</li> </ol>



## Appendix A: School Garden Coach Job Description

**Garden Coach Description** A School Garden Coach is a leader who coordinates school gardening efforts and maintenance, coordinates resources for increased garden-classroom connections, and encourages engagement of students, staff, and community. This position can be held by a teacher, ed-tech, or other schools staff. Parents or community members can be considered if no one on staff can fill the role. This position is not intended to do all garden maintenance and programming alone, but instead be the point person who helps foster this school culture to integrate hands-on, outdoor education and connection to food systems for all students in the school. While technical gardening knowledge is certainly helpful, energy, enthusiasm, and a willingness to learn are far more important!

### Position Responsibilities

- Serve as the main point person for school garden care and use from September-August
- Oversee School Planning Team
  - Convene and recruit garden team (i.e. parents, community volunteers, staff)
  - Collaborate on garden plan (what is planted, how & when it is used)
  - Collaborate on infrastructure needs
  - Meet with the PTO to report and collaborate at minimum one time a year
  - Meet with the administration to report and collaborate at minimum one time a year
  - Meet with the head custodian to report and collaborate at minimum one time a year
- Oversee programming in the garden
  - Run a fall and spring School Garden Club (*run by you*)
  - Coordinate classroom integration for garden-based lesson (*you or others*)
  - Coordinate school opportunities for hands-on garden experiences (*you or others*) (planting, tending, and harvesting)
  - Coordinate after-school programs and clubs garden opportunities (*you or others*)
  - Organize scheduling of garden activities/classes
- Serve as point person for garden and/or greenhouse maintenance to ensure:
  - Fall: Harvesting and putting the garden to bed for winter
  - Spring: Planting and weeding
  - Summer: Watering, harvesting, and weeding
- Coordinate Resources
  - Manage \$500 garden budget
  - Understand the resources available for PPS and disseminate to school
  - Apply for grants and procure donations for additional materials in the gardens
- Reporting and Evaluation
  - Complete goal setting every Winter before growing season





- Track garden activities, harvests, and number of students reached
- Report on goals and reflections
- Participate in district goals and initiatives
  - Attend PPS Garden Network Meetings led by Cultivating Community
  - Participate in at least 2 garden-based trainings offered throughout the year
  - Share successes through available communication channels and/or social media

### **Position Highlights**

- Receive a \$2,000 stipend for the season
- Receive ongoing support from School Garden Network (curricula, training opportunities, grant opportunities, etc)
- Be connected to School Garden Network and Food Fuels Learning Initiative to have influence and input on district level goals and decisions that impact kids connection and education about food and nature.
- Participate in a cohort of school garden coaches and share ideas, resources, best practices, etc.
- Have support from Master Gardener
- Explore garden and cafeteria connection points
- Grow food for your community and yourself!

### **Additional Opportunities**

- Receive scholarship funds and contact hours/CEUs to attend local meetings and conferences such as:
  - Maine School Garden Day
  - Maine Farm to School Conference
  - Maine Agriculture in the Classroom Summer Teachers' Institute

### **Stipulations:**

- This position cannot exist alone, having a garden team to plan events and manage maintenance is also needed
- There needs to be school buy-in and culture (i.e. P.E. teacher uses it for functional fitness lessons, parents collect leaves for garden, the PTO incorporates it into events and fundraisers)
- There needs to be city buy-in providing materials such as adequate compost, woodchips, and hay if possible.

## Appendix B: Nutrition Educators Survey Report

**Initial Report: July 2019**

**Revisions: January 2020**

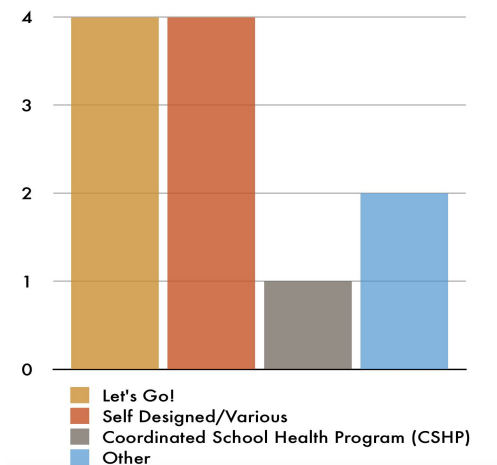
**Overview:** The Nutrition Education Action Group (under Food Fuels Learning) reached out to health teachers, physical education teachers, school nurses, and “Wellness Champions” in all elementary, middle and high schools within the Portland Public Schools with an 11 question survey. The goal was to gauge the following: what nutrition education curricula are being used in the Portland Public Schools; how often nutrition is taught; what lesson topics are covered in class; what is working well; and where educators feel there are gaps. Ultimately, we hope to use this data to assist educators in building a comprehensive, district-wide nutrition curriculum and addressing those gaps.

### Survey Results

Of the twenty-four respondents, four are health/physical education teachers, three are school nurses, two are social workers, nine are teachers, one is a principal, and five hold other positions (see Appendix A). Not all schools are represented in the results: out of eight elementary schools, four are represented (Lyseth, Ocean Avenue, Rowe, and Riverton); out of three middle schools, all are represented (King, Lincoln, and Lyman); and out of three high schools, two are represented (Casco Bay and Deering) (see Appendix A). Since the addition of Ocean Avenue Elementary School responses, which is fifteen, only seven of the submissions have responses and enough information for data.

#### The District

Of the respondents, six used the “5210: Let’s Go!” nutrition curriculum, nine used self-designed or various curricula, and one used Coordinated School Health Program. Several of the respondents reported that they developed their curriculum by doing research, reading books, taking classes, and self-assessing the needs of their students. The health teachers who responded to the survey reported spending between 3-4 weeks on nutrition, whereas nurses and social workers generally spent time with students on an individual, intermittent basis. One middle school social worker made nutrition the focus of their work for

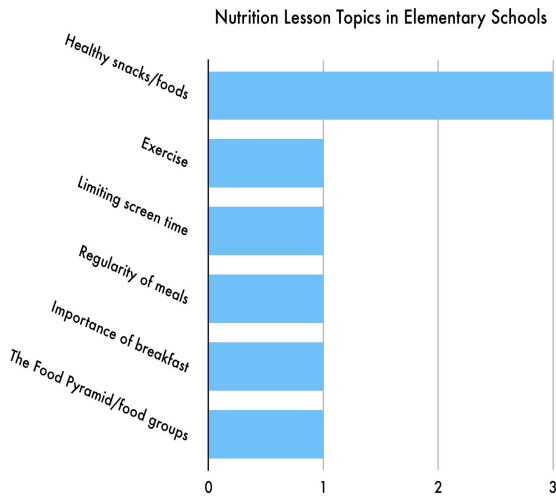




one month. Across all schools and grade levels, teachers reported needing more time to teach nutrition, as well as more access to healthy snacks for students.

### Elementary Schools

Of the elementary school educators, one was a physical education teacher, one was a social worker, one was a school nurse, and one was a classroom teacher.

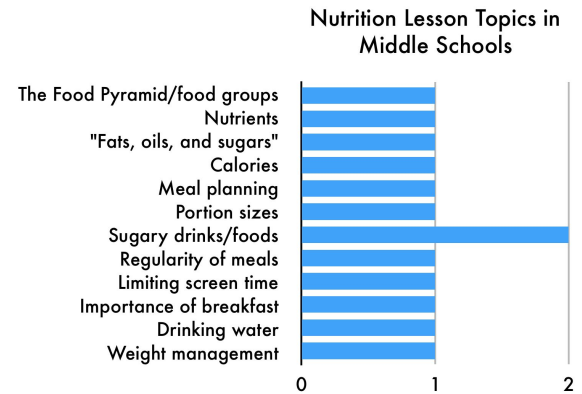


The two teachers reported using the 5210 Let’s Go! nutrition curriculum. To answer the question of how the curriculum was chosen, one teacher responded, “I have been using it for years in my regular classroom” and the other reported not knowing of any others. The most commonly reported lesson in elementary schools is healthy snacks and food.

### Middle Schools

Only one of the middle school respondents was a health teacher. The other three included two school nurses and one social worker. The health teacher wrote, "I don't have a specific curriculum. My curriculum is designed by me in conjunction with what other health teachers in the district teach," and that to design

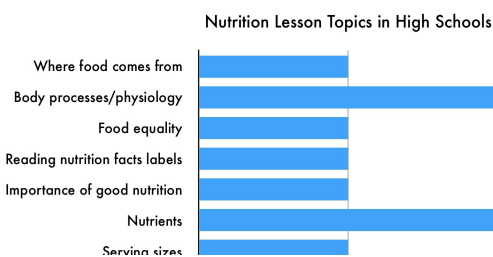
the curriculum “I took classes and read books around nutrition and came up with a list of things I feel were the most important things for young people to learn around nutrition at this age.” The lesson topics for middle schools were more variable compared to the elementary and high schools. The two nurses reported using 5210 Let’s Go! curriculum, and the social worker drew from their own knowledge and information from the state department.



### High Schools

The two respondents for the high schools had experience teaching health or were currently in the position of physical education/health teachers. Both respondents reported designing their own curriculum, one reporting student needs as the foundation and the other reported research. Each reported a wide variety of topics taught in class, with overlap regarding nutrients and body processes/physiology.

Both teachers cited needing more time to properly cover nutrition and health. To answer the question “Are there any nutrition education





‘asks’ that you would like us to bring to the Superintendent,” one wrote: “One quarter is not enough time to teach all of the health topics.” The other teacher wrote: “Give health education the time it deserves! We are not doing justice to the topic and it continues to be the subject areas the students need to be successful.

## Successes, Challenges, and Asks

Educators across the schools reported a variety of successes, challenges, and asks, but the common needs of teachers according to the assessment are:

- More time to teach health
- A supply of healthy snacks for students
- Special events like food labs, handing out water bottles, or Take and Apple to School Day to engage students
- Support from administration for time and funding to teach nutrition
- Training for educators on how to sensitively teach mental health and eating disorders when covering nutrition and food-related topics

### Elementary Schools

Successes	Challenges	Asks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School-wide events like Healthy Eating Month, Fitness Month, Drinking More Water</li> <li>● Introducing new and healthy foods to students</li> <li>● Helping get a regular food supply to kids who are food insecure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Finding the time to fit in a lesson</li> <li>● Resources</li> <li>● Having a steady supply of healthy snacks to offer children who don't have the ability to bring them from home</li> <li>● Food waste when there's need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Professional development</li> <li>● Curriculum design</li> <li>● Money for materials</li> <li>● Nutrition teacher</li> <li>● Fresh fruit and veggie snacks offered daily for all of our students!</li> </ul>

### Middle Schools

Successes	Challenges	Asks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Changing some of the snacks that King provides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Combatting American fast food culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wider access to healthy snacks at school</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Changing drinks machine to just selling water</li> <li>● Helping students eat correctly when it comes to playing sports</li> <li>● Students expressing pride re weight control and increased exercise</li> <li>● More students eating breakfast</li> <li>● Students drinking more water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students lack of understanding the effects of food/nutrition on physical, emotional, and mental well being</li> <li>● Not enough time to cover nutrition properly in a nine-week health class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wider varieties of food offerings</li> <li>● Special events where we provide water bottles or “Take an Apple to School Day” where we give out apples</li> </ul>
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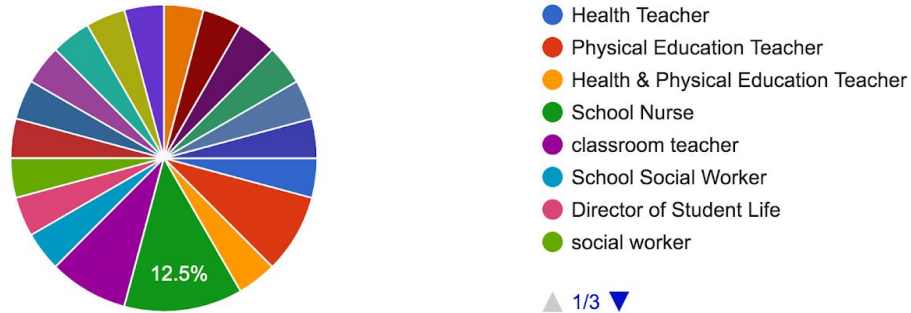
**High Schools**

Successes	Challenges	Asks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students understanding and connecting with where their food comes from</li> <li>● Students understanding human physiology and how food is processed by the body</li> <li>● Debunking food myths</li> <li>● Students reporting that they now check the nutrition facts labels to make choices</li> <li>● Raised awareness of how much sugar and calories students drink</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Not enough time to cover nutrition properly in a nine-week health class</li> <li>● American fast food culture</li> <li>● Students’ lack of understanding the effects of food/nutrition on physical, emotional, and mental well being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More time to teach topics</li> <li>● Support from administrators</li> <li>● Food lab where students can learn to make healthy snacks</li> <li>● Healthier choices in the cafeteria</li> </ul>

### Appendix A

Figure 1: Position of survey respondents in the schools. Percentages out of the total 24 respondents.

What is your job title?  
24 responses



Which school(s) do you work at?

24 responses

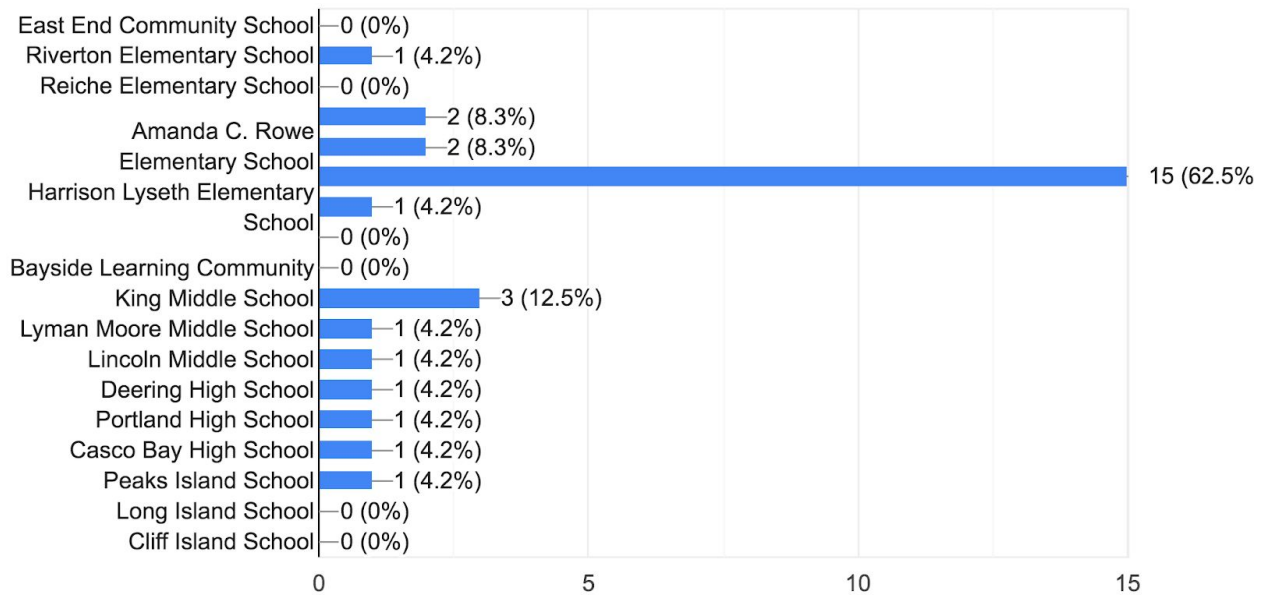


Figure 2: Current schools of educators who responded to the survey. Ocean Avenue Elementary School had the largest participation rate.



### What grade(s) do you teach?

24 responses

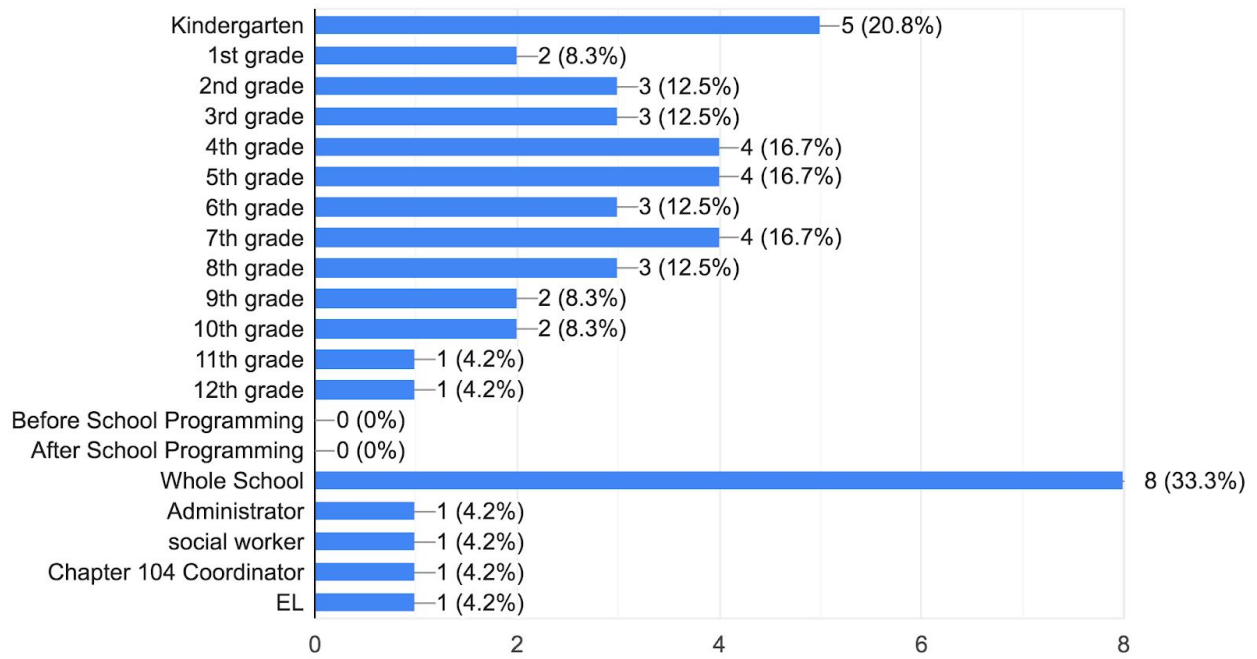


Figure 3: Percentages of participating grades in nutrition education..



## Appendix B: Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with the overall goal of ending food insecurity within the PPS district:

### District

**District Recommendation 1:** Develop and implement district-wide and school-specific strategic plans based on the PPS Food Security Needs Assessment:

1.1 Develop and implement food security strategic plans that align with the PPS District Wellness Plan and Portland Promise through collaboration with PPS District Wellness Committee, schools, and partner organizations

1.2 Use the Portland Education Foundation; Full Plates, Full Potential; Farm to School grants; and other funding opportunities to support the implementation of PPS Food Security Needs Assessment recommendations

**District Recommendation 2:** Develop a yearly monitoring and evaluation plan to track progress implementing the district-wide and school-specific strategic plans:

2.1 Develop shared indicators for schools and partner organizations for data collection and tracking

2.2 Institutionalize data collection and data sharing practices

2.3 Report on yearly findings at the end of each school year

2.4 Build upon PPS food system successes in subsequent years' strategic, monitoring and evaluation plans

**District Recommendation 3:** Institutionalize and maintain a PPS Wellness Coordinator position whose responsibilities include acting as food security advocate on the PPS District Wellness Committee, as follows:





3.1 Coordinate food security efforts by partner organizations and schools; eliminate redundancies, increase reach, oversee networks and resource sharing, and ensure equitable access to food security resources across the district

3.2 Participate on the PPS District Wellness Committee and in development and implementation of district-wide and school-specific strategic plans

3.3 Participate in development of school-based wellness teams

3.4 Identify and research potential funding sources for the implementation of district-wide and school-specific strategic plans

3.5 Provide professional development training and learning opportunities for school staff on poverty and food security

3.6 Create and implement an outreach plan to increase awareness of student food insecurity and promote available food security resources through district-organized events

**District Recommendation 4:** Designate one or more “food security champions” on each school Wellness Team, with responsibilities as follows:

4.1 Serve as liaison between the appropriate school staff members and partner organizations with regards to food security programming

4.2 Participate in development and implementation of district-wide and school-specific food security strategic plan

4.3 Oversee monitoring and evaluation of food security programming at their school

4.4 Report to PPS Wellness Coordinator on District Wellness Committee

## Charitable Foods

**Charitable Foods Recommendation 1** - Enhance consistent resource-sharing within, and among, school communities:



1.1 Circulate Portland Community Food Resource Guide (Appendix A) and Portland Community Summer Food Resource Guide (Appendix B) to families and all school staff at the beginning and end of the school year, respectively

1.2 Incorporate charitable food program information into trainings for school staff. All staff should be informed on what resources are available, trauma-informed ways to help families access services, and the appropriate contact people

1.3 Distribute a general information packet and food security survey at the beginning of each school year to determine wants and needs and enable families to opt in to programs

1.4 Send home feedback forms through backpack programs to improve communication with families receiving this service

1.5 Strengthen communication and collaboration among organizational partners and liaisons managing charitable food programs

1.6 Form charitable foods provider PPS network to share resources and best-practices developed at each school

**Charitable Foods Recommendation 2** - Improve the reliability, efficiency, and sustainability of charitable food programs:

2.1 Ensure that there are adequate school liaisons (e.g., staff, volunteers) to manage the food programs at the schools and to maintain adequate food supply

2.2 Guarantee stipends for the school liaisons managing charitable food programs

2.3 Invest in necessary infrastructure (e.g., cold storage and equipment)

**Charitable Foods Recommendation 3**- Encourage low-barrier access and high availability of school pantries and food options:

3.1 Partner organizations collaborate with schools that do not have an existing charitable food program to prioritize what would serve their school best

3.2 Increase communication about charitable food opportunities at each school to students and families

3.3 Require no paperwork or eligibility checks for access

3.4 Work with partner organizations to offer free, nutritious food in more places (e.g., bowls of fruit in the classroom, Adult Ed, multicultural office)



3.5 Engage with partner organizations to increase the availability of fresh produce and of culturally appropriate foods such as labeled halal options

## Federal Nutrition Programs

**Federal Nutrition Programs Recommendation 1** - Increase overall student participation in federal nutrition programs:

1.1 Launch a professional school meals marketing campaign to attract more students and families

1.2 Collect, analyze, and incorporate student feedback on menu options through district-wide taste tests and response forms

1.3 Maximize cafeteria and lunch period efficiency to ensure students have sufficient time to enjoy and digest their food

1.4 Support and evaluate Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP) 2018 meal pilot and maximize this program throughout district

1.5 Develop a summer meals strategic plan that includes monthly stakeholder meetings beginning in January

**Federal Nutrition Programs Recommendation 2** - Encourage full participation of all eligible students in free and reduced-price meals:

2.1 Continue to encourage and incentivize registration of all eligible families for free and reduced-price meals

2.2 Continue to support families completing eligibility paperwork and implement additional best practices

2.3 Fully implement the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in every eligible school

2.4 Train staff on how to manage breakfast in the classroom to ensure maximum reimbursement

**Federal Nutrition Programs Recommendation 3** - Cultivate a school culture of healthy and inclusive food practices:

3.1 Serve more meals, snacks, and taste tests that represent and celebrate the cultural diversity of the student body



- 3.2 Restore school budget line item that subsidizes food service, especially local food procurement
- 3.3 Increase capacity for food preparation to include more scratch cooking
- 3.4 Exceed federal nutritional requirements by focusing on nutrient dense, minimally processed foods
- 3.5 Limit access to unhealthy food options outside reimbursable school meals as specified in the District Wellness Policy and Smart Snacks regulations

## School Gardens

**School Gardens Recommendation 1** - Develop and implement school garden-based learning goals integrated with Common Core State Standards:

- 1.1 Establish a school garden at every school
- 1.2 Institute teacher training on garden-based education as Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credit
- 1.3 Provide all teachers with a garden curriculum formulated from existing Maine-based lessons connected to Common Core State Standards
- 1.4 Maintain a resource list of existing curricula for teachers to draw from to connect to their learning goals
- 1.5 Increase garden-related summer programming for students that includes hands-on learning and maintenance

**School Gardens Recommendation 2** - Create a district-wide School Garden Network:

- 2.1 Establish a platform to share resources, grants, tips, and ask questions
- 2.2 Convene in-person quarterly meetings
- 2.3 Maintain an online presence to promote school gardens in the district and recruit interested volunteers from the community
- 2.4 Increase efficiency of produce distribution between school garden coordinators and liaisons managing charitable food programs during the growing season
- 2.5 Raise awareness of and fully utilize garden-based education resources in the state



**School Gardens Recommendation 3** - Increase funding and infrastructure for school garden programs:

- 3.1 Identify and utilize sources of funding for school garden maintenance and programming for all schools
- 3.2 Designate budget line in Parks & Recreation Department to support outdoor learning spaces on school property
- 3.3 Provide stipends to school garden coordinators
- 3.4 Create school garden committees at each school with representatives from the school administration, each grade, and the parent community to institutionalize gardening into school culture
- 3.5 Organize more and more-sustained support for summer maintenance

## Nutrition Education

**Nutrition Education Recommendation 1** - Develop a district-wide comprehensive and equitable approach to nutrition education:

- 1.1 Establish nutrition education goals for each grade that build upon the previous year's lessons
- 1.2 Create and implement a nutrition education curriculum aligned with Common Core State Standards through collaboration with the academic departments and organizational partners

**Nutrition Education Recommendation 2** - Designate one person to oversee nutrition education in the district, with responsibilities as follows:

- 2.1 Coordinate existing nutrition education efforts by partner organizations, eliminating redundancies and increasing reach
- 2.2 Provide resources and training to teachers on how to teach basic nutrition education
- 2.3 Leverage funding opportunities among the district and partner organizations by collaborating on grant proposals
- 2.4 Convene bi-annual meetings among partner organizations

**Nutrition Education Recommendation 3** - Prioritize and implement nutrition education in schools:



- 3.1 Equip schools with the basic infrastructure to teach nutrition education
- 3.2 Provide a stipend to teachers who provide after-school nutrition programming
- 3.3 Foster greater awareness of available nutrition programs, and strengthen student and family participation

## Sustainable Practices

**Sustainable Practices Recommendation 1** - Develop measurable local food procurement goals for Food Services:

- 1.1 Set local food purchasing goal to at least 20-25% of total food budget
- 1.2 Launch a marketing campaign to promote local food among the school community
- 1.3 Prioritize local food procurement from small Maine farms

**Sustainable Practices Recommendation 2** - Follow New England Environmental Finance Center's (Sheils, M., & Webster, S. n.d.) best management practices for district-wide composting:

- 2.1 Involve custodial and lunchroom staff in trainings and discussions
- 2.2 Supply school cafeterias with additional composting and waste sorting stations
- 2.3 Incorporate composting into education goals, and involve students in composting

**Sustainable Practices Recommendation 3** - Institute sustainable practices in cafeteria purchases and operations:

- 3.1 Clarify and institutionalize consistent share table practices
- 3.2 Purchase compostable or reusable utensils
- 3.3 Reduce use of single-use plastic by decreasing use of plastic straws and packaged cutlery
- 3.4 Use pump dispensers instead of individual packets for condiments