



**Providence Public School District**

# **FARM TO SCHOOL ACTION PLAN**

**2020-2025**

**Developed by Providence Public Schools and the City of Providence  
Healthy Communities Office**

**January 2019 - June 2020**



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This Action Plan was developed between January 2019 and June 2020 through a partnership between the City of Providence Healthy Communities Office and Providence Public Schools, funded by a USDA Farm to School Planning Grant. Thanks are due to the members of the Farm to School teams who participated in its creation over many months. Special thanks to the dedicated Providence Public Schools teachers and administrators, multiple community partners, and Sodexo Providence for their contributions to understanding the complexities and possibilities of the Providence Public Schools food system.

This material is based upon work that is supported by the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.





## ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

The following action steps were developed through an 18-month planning process detailed in the Providence Public School District Farm to School Action Plan, 2020-2025

### BUILDING THE FARM TO SCHOOL TEAM

- ★ *Expand the Advisory Team to include food producers*
- ★ *Expand the On the Ground Team to include PPSD Curriculum Leads, parents and students*
- ★ *Establish bi-monthly On the Ground Team meeting schedule*
- ★ *Establish quarterly Advisory Team meeting schedule*

### VISION, GOALS & CONTEXT

#### POLICY

- ★ *Amend the PPSD Health and Wellness Policy to include new Farm to School definition of “Local Product”*
- ★ *Include goals for local purchasing, based on analysis of current local purchasing, in Health and Wellness Policy*

#### INSTITUTIONALIZATION

- ★ *Establish Food Service Management Company (FSMC) reporting metrics and oversight structure within the Health and Wellness Committee*
- ★ *Continue to ensure that the FSMC contract reflects demand for local foods and update metrics and goals regularly*
- ★ *Incorporate outdoor classrooms and gardens into designs for new buildings or building improvements*
- ★ *Incorporate gardens and outdoor classrooms into appropriate curriculum at all levels*

### SCHOOL MEALS

#### SOURCING AND PROCUREMENT

- ★ *In partnership with FSMC, complete analysis of current local purchasing and establish annual goals for expansion*
- ★ *Explore opportunities to expand “adopt-a-farm” to one additional RI farm by 2023*



- ★ *Re-establish a relationship with Red's Best or other purveyors to re-introduce locally-landed fish into Providence school meals*
- ★ *Identify partnerships, including integration of purveyors into Ad Hoc food service committee, to better understand and overcome challenges in distribution, processing and other factors that limit local procurement*
- ★ *Require purveyors to create and maintain systems to track and report product sources, using tiered approach developed through the Farm to School planning process*
- ★ *Maintain, update and refine the Local Procurement Tracking Form regularly*

## **DELIVERY, PROCESSING AND STORAGE**

- ★ *Ensure that the production kitchens are properly equipped for increased in-house processing and production, including engagement of knife sharpening vendor*
- ★ *Add overnight shift at production kitchens to increase in-house processing and production capacity*
- ★ *Engage the Providence Department of Planning and Development and the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation in identifying opportunities to develop light processing facilities in Providence*

## **MENU PLANNING**

- ★ *Coordinate monthly menu planning with the FFRI Harvest of the Month Calendar to feature local, seasonal foods*
- ★ *Use the Students Take Charge Program as a tool of student engagement in menu planning*
- ★ *Engage garden teachers in menu development to feature varieties grown in school gardens*
- ★ *Prioritize quality, appeal, cultural responsiveness and inclusion of seasonal and local ingredients in menu development over quantity of choices offered*

## **TRAINING**

- ★ *Review current annual cafeteria staff training; review effectiveness of current annual Smarter Lunchroom training; identify opportunities to expand awareness of Farm to School and local foods among cooks, assistant cooks and servers*
- ★ *Provide chefs and cafeteria staff with training necessary to increase processing and promotion of local products, including through Farm Fresh Rhode Island's food service trainings with local chefs and farmers, through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant*



## PROMOTION & OUTREACH

### STUDENTS

- ★ *Engage a group of PPSD students in the development of a Providence Farm to School identity*
- ★ *Engage Art teachers and students in the development of a Providence Farm to School logo using the student-developed identity*
- ★ *Increase student and community awareness of Farm to School through promotion of logo contest*
- ★ *Connect with PCTA's Culinary Arts program to bring Farm to School to Providence students in career training*

### FAMILIES

- ★ *Develop family engagement opportunities in gardens and food service activities*
- ★ *Include Farm to School opportunities in District's communications with families*
- ★ *Use monthly menus to increase student and family awareness of seasonal and local products and Providence's Farm to School effort*
- ★ *Include Farm to School in a community forum about school meals*

### TEACHERS

- ★ *Continue to support teachers in development of Farm to School teacher network, including identification of a Farm to School representative at each school*
- ★ *Develop and maintain a Farm to School teacher lists*
- ★ *Develop and promote a Providence Farm to School Handbook of teacher resources*

### SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS & BOARD

- ★ *Support teachers in increasing principals' awareness of and support for staff participation in District Farm to School efforts*
- ★ *Continue to advocate for Farm to School as a critical part of Providence school planning with RI Department of Education*
- ★ *Include Farm to School opportunities in upcoming Providence School Health Needs Assessment and Green Schoolyards Initiative*



## FOOD PRODUCERS & NETWORKS

- ★ *Build connections to local farmers through local food systems agencies*
- ★ *Develop strategies to bring local farmers into cafeterias and other school settings*
- ★ *Develop strategies to overcome local producers' barriers to inclusion in procurement for school meals*

## SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE STAFF

- ★ *Integrate "Intro to Farm to School" into annual food service staff training*
- ★ *Promote monthly recipes using seasonal produce*
- ★ *Partner with Farm Fresh RI to develop and deliver farmer/chef-led educational activities for Providence food service staff*

## MEDIA & COMMUNITY

- ★ *Build out Farm to School web page*
- ★ *Identify opportunities for public communication about Providence Farm to School activities*

## SCHOOL GARDENS

- ★ *Update Garden Assessment, through partnership with Cooperative Extension/ Providence School Garden Initiative, Sodexo and teachers in the On the Ground Team*
- ★ *Develop prioritized list of garden improvements or build-outs to take place in the next five years*
- ★ *Identify five schools for Green Schoolyard interventions in 2020-2021*

## GETTING BUY-IN

- ★ *Continue to advocate for Green Schoolyard model in development of school facilities improvement plan*
- ★ *Develop timeline for engagement of Teaching and Learning staff in identifying Farm to School curriculum connections and professional development (PD) opportunities in support of new curriculum resources being introduced*
- ★ *Work with Curriculum Heads annually to identify PD opportunities*
- ★ *Engage RIDE/PPSD fiscal staff in development of structure and strategies to direct funding from Sodexo to teachers for participation in eligible PD*



## PLANNING & DESIGN

- ★ *Distribute and promote the How-to-Guide for Rhode Island School Gardens to teachers throughout the District*
- ★ *Ensure that teachers' plans for new gardens are coordinated with the City's facilities improvement plans*

## FUNDING

- ★ *Ensure that teachers, schools and the PPSD Development Office are regularly sharing info and coordinating fundraising for Farm to School activities*
- ★ *Partner with Executive Directors to ensure that proper grant application procedures are communicated to garden teachers and others*
- ★ *Engage RIDE/PPSD fiscal and development staff in developing strategies to earmark and appropriately disburse funds raised for Farm to School*

## MAINTENANCE, TRAINING & SUPPORT

- ★ *Create volunteer opportunities to engage community in garden maintenance*
- ★ *Identify need and method for engaging contractors in garden repairs*
- ★ *Identify appropriate schools and community organizing partners for expansion of hybrid school/community garden model in District*
- ★ *Develop summer employment program(s) for local youth to maintain school gardens*
- ★ *Develop partnerships toward development of a Transition Academy Summer Garden Program*
- ★ *Identify opportunities in maintenance contact to clarify roles and increase management of green features on school grounds*
- ★ *Engage facilities management representatives in on-the-ground work to familiarize them with individuals gardens and garden teachers*
- ★ *Support On the Ground Teachers in identifying and developing network of peers at all schools*
- ★ *Identify and engage support of an administrator at each school with a current or planned garden*
- ★ *Continue to engage URI Cooperative Extension, including PSGI and the URI Master Gardeners, in supporting and training teachers*
- ★ *Develop necessary partnership with PSGI to expand School Garden Mentors to every school with a garden*



- ★ *Explore opportunities for connecting garden repair and maintenance needs to GWRI's employment and training programs*
- ★ *Explore partnerships with community gardening organizations to connect schools to nearby community gardens and farms, engage community in school gardens, and activate school gardens in out-of-school times*
- ★ *Expand the City Gardener position to include connecting school gardens to Parks resources*
- ★ *Engage a food service program-supported School Garden Coordinator to provide support to teachers and gardens throughout the District*

## USING GARDEN PRODUCE

- ★ *Develop tastings based on produce grown in school gardens*
- ★ *Offer food safety trainings to Providence teachers who teach in school gardens*

## EDUCATION & CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- ★ *Present Farm to School plan to Content Supervisors for input and buy-in*
- ★ *Connect curriculum area supervisors to Farm to School lessons and other curriculum supports for distribution to building coaches*
- ★ *Adjust strategies and continue to build relationships with curriculum heads as turnaround process proceeds*
- ★ *Engage with FFRI Farm to School planning process to support alignment with Providence Farm to School goals and increase access to programming*
- ★ *Integrate local and/or culturally appropriate produce into FFVP education and procurement priorities statewide*
- ★ *Promote and offer teachers professional development in FFVP curriculum delivery*
- ★ *Raise awareness of challenges to creating and facilitating partnerships, including development of data sharing strategies; build upon successful partnership models in neighboring RI districts*
- ★ *Engage with URI SNAP-Ed planning process to support alignment with Providence Farm to School goals and increase access to programming*
- ★ *Explore how local foods can be integrated into Cooking with Kids for a Healthy Future and how the program can be expanded to reach more schools*



## GARDEN ACTIVITIES

- ★ *Develop and implement baseline survey of all garden education activities being conducted by PPSD teachers*

## CULINARY ACTIVITIES

- ★ *Partner with the RI Healthy Schools Coalition to identify additional opportunities to expand the Local Food Ambassadors (LFA) program in Providence schools and strategies to address challenges or adjust programming as needed*
- ★ *Identify budget and other resources needed to implement Local Food Ambassadors in Providence*
- ★ *Collaborate with Sodexo to align the LFA program with other sustainability goals*
- ★ *Explore partnerships to re-introduce and expand tastings and education about local fish in cafeterias*
- ★ *Engage PCTA Culinary Arts in development of Farm to School culinary strategies*
- ★ *Explore partnership with Johnson & Wales University culinary and sustainable food systems programs in support of Farm to School culinary activities*
- ★ *Identify and address barriers to expanding implementation of Fuel Up to Play 60 across the District*

## FIELD TRIPS

- ★ *Continue supporting elementary school field trips to Pezza Farm and/or new farms engaged through Adopt-a-Farm*
- ★ *Explore partnerships with local urban farming organizations to facilitate Providence-based afoot field trips*
- ★ *Raise awareness of nearby learning opportunities and support planning of afoot field trips by developing a map of each school identifying proximate opportunities*
- ★ *Continue and expand 5th-8th grade trips to local dairy farms through New England Dairy Council*
- ★ *Identify opportunities for sea- and bay-based field trips for students at all levels*
- ★ *Develop partnerships with hydroponic greenhouses and local food producers for field trips and career exploration opportunities*



## AFTERSCHOOL & SUMMER ACTIVITIES

- ★ *Partner with the Providence Parks Department to develop strategies to increase integration of Farm to School activities and education into summer and afterschool meals*
- ★ *Explore options for local food systems, gardening or culinary partners to deliver Farm to School-based programming at PASA sites, potentially coordinated with supper service at the schools*

## EVALUATION

- ★ *Evaluate monthly FSMC reports to monitor progress toward Farm to School goals; update and refine strategies in response*
- ★ *Create Farm to School Implementation Checklist to monitor implementation progress*
- ★ *Integrate 3-year review of Farm to School into Wellness Policy assessment*
- ★ *Identify funding or partnership to develop and conduct annual qualitative assessment*

## PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

### INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

- ★ *Identify partnership and oversight structure for Farm to School Coordinator position*
- ★ *Continue to work with Sodexo to refine, update and determine priorities for spending of support for Farm to School earmarked in the food service budget*
- ★ *Continue to engage City of Providence Healthy Communities Office support in accessing City resources and partners*
- ★ *Review PPSD school food service account to identify funds that can support Farm to School priorities*

### GRANTS

- ★ *Increase coordination between Farm to School teachers and the PPSD Development Office to coordinate efforts and pursue large-scale grants*
- ★ *Submit application for a USDA Farm to School Implementation Grant in future grant cycle*



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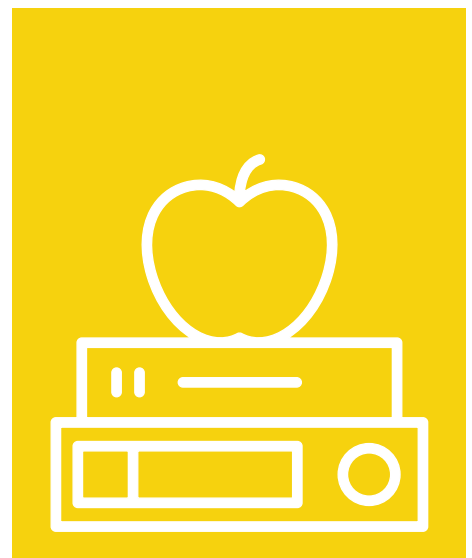
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## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

ES = elementary school  
 HS = high school  
 K = kindergarten  
 MS = middle school  
 PPSD = Providence Public School District  
 RIDE = Rhode Island Department of Education  
 USDA = United States Department of Agriculture  
 NSLP = National School Lunch Program  
 SBP = School Breakfast Program  
 CACFP = Child and Adult Care Food Program  
 FFVP = Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program



### I. HISTORY OF FARM TO SCHOOL

The national Farm to School movement has been developing since the 1990s as a way for schools to improve student health by reducing childhood obesity, support community-based food systems and strengthen local farms. Early Farm to School efforts engaged a variety of stakeholders and approaches, including establishing Farmers' Market Salad Bar in Santa Monica, CA, sales of washed, cut, ready-to-cook collard greens to the Gadsden County School District through the New North Florida Cooperative, and a partnership between Hartford Public Schools and the non-profit Hartford Food System to buy produce from local farmers. From these beginnings, the Farm to School movement spread across the nation. Today, Farm to School programs exist in all 50 states.

Providence has been building the foundation for a district-wide Farm to School (Farm to School) program since the early 2000s, when the District's Food Service Management Company (FSMC) entered into its first contract for local apples to be served in school lunches. In 2014, the District set its first local procurement goals by including a requirement of 15% local purchasing in the request for proposals for the 2014-2019 Food Service Management contract. The awarded FSMC, Sodexo, enlisted Pezza Farm in Johnston to dedicate 25 acres to production for PPSD alone. School gardens of varying scale have been built throughout the District. Providence's school garden landscape now includes dedicated teachers at many schools, various partnerships with supporting non-profit agencies, and at least one successful community partnership for continual use and maintenance of the garden at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School. URI SNAP Education, Farm Fresh Rhode Island and other partners deliver nutrition education lessons in cafeterias and classrooms.

While committed teachers, City and Schools staff and community partners have moved forward with aspects of Farm to School in Providence for many years, these efforts have been disconnected from each other, from the support of a district-wide coordinated strategy, and from the fundraising and other increased capacities of a shared effort. In 2018, PPSD and the City's Healthy Communities Office partnered in a successful application for a USDA Farm to School Planning Grant to assess current activities and develop a 3-5 year plan for a district-wide Farm to School program. This document is the outcome of that process.



Special education students at Esek Hopkins MS harvest lettuce from indoor grow cart



## II. WHY FARM TO SCHOOL

Farm to School programs help children understand where their food comes from and how their diets impact their bodies, the environment, and their local community. Research conducted over the last decade has shown Farm to School programs have numerous benefits in community engagement, economic development, education, environment, and public health. For a list of these benefits please see [Benefits of Farm to School](#).

By tapping into the strengths of the Providence and Rhode Island food communities, Farm to School presents an exciting opportunity to tackle many challenges that have been quantified for the District.

- Building and supporting school gardens will support the effort to **lift academic achievement** by creating new and engaging learning activities on school grounds.
- School gardens will offer new opportunities for **school families and neighbors to engage with and support the schools** while **improving the facilities and appearance of the schools** as healthy, welcoming places.
- Educational field trips to community gardens and urban farms, within blocks of many schools, will **create additional accessible learning opportunities and community connections**. These sites, used by Providence residents from around the world, can serve as living classrooms where students explore how families like their own preserve culture and health by growing traditional foods, while developing microbusinesses to support themselves.
- Bringing food from nearby farms and fisheries into school cafeterias, and expanding teaching about how healthy foods find their way to our plates, **connects students to the local economy while supporting Rhode Island businesses**.
- Providence Farm to School can **improve school environment and morale** by increasing opportunities to **reflect the diverse cultures of the Providence community** through food and by creating opportunities for **positive student engagement in their education and school culture**.



### I. BACKGROUND

For many years, individuals across the school district have been working on aspects of Farm to School in silos, without the support of district-level coordination or resources. In 2017, in an effort to start a coordinated Farm to School approach, a district-wide PPSD team, made up of teachers from Frank D. Spaziano Elementary School and Mount Pleasant High School, the PPSD Wellness Coordinator, PPSD Science Curriculum Chair and the Deputy Director of the City of Providence Healthy Communities Office, was accepted to represent the District at Vermont FEED's annual Northeast Farm to School Institute. The Institute is a unique year-long professional learning opportunity for schools and districts in New England and New York. It starts with a 3-day summer retreat held at Shelburne Farms in Shelburne, VT. During the retreat the team develops a comprehensive 12-month Farm to School action plan and networks with other school teams to share ideas.

Shortly before the June Institute, the District's Supervisor of Science had to withdraw, and it was announced that the contract of the part-time Wellness Coordinator would not continue after the end of the school year. The outgoing Wellness Coordinator attended the Institute as a parent of PPSD students but was no longer able to serve as the anchor of Farm to School within the District administration. Without an administrative anchor, the team developed a work plan that focused on the attending schools as pilot sites for a future district-wide effort. This team drafted what became the vision statement of the PPSD Farm to School effort:

***“ We nourish our children with good food and honor our community’s diversity, to foster respect and support academic achievement and lifelong learning. ”***

Mount Pleasant continued to pursue the work plan under the leadership of teacher James Egan. Monthly meetings were held to first focus on increasing awareness of Farm to School within the school and to recruit more teachers and students for the district's first Farm to School school team. In their first year the team worked with students from Teacher Academy, a school for students who are interested in becoming educators, to lead a lesson on local food and food justice in classrooms. This lesson occurred on the same day Sodexo led a local food tasting in the cafeteria. In 2018 the Mount Pleasant Farm to School team attended the Northeast Farm to School Institute as a single-school team. Despite subsequent personnel changes, the team has persevered and accomplished two great feats: the construction of an accessible greenhouse, and alignment of the school's science curriculum with the fundamental Farm to School principles.



In 2018 the City's Healthy Communities Office and PPSD applied for and were awarded a USDA Farm to School Planning Grant. The purpose of the grant was to create an action plan to establish a cohesive connection between the classrooms, cafeterias, and the local community. In January 2019 the work began with the engagement of a planning consultant and the creation of two Providence Farm to School teams:

1. **Advisory Team:** comprised of school administrators, management-level staff at the District's Food Service Management Company, and multiple statewide and community food systems organizations; and
2. **On the Ground Team:** individuals who work directly in PPSD cafeterias, classrooms and out-of-school programs.



Providence Farm to School team hone vision and work plan at 2019 Northeast Farm to School Institute

In June 2019 a new district-wide team attended the Institute. The team was comprised of teachers from Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex, Esek Hopkins Middle School, George West Elementary School, the new PPSD Wellness Coordinator, the Deputy Director of the Healthy Communities Office, and the District's Chief of Administration. The inclusion of the Chief of Administration was especially notable as a bridge to broader District priorities.

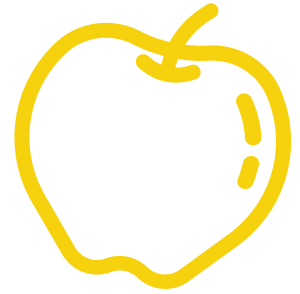
During the three day retreat, the team developed a District-wide work plan to implement over twelve months under the guidance of an assigned Farm to School institute coach, Katherine Brown. From August 2019 through July 2020 the work plan's overarching goal is to identify a structure and empower the team to ensure Farm to School activities (procurement, education, and school gardens) thrive across time and support and enhance the District. The team that attended the Institute joined the On the Ground planning team upon return from the retreat, and the twelve-month work plan they developed has been integrated into the five-year Action Plan.

Each time representatives of Providence have attended the Northeast Farm to School Institute, Providence is by far the largest and most urban district represented. Many peers represent small rural schools, districts serving only a few hundred students, or districts that do not face the financial constraints of PPSD. The Institute has been an overwhelmingly positive experience, but the three-day format is far from sufficient to develop strategies to effectively implement Farm to School in a district of Providence's scale or economic profile.

## TEAM ACHIEVEMENTS 1/2019-10/2019:

### ADVISORY

- Held regular team meetings
- Developed Farm to School definition for district-wide use
- Developed “local and regional” procurement definitions



### ON THE GROUND

- Held regular team meetings
- Developed a 12-month Action Plan (2019-2020)
- Refined and finalized the Providence Farm to School Vision Statement
- Developed a Message Map to assist in outreach and engagement of additional teachers and school staff
- Began to implement increased Farm to School activities with the support of the Food Service Management Company

Both Farm to School teams participated in a joint meeting in August 2019 to review and update the 12-month action plan and strategize for future meetings.

## II. MEMBERS

Each team has representatives from all three aspects of Farm to School: procurement, education, and gardens. Biographies of each team member can be found in [Appendix A.](#)

\*member of the District’s School Wellness Committee

\*\*attended the Vermont FEED Farm to School Institute

### ADVISORY

This team represents policy-level expertise in the areas of Food Systems, Public Health, School Administration, Food Service Management and other relevant fields. This team is comprised of individuals representing state agencies, city government, nonprofits, academic institutions, the food service management provider, and PPSD.

Sarah Amin, *Assistant Professor and Director of SNAP-Ed, University of Rhode Island*  
Sue AnderBois, *Director of Food Strategy, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation*  
Stephanie Bush, *Farm to Community Program Director, Farm Fresh Rhode Island*  
Rachel Calabro, *Climate Change Program Manager, Rhode Island Department of Health*  
Lino Cambio\*, *Supervisor of Food Services, PPSD*



Joseph DiPina+, *Chief of Administration, PPSD*  
 Lynne Conca, *Director of Operations, Sodexo*  
 Elyena de Goguel, *Sustainability Strategy Manager, City of Providence*  
 Rachel Newman Greene\*+, *Deputy Director, City of Providence Healthy Communities Office*  
 Mark Jeffrey, *District Manager, Sodexo*  
 Kate Lacouture, *Principal, Green Circle Design; volunteer coordinator Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School Garden; PPSD parent*  
 Jessica Patroliia, *Nutrition Program Specialist, Rhode Island Department of Education*  
 Betsy Skoda, *MPA, Regional Program Coordinator, Health Care Without Harm*  
 Solight Sou\*+, *District Wellness Coordinator, PPSD*

## ON THE GROUND

This team represents expertise from day-to-day implementation experience inside the schools. This team is made up of teachers, cafeteria staff and program providers.

Kate Balestracci\*, *SNAP-Ed Program Manager, University of Rhode Island*  
 Katherine Brown\*\*, *Farm to School Coach, Northeast Farm to School Institute*  
 Donna Casanova, *Supervisor of Science K-12, PPSD*  
 Robert Daniels+, *Teacher, Esek Hopkins Middle School*  
 Kelly DeAngelis, *Director of Sustainability for PPSD Nutrition Program, Sodexo*  
 Susan Shim Gorelick, Ph.D., *Providence Regional Manager, URI School Garden Mentors*  
 Ben Gormley+, *Teacher, Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex*  
 Shannon Gormley+, *Teacher, Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex*  
 Tammy Lafreniere+, *School Nurse, Mount Pleasant High School*  
 Agnes Summerly+, *Teacher, Webster Avenue Elementary School*  
 Thomas Thomaidis, *Student Engagement Manager, Sodexo*

The establishment of these teams has been productive and successful. However, both teams lack representation from key voices. The Advisory Team should seek to engage representatives from farms and fisheries from which they procure, and curriculum leads from the subject areas beyond science. The On the Ground Team should seek to engage parents and students to bring their expertise and perspective into programming and implementations, and to foster community support for the Farm to School effort.

- ★ ***Expand the Advisory Team to include food producers***
- ★ ***Expand the On the Ground Team to include PPSD Curriculum Leads, parents and students***

### III. DETAILS AND LOGISTICS

#### RESPONSIBILITIES & POWER

The Advisory and the On the Ground Teams are coordinated by the HCO Deputy Director and the PPSD Wellness Coordinator. Both teams make decisions regarding the direction and future of Farm to School in a collective and participatory nature. The On the Ground Team developed a 12 month work plan and worked together on its implementation.

#### MEETINGS

Meetings for both teams are scheduled on an as needed basis. Most meetings have been held at the City of Providence's Healthy Communities Office. In August 2019, Sodexo's Providence Child Nutrition Program moved to a central location that is convenient and easily accommodates meetings. Moving forward both teams should meet regularly and continue to utilize Sodexo's Providence Child Nutrition Program office.

★ ***Establish bi-monthly On the Ground Team meeting schedule***

★ ***Establish quarterly Advisory Team meeting schedule***



Butternut squash taste test with Nathanael Greene MS students, Sodexo, Farm Fresh RI and Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition



## SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT:

### MOUNT PLEASANT HIGH SCHOOL FARM TO SCHOOL TEAM

Mount Pleasant High School is a leader in Providence's Farm to School movement. Dedicated Mount Pleasant teachers, who had already been integrating gardening and food-based education into the classroom, attended the 2017 Northeast Farm to School Institute and returned to the Institute as a single-school team in 2018. Under the leadership of special education teacher James Egan, Mount Pleasant has continued to serve as the Farm to School flagship, making sizable achievements including the construction of a high-hoop greenhouse.

*Mount Pleasant provides cross curricular agricultural education for all MPHS students through classroom research and investigations, in collaboration with cafeteria and community partners with a focus on local foods and farms.*

- Mount Pleasant High School Farm to School values statement



Mount Pleasant HS Farm to School members (L-R) Donna Casanova, Karen Rodriguez, James Egan, Coach Mikayla Anthes, Tammy Lafreniere

The greenhouse was conceived as a way to engage special education students, including those in wheelchairs or with other mobility challenges. Mr. Egan raised funds by applying to many small grants and was able to slowly move the project forward over several years. Programming for students began in the greenhouse while it was still under construction. When it was still just a metal structure with no walls and only a few tables inside, a farmer visited the school and taught students about planting and growing vegetables. The greenhouse construction was finally completed in June 2019, including a plastic cover, walls, and a door to secure its contents. Since completion, Mount Pleasant teachers have developed plans to use the greenhouse and other garden areas around the school as teaching tools in biology and math and special needs classes.

In previous school years, students used the greenhouse to grow flowers which they shared for free with their fellow students and other community members. Students began growing vegetables in the greenhouse in the 2019-2020 school year.



Prior to and during the completion of the greenhouse, Mount Pleasant integrated Farm to School into the classroom and cafeteria in several ways. Mr. Egan's students used making and selling pickles to their fellow students as hands-on learning for measurement and other mathematics topics, developing important life skills such as basic food preparation, and practicing social interaction and business skills.

Sodexo staff were active on the Mount Pleasant Farm to School team, working with teachers and students to integrate local food, tastings and other activities into the cafeteria. This included displaying Harvest of the Month posters, provided by Farm Fresh Rhode Island. Future plans include engaging art students in creating new posters, working with the District's Science Supervisor to align Farm to School with science standards, and other steps to institutionalize Farm to School at Mount Pleasant for all students.

The Mount Pleasant Farm to School work plan, updated in October 2019, includes multiple goals that overlap with those identified in this plan, including those for increasing signage and other Farm to School communications in the cafeteria, creating messaging to communicate about the Farm to School effort to other teachers, engaging art students developing communication materials, integrating Farm to School into curriculum and aligning standards, and more. Other plans include development of pollinator gardens and re-activation of the garden club to grow vegetables and herbs for donation and sale to the community.

At the end of the 2018 school year, James Egan went on leave. Christopher Bender, a biology teacher, has assumed leadership of the team. He has continued to engage students in and improve the garden and greenhouse, and other team members work to keep the Mount Pleasant Farm to School vision moving forward.

### **CURRENT TEAM MEMBERS**

Christopher Bender, *Biology Teacher*  
Donna Casanova, *PPSD Science Supervisor*  
James Egan, *Special Education Teacher*  
Tammy Lafreniere, *School Nurse*  
Karen Rodriguez, *ELL Teacher*





## VISION, GOALS & CONTEXT

### I. BACKGROUND

The vision for Providence's Farm to School program has been defined by teachers, school administrators and City staff as:

***We nourish our children with good food and honor our community's diversity, to foster respect and support academic achievement and lifelong learning.***

Through the work of the planning process, the Advisory Team further refined that vision to include:

***Providence Public School District's Farm to School program empowers children and their families to make informed choices while strengthening the local economy and environment and contributing to vibrant communities.***

The three components of Providence Public School District's Farm to School program are:

**Procurement:** local foods are sourced, purchased, promoted and served in the school environment

**Education:** integration of food-related education into the regular, standards-based curriculum and out of classroom opportunities for students and families

**School gardens:** students and staff engage in hands-on learning through growing food and connecting to local and global communities and environment

### II. LONG TERM VISION

By 2025, Providence's Farm to School program will be an established and thriving program where local foods are served and promoted in every cafeteria, food-related education occurs in and out of the classroom at every school, and gardens suited to the individual needs of each school are connected to systems of community support.



### III. NEAR-TERM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In the next 3-5 years, these objectives will move the District toward the long-term vision.

#### PROCUREMENT (SCHOOL MEALS)

- Increased procurement of products from local farms and fisheries
- Development of daily menus based on local seasonal availability and student input
- Increased student and staff awareness of local foods and the Farm to School program

#### EDUCATION

- Increased equity in access to food and nutrition education throughout the District
- Integration of food-based education into multiple curriculum areas



#### SCHOOL GARDENS

- Development of systems for successful, year-round use and maintenance of school gardens
- Development of strategies for continual build-out and improvement of gardens, to ensure equity in access throughout the District

#### EVALUATION

- Tracking progress on local procurement goals through development and ongoing use of reporting template
- Updating survey of existing gardens to establish baseline; conducting follow-up survey every three years to track progress in garden creation and improvement

#### PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

- Development of funding structure to sustain the Farm to School program
- Development of staffing structure to continue to develop and carry out the program's goals
- Increased awareness and participation in the Farm to School program to ensure equitable access to students in every school

The Action Steps necessary to meet these objectives are identified throughout this document.



#### IV. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND STUDENT POPULATION

The Providence Public School District (PPSD) is the largest school district in Rhode Island. More than 85% of the District's 24,000 students qualify for free or reduced price school meals, and all students are currently offered free breakfast and lunch. 37% of students come from families that earn below the poverty level, and 55.8% of students' families receive SNAP benefits. Food security is a significant challenge for families with the economic profile of the student population.

Approximately 16% of Providence Public Schools students receive special education services.

The student community is ethnically and culturally diverse. Approximately 65% of the student body is Hispanic, 16% Black, 9% White, 5% Asian, 4% Multi-racial and 1% Native American. More than half of Providence students come from homes where English is not the primary language spoken. Nearly one-third of students are English Language Learners (ELL). Combined, students and their families speak 55 different languages and hail from 91 countries of origin. Multiple sources have identified that cultural gaps between the predominantly White, native English-speaking teaching staff and the student body present challenges to school culture and student achievement. Efforts to address this gap have included piloting an Ethnic Studies Curriculum in the 2017-2018 school year, an effort led by Providence Student Union and other student advocates. The cultural richness represented in the PPCSD student body is a strong asset to Providence's Farm to School effort. Creating opportunities to explore and highlight the diverse cultural, linguistic, culinary and agricultural traditions of PPCSD families will build upon the strengths of the Providence community while genuinely connecting to students' lived experiences. Honoring this diversity and fostering respect are key aspects of the PPCSD Farm to School vision.

The Providence Public School District includes 42 schools: 22 elementary, 7 middle and 13 high schools. Schools are distributed throughout the city, with a concentration of three high schools (Classical, Central and Providence Career and Technical Academy) clustered together at a central location near downtown. The district uses a school choice model that enables families to communicate school assignment preference when their children register for Kindergarten, 6th and 9th grade. This model, in combination with high family mobility and special assignments for ELL or programs for other specific learning needs, results in a large proportion of students attending schools outside their neighborhood of residence. At any given school, it is likely that the majority of students do not live in the surrounding neighborhood, which presents challenges for transportation and family and community engagement.

According to the RI Department of Education (RIDE) 2018-2019 Providence District Report Card, just 11.2% of PPSD students measure as proficient in math on state assessments. In English Language Arts, 16.5% measure as proficient. Concern about low student achievement has recently come to a head. In May 2019, the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy led a review of the Providence Public School District at the invitation of the RIDE Commissioner, Angélica Infante-Green. The review was supported by Governor Gina Raimondo and Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza and funded by the Partnership for Rhode Island, a business-led group focused on economic development. In June, the review was summarized in a report that outlined deep concerns about school climate, culture, physical plant, administrative structure and other factors impacting student achievement. As of November 1st 2019, RIDE has assumed oversight and administration of the Providence Public School District, with the end goal of a transformation to achieve more positive student outcomes. This transformation model will be in effect through 2024.



Del Sesto MS garden after makeover by CAPP's summer youth program

## V. PROGRAM CONTEXT

### SCHOOL MEALS IN PROVIDENCE

Rhode Island is unique in that nearly all school districts' meal programs are run by three food service management companies: Aramark, Chartwells, and Sodexo. Only one school district (North Kingstown) operates its own school meals program. These same food service management companies, plus a fourth, Revolution Foods, also serve the majority of public, independent and charter schools and many child care institutions in the state. School districts' contracts with these contractors are year-by-year, with the option of up to four 1-year renewals.

Federal, state and local regulations require that the food service contract be awarded through a competitive bidding process. Through this bidding process, and through the regular practice of renewing the contract for the four years allowed, Sodexo has held the PPSD food service contract for the past 25 years. The current contract with Sodexo started July 1, 2019 and, if renewed for the maximum allowable time frame, could be extended through June 30, 2024.



In preparation for the current contract cycle, the District's Health and Wellness Committee convened a Food Service Ad Hoc Committee to establish priorities, vision, mission and goals for the school meals program for the first time in the District's history. This Ad Hoc group and the Health and Wellness Committee will be responsible for establishing and monitoring metrics toward its health-related food service priorities, including Farm to School.



### **PROVIDENCE HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMMITTEE FOOD SERVICE PRIORITIES (ESTABLISHED 2018):**

**Vision:** All Providence students have access to high quality, nutritious meals so they are well-nourished and ready to learn.

**Mission:** Providence Food Service provides high quality meals using local and wholesome ingredients to the students of Providence. Meals shall provide age-appropriate, accessible, attractive and nutritious food for students. Providence cafeterias will be places of learning and meals will reflect a positive relationship with healthy food. Food service staff and meals will reflect Providence's diverse student population and provide opportunities for culturally competent community engagement.

The Operational Objectives identified for by the Health and Wellness Committee for Providence Food Service support and overlap with the goals of Farm to School. They are:

1. Design menus built with student/community input that also meet USDA child nutrition standards
2. Purchase local and regionally grown/produced foods
3. Provide quality and culturally appropriate food and nutrition literacy opportunities for students, staff, and families in and outside of the school

The PPSD Supervisor of Food Service is the key internal staff member charged with oversight of the Sodexo contract. Sodexo employs over 300 staff members to manage the Providence Child Nutrition Program. At each school PPSD employs between two and nine cafeteria staff, including a chef manager and one or more food service workers. See [Appendix C](#) for an overview of the PPSD and Sodexo staff structure.

## SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAMS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES OFFERED IN PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS INCLUDE:

### SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

#### **2,262,152: # of breakfasts served to PPSD students (2018-2019)**

All PPSD schools offer breakfast through the USDA School Breakfast Program. Elementary schools offer breakfast in the classroom at no charge via the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Middle schools and high schools offer breakfast through a combination of models, including “grab and go.” A total of 2,262,152 breakfasts were served to PPSD students in the 2018-2019 school year. These meals are funded through USDA reimbursement to the District. In the 2019-2020 year free breakfasts are reimbursed at a rate of \$2.20 for each complete meal served.

### NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

#### **3,090,482: # of lunches served to PPSD students (2018-2019)**

In the 2018-2019 school year, 3,090,482 lunches were served in PPSD cafeterias through the National School Lunch Program. All foods offered comply with USDA Child Nutrition Program requirements. In the 2019-2020 school year, free lunches are reimbursed to the District from USDA at a rate of \$3.50 per complete lunch. Strategies that encourage students to choose a school lunch made up of every required element allow the District to maximize the funding available to the meals program as a whole.

### FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PROGRAM

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) is a federally-assisted program, administered in Rhode Island by the Rhode Island Department of Education, providing free fresh fruits and vegetables to children in elementary schools during the school day. The goal of the FFVP is to introduce children to fresh fruits and vegetables, to include new and different varieties, and to increase overall acceptance and consumption of fresh, unprocessed produce among children. Sixteen Providence elementary schools participate in FFVP and accompanying nutrition education offered by URI’s SNAP Education Program.





## AFTERSCHOOL SNACK PROGRAM (THROUGH NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM)

The National School Lunch Program's Afterschool Snack Program operates at 10 PPST schools (2 elementary, 2 middle and 6 high schools). In order for a school to participate in the Afterschool Snack Program, a school must participate in the NSLP lunch component and operate an afterschool care program that primarily provides care for children after school; has organized, regularly scheduled activities in a structured and supervised environment; and includes education or enrichment activities, distinct from any extracurricular program organized primarily for scholastic, cultural or athletic purposes. In the 2018-2019 school year, 132,670 snacks were served through the NSLP Afterschool Snack Program.

## AFTERSCHOOL SUPPER PROGRAM (THROUGH CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM)

The Afterschool Supper Program is funded through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and administered through the USDA. Suppers can be served at schools or other afterschool program sites located in areas of "demonstrated need". In order for these locations to offer supper, the afterschool care program must provide organized, regularly scheduled activities in a structured and supervised environment, including an educational or enrichment activity. PPST delivers the Supper Program at 7 schools (5 MS, 2 HS) and the City of Providence Parks Department offers the program at all 11 of the City's recreation centers. A total of 11,820 suppers were served in the 2018-19 school year at PPST schools and 48,393 in City recreation centers.

## SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

**123: # of City and PPST summer meal sites**

**60,680: # of summer breakfasts served to children at City and PPST meal sites (2019)**

**132,728: # of summer lunches served to children at City and PPST meal sites (2019)**

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is an ideal time and place to use locally grown foods in breakfasts, snacks, or lunches. During the summer of 2019, 118 summer meals sites were administered by the Parks Department, serving 52,000 breakfasts and 123,000 lunches, which includes meals that were served as "seconds" and therefore were not eligible for reimbursement. An additional 8680 reimbursable breakfasts and 9728 reimbursable lunches were served in five schools over the summer, to children participating in summer school or other programs taking place in the school buildings. Because they do not face the same time restrictions as meals provided during the school day, and usually operate at smaller scales than school-day meal service, summer and afterschool meals offer enhanced opportunities for food education activities, menu tailoring and increased youth engagement with the local food system.



## **PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:**

### **SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AT SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST**

In summer 2019, the Providence Parks Department and Southside Community Land Trust (SCLT) piloted an innovative program to connect summer meal participants with local foods. Southside Community Land Trust's Youth Employment Program engages approximately 20 paid youth staff in work that spans the Providence local food system: conducting community outreach about farmers markets and food access, assisting SCLT's City Farm in its urban food production, co-leading classes for SCLT's summer children's learning program, and participating in workshops and field trips that expand their knowledge of agriculture, their community and civic engagement. Youth staff operate Somerset Hayward Community Farm, a ¼-acre formerly abandoned and heavily vandalized lot in Upper South Providence, where the youth plant, tend, and harvest crops for sale.

The Youth Employment Program is a summer meals site, offering free lunch to all participants. Participants expressed that the meals they were offered were not reflective of the food systems lessons and skills they were learning during the program day. In Fall 2018, the Youth Employment Program began collaborating with the Providence Parks Department on strategies to provide summer meals directly connected to the food grown by the youth, with increased vegetarian and other options to meet the youths' preferences.

Providence Parks Department staff worked with the youth to plan menus that meet USDA school meal nutrition standards. The organizations identified a kitchen, managed by West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation's agriculture-based Sankofa Initiative, that meet food safety standards and includes the necessary equipment. The youth developed procurement plans that included vegetables and herbs from their own farm and remaining necessary items from Sodexo. The partners developed cooking lesson plans to ensure that the youth had the skills necessary to prepare daily meals for their peers that met all the nutritional and food safety requirements.

For six weeks in July and August 2019, sixteen youths created two hot lunches a week to share with their peers, with the remaining three meals a week provided by Sodexo. The Youth Employment Program and the Parks Department intend to continue and expand this partnership in summer 2020, with the intention of providing more meals per week and expanding to serve lunches to youth at additional meals sites.



## VI. POLICY CONTEXT

Federal, state, and local policies affect a community's ability to implement Farm to School practices. The following information is the current landscape of local Farm to School policy. For federal and state level Farm to School policy see [Appendix B](#).

### FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT COMPANY CONTRACT

The 2019-2020 School Year is the first year of this five year Food Service Management Company (FSMC) contract. In the contract Sodexo agreed to the following:

*The FSMC, as the agent of the SFA, will maximize the use of RI grown/locally grown products, including but not limited to, fruits, vegetables and dairy products, whenever possible, and when purchased by the SFA directly, such fruits, vegetables, and dairy products must be used by the FSMC in the SFA's Food Service Program.*

*The FSMC shall engage in RI's Farm to School initiative in an effort to connect schools (K-12) with RI/local farms in order to serve healthy meals using locally-produced foods.*

*The FSMC shall produce a monthly report which documents the procurement of RI grown/locally grown products including the local farm source, the product(s) purchased and the value of the products purchased on behalf of the SFA.*

Page 21, Sections G, H, & I.



### PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WELLNESS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Any school district participating in the National School Lunch Program is required by USDA to have a wellness policy pertaining to nutrition and physical activity in the district. The Rhode Island Department of Education further requires that each district engages a Health and Wellness Committee to develop and carry out the policy. PPSD created the Wellness Coordinator position to support schools in implementing and enforcing the policy.

While typical school wellness policies are limited to defining how a district will meet federal nutrition and physical activity requirements, Providence has engaged an active Health and Wellness Committee from a variety of related disciplines, resulting in a broad district wellness policy that guides the district’s efforts to establish a school environment that promotes students’ health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. The current wellness policy includes the following:

***“ As part of the Health curriculum, nutrition lessons at every grade level shall be directly linked to the school environment so that school gardens, school cafeterias, farm field trips, taste testing, and student cultural backgrounds may serve as learning tools to enhance the knowledge and skills presented in the classroom. ”***

page 3, Section 2a.



Webster Ave. ES students in the school outdoor learning space and gardens

***“ The District recognizes the importance a Farm to School approach plays in helping students eat with the seasons, develop lifelong healthy eating patterns, support the local economy and reduce food miles and food carbon footprints and learn about origins of food and how it is grown or sourced. Schools are encouraged to offer and promote seasonal, locally sourced produce and ingredients in every cafeteria and every location in the school building where food is offered or sold. Farm to School activities are strongly encouraged. Farm to School activities include incorporating local products into meal and menu planning, providing consistent messaging and education about the local food connection to nutrition, development and use of school gardens, offering field trips to local farms or local food producers and having special promotions or taste tests that highlight local foods. ”***

pages 5-6, Section 3d.



Future Farm to School policy activities are to amend the above policy to include the definition of “local product” as established by this planning process, and to include a minimum local purchasing goal in the Wellness Policy. This goal will be set after analysis of current local procurement as described under “School Meals” below.

- ★ ***Amend the PPSD Health and Wellness Policy to include new Farm to School definition of “Local Product”***
- ★ ***Include goals for local purchasing, based on analysis of current local purchasing, in Health and Wellness Policy***

## COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION

USDA’s Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows schools in high-need districts to offer nutritious meals to all students at no charge through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). The CEP has a number of benefits to students and school districts: Offering a meal to every student at no charge can increase meal consumption by eliminating the need for cash-in-hand or stigma associated with participation in free or reduced-price meals. The CEP can reduce administrative costs by eliminating the need to collect and manage cash on a daily basis, which ideally allows those funds to be dedicated to improving meal quality or other factors.

Through CEP, all PPSD elementary schools have offered breakfast and lunch at no charge for several years. As of the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, all schools including middle and high schools, offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to students through CEP.

## RI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TURNAROUND INTERVENTION

As described above under “School Environment and Student Population,” the Providence Public School District is undergoing a turnaround process, under the leadership of the RI Department of Education (RIDE). This turnaround process includes a review of all external contracts held by the Department, including the Food Service Management Company contract, the custodial services contract (currently held by Aramark), and the union-negotiated teachers’ contract. The process also includes a review and replacement of curriculum.

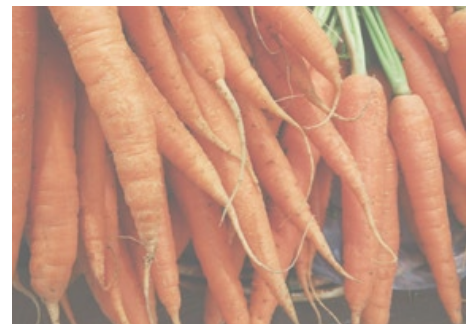
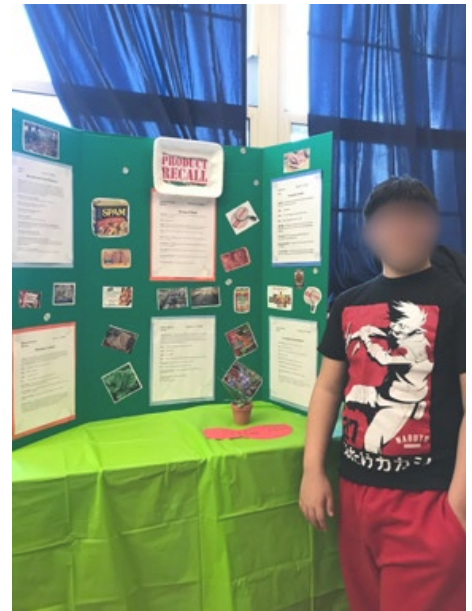


Students and volunteers improve the Vartan Gregorian ES garden before the start of the 2019-2020 school year

## VII. INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The many partners engaged in Providence Farm to School are laying a strong foundation for institutionalizing Farm to School into the District's operations. These steps, many of which have already begun, are needed to continue making Farm to School a part of the day-to-day for everyone in Providence schools:

- ★ ***Establish Food Service Management Company (FSMC) reporting metrics and oversight structure within the Health and Wellness Committee***
- ★ ***Continue to ensure that the FSMC contract reflects demand for local foods and update metrics and goals regularly***
- ★ ***Incorporate outdoor classrooms and gardens into designs for new buildings or building improvements***
- ★ ***Incorporate gardens and outdoor classrooms into appropriate curriculum at all levels***



Students presented nutrition information and student-created recipes at Nathan Bishop MS Harvest event



### I. BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS TO DATE

As noted above under “Policy Context,” Farm to School activities in the cafeteria, including the importance of local seasonal products, have been integrated into the Health and Wellness Policy since 2013. In 2014, the City of Providence Healthy Communities Office supported PPSD in including a 15% local procurement requirement into the Food Service Management Company Request for Proposals. While this was an important first step in introducing local procurement into the Providence school meal landscape, a specific definition of “local product” was not yet established, and tracking and reporting protocols were not created to evaluate the District’s success at meeting this goal.

A success of this planning process has been the establishment of a clear definition of “local product,” as described below. Another important step was in compiling available information from Roch’s, Sodexo’s primary local produce vendor, about varieties and quantities of local products procured in the 2018-2019 school year. This level of reporting had not been previously requested. This data, described further below, will be used to establish a baseline and goals for increased local procurement.

★ ***In partnership with FSMC, complete analysis of current local purchasing and establish annual goals for expansion***

### II. DEFINING LOCAL AND REGIONAL

The Healthy Communities Office and Providence Public School District envision a Farm to School program that coordinates with and supports City, State and regional economic and agricultural goals. This planning process engaged statewide food system and economic development representatives in the Advisory Team to inform the development of a geographically prioritized, tiered definition of “local.” This definition will help ensure that Providence’s Farm to School effort is in sync with the priorities, goals and metrics of these important partners.



## WHAT IS “LOCAL” TO PROVIDENCE FARM TO SCHOOL?

**Local products** are those **grown, raised, landed or harvested** in:

### **Tier 1: Rhode Island**

### **Tier 2: Regionally**

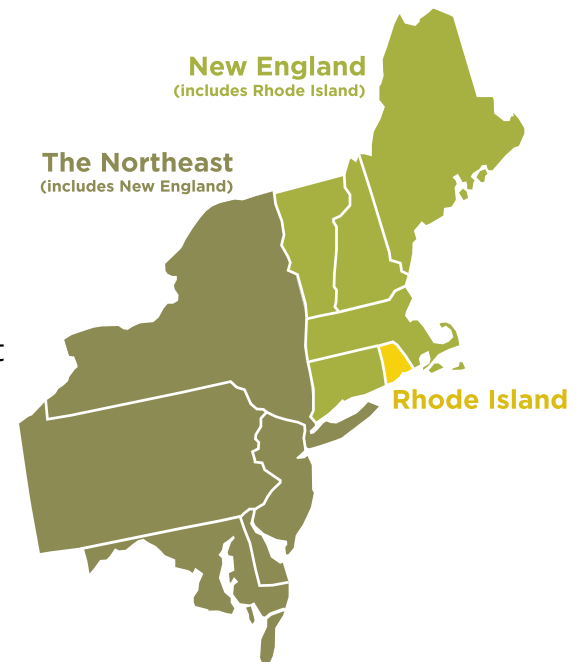
**2a: New England** (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)

**2b. The Northeast** (New England states plus New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland)

Some important considerations factored into the process of establishing this definition. First, fisheries play a vital part in Rhode Island’s economy, culture and environment. While fish is not regularly included in USDA Farm to School plans, the inclusion of landed in the definition creates possibilities to connect with the local food system that are particular to the character of Rhode Island’s community and ecosystem.

While procuring from local companies in general is in the best interest of the state and local economy, and procurement from local bakers, juice bottlers, pickle manufacturers or other food producers is supportive of the Rhode Island food system, the Farm to School program targets and measures only minimally-processed foods directly from local farms and fisheries. The Team agreed that it is important to prioritize local procurement across the board, but that products other than those grown, raised, landed or harvested locally are beyond the scope of Farm to School.

As a required component of any school meal, milk is an important local agricultural product that makes up a significant proportion of all Child Nutrition Program budgets and purchasing. Because of its short shelf life and challenges in transportation, milk in any district’s meal program is generally a “local” product. For Providence Public Schools, Sodexo procures over three million individual milk cartons annually from Guida Dairy in New Britain, CT, at a cost of over \$834,000 in the 2018-2019 school year. Since 100% of Providence’s milk procurement already meets the established definition of “Local” (Regional, New England tier), and since there is little opportunity for increased procurement of an item that is already required to be served at every meal, Providence’s Farm to School efforts will not set or monitor goals for milk procurement.





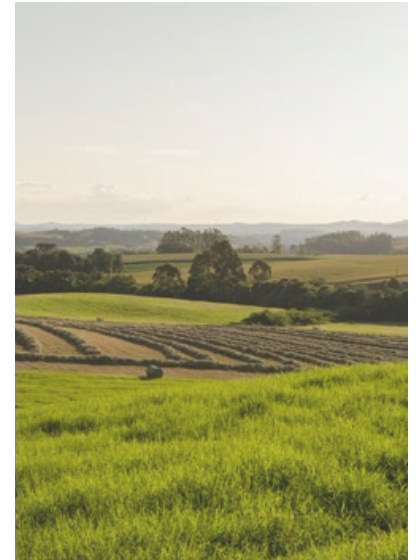
### III. SOURCING AND PROCUREMENT

Rhode Island has an active agricultural community made up of approximately 1,200 farms, using 6.9% of land in the state. However, the leading agricultural products are sod and nursery products. The state is also known for its diversity of specialty crops, including fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture products. Rhode Island farms are typically small- the 2012 Census reports that 35% of the state's farms are 9 acres or less- and few produce commodity monocrops such as wheat or corn that are suitable for large-scale institutional use.

Rhode Island leads in national rankings of the percent of farmer income that comes from direct- to-consumer (e.g. farmstand or farmers' market) sales. Direct-to-consumer sales command a higher price point and bring more money back to the farmer than selling wholesale. This form of sale is better suited to the current capacities of most Rhode Island farms than large-scale wholesale.

#### SOURCES OF LOCAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

As demonstrated by Southside Community Land Trust's Youth Employment Program, summer, afterschool and other small-scale programs offer opportunities for creative procurement from hyper-local small farms, even right in the city of Providence. However, to serve up to 24,000 students in more than 40 locations, it is expected that the Providence Child Nutrition Program's primary connection to local products will continue to be through large-scale contracts between the Food Service Management Company and wholesale distributors. The primary vendors for Sodexo's Providence Child Nutrition Program are Sysco, based in Boston, MA and Roch's Fresh Food, based in West Greenwich, RI.



Through Roch's, Sodexo contracts with Pezza Farm in Johnston, RI for the bulk of Providence Public Schools' local procurement. This partnership began in 2013, with the dedication of 10 acres to Providence Public Schools, producing 8,000 pounds of produce for school meals. In 2015, the program expanded to 25 acres. It is recommended that Sodexo pursue opportunities to expand this "Adopt-a-Farm" model with at least one additional RI farm in the next three years.

★ ***Explore opportunities to expand "adopt-a-farm" to one additional RI farm by 2023***

The [Northeast Regional Food Guide](#), developed by Cornell Cooperative Extension, lists seasonally available foods that may be procured from local farms for use in PPSD school meals.

## SOURCES OF LOCAL FISH AND SEAFOOD

Rhode Island's vibrant local fishing industry plays an important part in the state and region's culture and economy. Locally-landed varieties include shellfish (oysters, soft-shell clams, whelks, squid, quahogs), crustaceans (primarily lobster and rock crab) and finfish (winter, yellowtail, and summer flounder, tautog, striped bass, black sea bass, scup, bluefish, butterfish, whiting, skate, monkfish, cod and dogfish). The Port of Galilee, 35 miles from Providence, is the state's largest fishing port, transporting 16 million pounds of seafood annually. Regionally, the country's largest commercial fishing port is located just 31 miles away in New Bedford MA.

A commonly cited statistic is that Rhode Island exports 95% of the seafood landed at ports in the state, while importing 95% of the seafood eaten in the state. Increasing institutional purchases of local fish can have a positive impact on both the economy and the environment by raising demand for fish caught in the waters just off our coast.

Red's Best is a wholesaler specializing in connecting local fishermen to local markets. In 2017, Red's Best conducted a successful [tasting of dogfish tacos at Classical High School](#). The tasting demonstrated student interest in fresh local fish, counter to common assumptions about the appeal of fish to student palettes. Sodexo ordered local dogfish for service in Providence middle and high schools monthly for the remainder of the 2017-2018 school year. Local fish has not been included in PPSD meals in subsequent years.

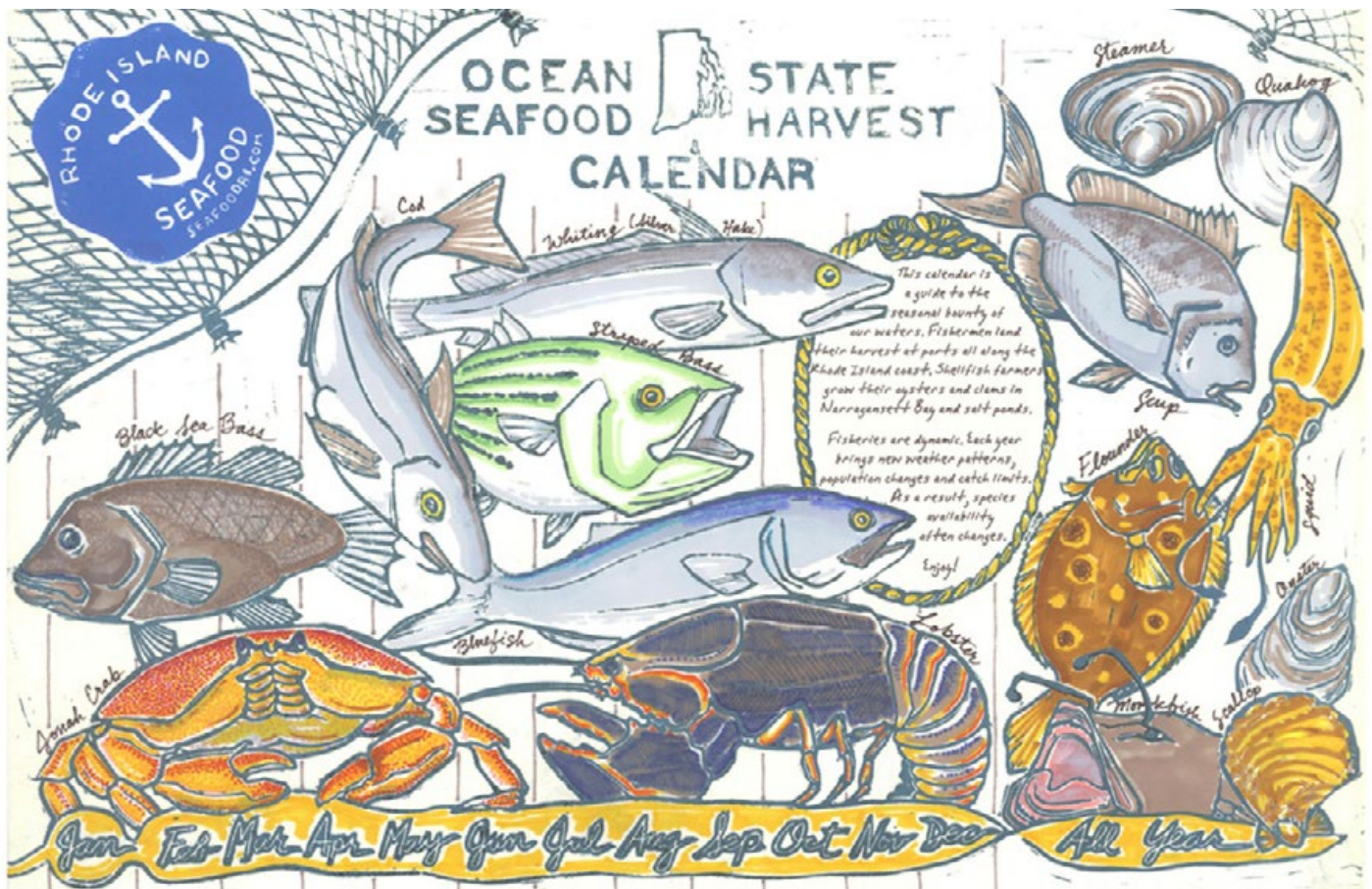


Image courtesy of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management



Making a stronger connection to local fisheries can be a key aspect of ensuring the sustainability of the local food supply. According to Jamey Lionette, Director of the Sustainable Seafood Program with Red’s Best, “There’s enough fish landed in New England to feed fresh fish to every school kid in New England, every day. There isn’t enough chicken in New England to feed those kids for one day.” In addition to owning docks in New Bedford, Martha’s Vineyard, Chatham and Boston, MA, all in the “New England” local tier, Red’s Best sources directly from fishermen landing in Newport and Tiverton.

Red’s Best fish specifically portioned and processed for school food service has been successfully integrated into meals in similar districts served by Sodexo, including Springfield and Fitchburg, MA. Varieties served include dogfish (breaded patties and filets), haddock, hake and pollock. Providence’s food service can easily bring fresh, local fish back into school meals by re-establishing the relationship with Red’s Best.

★ ***Re-establish a relationship with Red’s Best or other purveyors to re-introduce locally-landed fish into Providence school meals***

See the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management’s [Harvest Calendar Chart](#) for locally available seafood by month.



**CURRENT LOCAL PROCUREMENT**

In the 2018-2019 school year, a total of \$159,947.59 in products meeting the established definition of “local” were purchased for Providence school meals and the Federal Fruit and Vegetable Program through Sodexo’s contract with Roch’s Fresh Foods. This amount included \$96,940.89 in products from Rhode Island farms, including:

- |               |               |                |            |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| ● Apples      | ● Eggplant    | ● Kale         | ● Tomatoes |
| ● Green beans | ● Broccoli    | ● Bell peppers | ● Honey    |
| ● Carrots     | ● Cauliflower | ● Squash       |            |
| ● Cucumbers   | ● Lettuce     | ● Potatoes     |            |

These products were from the following farms:

- |                  |                    |                     |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| ● Bardin Orchard | ● Confreda Farm    | ● Quonset View Farm |
| ● Pippin Orchard | ● Schartner’s Farm | ● Aquidneck Honey   |
| ● Steere Farms   | ● Pezza Farms      |                     |

In the same period, Sodexo procured \$45,610.19 of produce from New England farms through Roch's. These purchases were primarily apples, with a small amount of peaches and pears, from Belltown Farm in Connecticut and Lanni Farm in Massachusetts. An additional \$16,671.12 in apples was procured from farms in New England and New York.

The above data will be reviewed with Sodexo, food systems representatives in the Advisory Committee, and other relevant partners to establish baseline measures, goals and strategies for increasing procurement of local foods for use in Providence school meals. Special care should be taken to establish clear and realistic goals that accommodate the budget and logistical challenges of the Providence Child Nutrition Program. In addition to near-term (1-2 year), and long-term (3-5 year) goals, the Providence Farm to School effort should identify partnership opportunities to overcome challenges in distribution, processing, and other factors that limit local procurement capacity.

- ★ ***Identify partnerships, including integration of purveyors into Ad Hoc food service committee, to better understand and overcome challenges in distribution, processing and other factors that limit local procurement***
- ★ ***Require purveyors to create and maintain systems to track and report product sources, using tiered approach developed through the Farm to School planning process***

A [draft procurement tracking form](#) has been developed for tracking local food purchases in the short-term. It is recommended that this form be used by Sodexo and their contractors to track and report local purchases. It is further recommended that the Advisory Team, Sodexo, and other partners continue to refine this form to accurately reflect priorities and Sodexo and suppliers' reporting capacities.

- ★ ***Maintain, update and refine the Local Procurement Tracking Form regularly***



Indoor garden cart harvest at Esek Hopkins MS



#### IV. DELIVERY, PROCESSING AND STORAGE

The PPSD Child Nutrition Program has a warehouse, one production kitchen, and a cafeteria at each of the 41 schools. The majority of secondary schools have complete kitchens where at least some components of the meals are prepared. While deliveries are made to each of these locations, some vendors only deliver to the warehouse, others to the central kitchen, and some companies deliver directly to schools.

Aside from whole fruits such as apples, the majority of foods served through the school meals program require some form of minimal processing (peeling, cutting or packaging). Currently, only 25% of the produce procured for the Providence Child Nutrition Program is purchased whole.

Some operational changes are required to increase Sodexo's capacity to process whole fruits and vegetables. These changes include engagement of a knife sharpening vendor to ensure that kitchen equipment is up to the task, and increasing hours at the Bucklin Production Kitchen to increase in-house processing and production.

- ★ ***Ensure that the production kitchens are properly equipped for increased in-house processing and production, including engagement of knife sharpening vendor***
- ★ ***Add overnight shift at production kitchens to increase in-house processing and production capacity***

Rhode Island Food system stakeholders, including farms and institutional buyers, have identified that a lack of local light processing facilities in the state present a challenge to increased institutional use of local products. Developing light processing facilities in or near Providence could create opportunities for hyper-local farms to sell their products more easily to local institutions, including for Providence school meals. Connecting Providence farms into the 17,000+ meals served daily in Providence schools could have a strong economic development impact for city growers.

The City of Providence Healthy Communities Office frequently partners with other City departments to identify opportunities to improve health and wellness through City operations. Examples of this work include identifying City-owned parcels for the development of urban farms and connecting schools to nearby parks for increased outdoor recreation and education opportunities. Using this model, the Healthy Communities Office can promote Farm to School by working with the Department of Planning and Development and the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation to identify properties, programs or other opportunities to develop local light processing facilities in the city.

- ★ ***Engage the Providence Department of Planning and Development and the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation in identifying opportunities to develop light processing facilities in Providence***

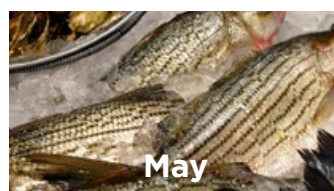
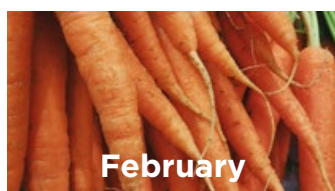
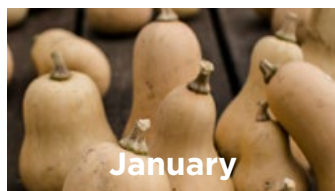
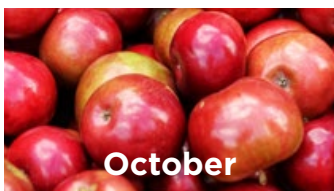
## V. MENU PLANNING

Providing millions of meals a year at more than four dozen locations, at very low per-meal cost, takes a tremendous amount of advance planning. Menu planning for Providence Child Nutrition Program meals typically starts six months in advance, with products ordered several months ahead of the date they are delivered and served. The menus are repeated in a twelve-week cycle, with varying menus for each school level to meet calorie and portion size standards for each age group. Current menus for Providence meals are posted on [Sodexo's Providence website](#).

Farm Fresh Rhode Island's (FFRI) Harvest of the Month program identifies and promotes awareness and knowledge of local seasonal produce in school cafeterias. Coordinating with the Harvest of the Month calendar will enable Providence cafeterias to plan menus that feature these seasonal products, while using the posters, stickers and other educational materials that have been created to promote the foods among students. The Harvest of the Month calendar is:

- **September** — Tomatoes
- **October** — Apples
- **November** — Broccoli
- **December** — Potatoes
- **January** — Butternut squash
- **February** — Carrots
- **March** — Dairy
- **April** — Greens
- **May** — Locally-raised protein (including fish)
- **June** — Strawberries
- **July** — Cucumbers
- **August** — Stone fruit

★ ***Coordinate monthly menu planning with the FFRI Harvest of the Month Calendar to feature local, seasonal foods***





Increased student engagement can create additional ways to integrate local products into school menus and reflect and celebrate the cultures of the school communities. It's recommended that the Food Service Management Company engage students in menu development modeled after URI SNAP Ed's Student Take Charge program, through which students at Spaziano Elementary School brought recipes from home to be converted to food service scale, taste-tested and selected a favorite recipe, resulting in Spaziano Potatoes being served across the District.

★ ***Use the Students Take Charge Program as a tool of student engagement in menu planning***

Other menu development strategies can be in partnership with teachers who lead school gardens, around the items that they plan to grow with their students. Months-ahead coordination with these teachers can result in, for example, a tasting of school garden-grown radishes in the spring, coordinated with locally-grown radishes served in salad bars throughout the district.

★ ***Engage garden teachers in menu development to feature varieties grown in school gardens***

The wide variety of choices that are expected to be offered at each meal, especially at the high school level, has been identified as a challenge to providing creative, healthy and high-quality options, including those that better integrate local produce.

★ ***Prioritize quality, appeal, cultural responsiveness and inclusion of seasonal and local ingredients in menu development over quantity of choices offered***

■ **VI. TRAINING NEEDS**

As discussed above, URI SNAP-Ed provides an annual training on Smarter Lunchroom concepts as a part of Sodexo's annual cafeteria staff training. This training is focused on making the lunch line an inviting and warm atmosphere where the students are encouraged to make healthy food choices and try new foods. It is recommended that the FSMC and URI SNAP-Ed partner to improve and expand this training to include an introduction to Farm to School, and techniques for increasing student awareness of local foods in their school meals. For the last several years, Farm Fresh Rhode Island has also taken part in this training by providing a Farm to School presentation.

★ ***Review current annual cafeteria staff training; review effectiveness of current annual Smarter Lunchroom training; and identify opportunities to expand awareness of Farm to School and local foods among cooks, assistant cooks and servers***

Other specific food service staff training needs (such as knife skills) may emerge as Providence food service expands the use of local produce and increases use of Farm to School principles in kitchens and cafeterias.

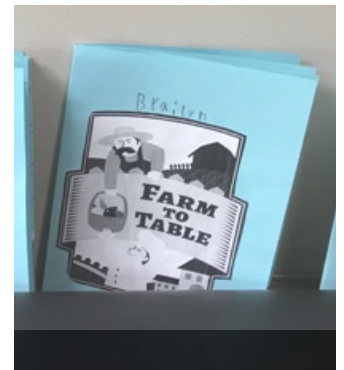
- ★ ***Provide chefs and cafeteria staff with training necessary to increase processing and promotion of local products, including through Farm Fresh Rhode Island's food service trainings with local chefs and farmers, through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant***

## PROMOTION & OUTREACH

### I. BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS TO DATE

At the June 2018 Northeast Farm to School Institute, the team identified a number of strategies for outreach and engagement of teachers, students and administrators. The 12-month plan resulting from the Institute includes engagement of a Farm to School teacher representative at every school. Teachers attending the Institute committed to organizing among their fellow teachers, but needed assistance in developing an “elevator speech” to explain to their peers what they are being asked to engage with.

In September 2019 the Mayor’s Communications staff led these teachers in a workshop to develop key outreach language to assist them in engaging fellow teachers throughout the district in the Farm to School effort. The outcome of this workshop was a Message Map identifying stakeholder audiences, background information of Farm to School in PPSD, supporting Farm to School statistics, and key messages and talking points. Teachers will use the Message Map to communicate among their peers to broaden awareness of Farm to School and identify an advocate/representative in each school.



Farm to Table books created by Nathan Bishop MS students

At the Institute, the Providence team identified the branding and framing of “Farm to School” to be a barrier to engagement of students, teachers and others in Providence’s diverse, urban community. The Team agreed that the “Farm to School” name evokes a rural environment that is disconnected from Providence’s schools, and does not address the day-to-day local food activities taking place in school cafeterias and gardens.

For the foreseeable future, promotion and outreach plans focus on internal communications to build awareness and support of the Farm to School effort, including among Rhode Island Department of Education and the School Department administration, to ensure institutionalization of Providence Farm to School through the 5-year district turnaround process.



## II. STUDENTS

As noted above, the current Providence Farm to School team has identified the branding of “Farm to School” as a challenge to engagement of students and other members of the diverse, urban Providence school community. A first step in engaging students will be to enlist a core group in the development of an identity that is reflective of Providence and engaging to Providence students. This identity will include a new program name.

★ ***Engage a group of PPSD students in the development of a Providence Farm to School identity***

A second step will be engagement of art classes throughout the district in a logo contest. These two stages of student engagement will be broadly promoted to increase student and community awareness of the Farm to School effort.

★ ***Engage Art teachers and students in the development of a Providence Farm to School logo using the student-developed identity***

★ ***Increase student and community awareness of Farm to School through promotion of logo contest***

Connecting with the Culinary Arts Program at Providence Career and Technical Academy (PCTA) is another way to increase awareness of Farm to School by linking to students daily school experiences. It is recommended that the lead Culinary Arts instructor be engaged in developing recipe contests, integrating local foods into culinary lessons, and other ways of bringing Farm to School into career training in Providence.

★ ***Connect with PCTA’s Culinary Arts program to bring Farm to School to Providence students in career training***



**TOP PHOTO:** EvanLee Organics CEO Todd Bard helps harvest indoor garden cart vegetables with Esek Hopkins special education students

**MIDDLE & BOTTOM PHOTOS:** Health class nutrition lesson at Nathanael Greene MS

### III. FAMILIES

As identified in the June 2019 report by Johns Hopkins University, effective engagement of Providence families has been a challenge for the District. It is highly possible that the RI Department of Education turnaround process will include restructuring of the District's Family and Community Engagement strategies. School gardens, recipe development, surveying and other aspects of Farm to School are excellent opportunities to improve relationships with families and engage them in school life in new ways. As the turnaround proceeds, a key strategy will be to integrate family engagement opportunities created by Farm to School into the District's communications.

★ ***Develop family engagement opportunities in gardens and food service activities***

★ ***Include Farm to School opportunities in District's communications with families***



Printed and electronic menus are distributed monthly to students and families and provide an opportunity to increase awareness of local foods and the Farm to School effort.

★ ***Use monthly menus to increase student and family awareness of seasonal and local products and Providence's Farm to School effort***

There is broad community concern about the quality and content of school meals, but little common knowledge about the mechanics of what school meals are and how they work. Parents frequently pose questions to PPSP, the City of Providence and RIDE such as: How is quality and freshness of school food monitored? Are the meals nutritious? How much sugar is in the meals? Who makes menu decisions? Do the meals meet students' religious requirements?

It is recommended that as a part of the turnaround process, the City, RIDE and PPSP hold a community forum specifically about school meals and other Child Nutrition Programs. This will create an opportunity to promote Farm to School to parents and other community members.

★ ***Include Farm to School in a community forum about school meals***

## IV. TEACHERS

As described above, teachers in the On the Ground Team have committed to reaching out among their networks to increase awareness of and engage their colleagues in the Farm to School process. It is recommended that the PPSD Wellness Coordinator support the teachers' work by creating and maintaining a Farm to School listserv to connect teachers with each other and share resources and information. Additionally, it is recommended that the Healthy Communities Office work with teachers and the Wellness Coordinator to develop a Farm to School Handbook to give educators Farm to School resources at their fingertips.

- ★ ***Continue to support teachers in development of Farm to School teacher network, including identification of a Farm to School representative at each school***
- ★ ***Develop and maintain a Farm to School teacher list***
- ★ ***Develop and promote a Providence Farm to School Handbook of teacher resources***



H&W meeting led by former Chair Robert Gondola, Jr

## V. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND SCHOOL BOARD

Members of the On the Ground Team and other teachers already spend many off-the-clock hours on garden activities, meetings and trainings about school gardens. With permission of their school administrator, who is responsible for ensuring classroom coverage and equitable use of professional days by a school's staff, teachers may use paid "professional days" to participate in these activities. Broadening awareness of and support for Farm to School among school administrators will be key to teachers' abilities to participate in ongoing meetings and trainings to support Farm to School in individual schools and throughout the District.

- ★ ***Support teachers in increasing principals' awareness of and support for staff participation in District Farm to School efforts***

As required by State law, the Providence Health & Wellness Committee is chaired by a school board or committee member. Under the RI Department of Education oversight, the Providence School Board is still intact but with reduced decision making roles. As new structures are being developed for Providence schools, it will be critical to reinforce the importance of embedding Farm to School in curriculum, facilities planning, and food service. Upcoming opportunities include the development of Providence's Green Schoolyard Initiative and a Providence School Health Needs Assessment. As previously



noted, Farm to School is also a great opportunity to better engage families, students, and the community in Providence schools.

- ★ ***Continue to advocate for Farm to School as a critical part of Providence school planning with RI Department of Education***
- ★ ***Include Farm to School opportunities in upcoming Providence School Health Needs Assessment and Green Schoolyards Initiative***



Maureen's Garden at Vartan Gregorian ES, a memorial to former Special Education teacher Maureen Kenner

## VI. FOOD PRODUCERS AND NETWORKS

The Advisory Committee includes representation from several agencies that work directly with local food producers and farmers networks, including Farm Fresh Rhode Island, Southside Community Land Trust and the State Commerce Corporation, as well as management-level staff of the Food Service Management Company. A focus of future meetings of the Advisory Committee should be building bridges with local producers for tastings and cafeteria demonstrations, developing strategies for overcoming challenges of scale and processing, and other other opportunities to meaningfully connect with producers.

- ★ ***Build connections to local farmers through local food systems agencies***
- ★ ***Develop strategies to bring local farmers into cafeterias and other school settings***
- ★ ***Develop strategies to overcome local producers' barriers to inclusion in procurement for school meals***

## VII. SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE STAFF

As mentioned above, Sodexo provides and annual training for cafeteria staff. Integrating an “Introduction to Farm to School” into that training is an important step in reaching school food service staff with the District’s Farm to School goals.

- ★ ***Integrate “Intro to Farm to School” into annual food service staff training***

Sodexo uses its internal communications, such as memos and kitchen staff meetings, to distribute Farm to School marketing



Caprese salad made by Esek Hopkins MS students with garden cart basil

materials and other information to food service staff. These staff are also engaged when special Farm to School events such as tastings occur, and chef/area managers are informed of and engaged in local purchasing efforts. Engaging chef/area managers in choosing monthly recipes that highlight seasonal produce can be an effective way of engaging them in meeting the Farm to School goals.

★ ***Promote monthly recipes using seasonal produce***

Farm Fresh Rhode Island (FFRI) works with partners across the state to assist more RI schools in sourcing more local food. FFRI offers support to food service managers and cafeteria staff to help them find more ways to incorporate fresh foods into their menu through seasonal sourcing and recipe resources. This work supports local growers by connecting them with additional outlets for their food through both conventional distributors as FFRI's Market Mobile wholesale distribution system. FFRI plans to include Providence Public Schools in its USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant activities in 2020 and 2021, bringing farmers and chefs into schools to conduct educational activities with students and food service staff.



Basil pizza made by Esek Hopkins MS students

★ ***Partner with Farm Fresh RI to develop and deliver farmer/chef-led educational activities for Providence food service staff***

## VIII. MEDIA AND COMMUNITY

Upon completion of this plan and at key milestones throughout its execution, City and PPSD communications staff will issue press releases and other materials to engage the media in increasing public knowledge about Providence's Farm to School work.

The Healthy Communities Office currently hosts a [School Wellness web page](#) that can be built out with increased information about Farm to School, including press releases, blog posts and this plan. The web page can be promoted throughout this effort as a portal for Farm to School information for the general community.

★ ***Build out Farm to School web page***

★ ***Identify opportunities for public communication about Providence Farm to School activities***

## SCHOOL GARDENS

### I. BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS TO DATE

As described previously, many individual teachers and schools have worked hard over the years to create and keep school gardens, with varying success. Some, like the garden at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School, thrive year-round in partnership with neighbors and volunteers. Others are started with great enthusiasm but soon encounter discouraging maintenance challenges or lose steam when the one committed teacher moves on.

In 2017, the University of Rhode Island (URI) Cooperative Extension initiated the Providence School Garden Initiative (PSGI), which conducted a school garden assessment to list each school garden in the District. In Providence's 40+ schools, a total of 22 gardens were identified, with 18 existing and 4 in the planning stage.

### EXISTING GARDENS (AS OF 2017)

ELEMENTARY	STATUS	DESCRIPTION
Carnevale	Existing	Pollinator
Fogarty	Existing	Raised Beds
Fortes	Existing	Edible/Pollinator
Vartan Gregorian	Existing	Courtyard, Outdoor Classroom
Kennedy	Existing	Pollinator
MLK	Existing	Hybrid School/Community Garden
Kizirian	Existing	Edible Forest and Beds in Adjacent Community Garden
Pleasant View	Existing	Raised Beds, Pollinator Garden
Reservoir	Existing	Native Pollinator Garden
Webster	Existing	Outdoor Classroom
West	Existing	Wildlife Habitat Garden
Feinstein At Broad	In Planning	Edible/Pollinator
Feinstein at Sackett	In Planning	Edible/Pollinator
Lima	In Planning	Pollinator Garden



MIDDLE	STATUS	DESCRIPTION
Nathan Bishop	Existing	Pollinator Garden
DelSesto	Existing	Hybrid School/Community Garden
Nathaniel Greene	Existing	Beds in nearby community garden
Esek Hopkins	Existing	Beds in nearby community garden
Gilbert Stuart	Existing	Pollinator Garden
HIGH	STATUS	DESCRIPTION
Mount Pleasant	Existing	Garden, high tunnel
JSEC	Existing	Edible/Pollinator
Central	In Planning	Edible/Pollinator



Raised garden beds and outdoor learning space at Webster Ave ES

The assessment only identified school gardens outside of or nearby the school building. No assessment has been done of gardens in the classroom.

This assessment also only included schools that had an existing relationship with the URI PSGI. It is recommended that this assessment be updated to reflect current garden status and needs, including schools that may have no existing relationship with a supporting partner.

In its current FSMC role, Sodexo has earmarked \$10,000 annually from the Providence school meals program to create and improve school gardens. It is recommended that the On the Ground team use the updated garden assessment and engagement of new teachers to identify and prioritize garden improvements or build-outs to be made each year.

- ★ ***Update Garden Assessment, through partnership with Cooperative Extension/ Providence School Garden Initiative, Sodexo and teachers in the On the Ground Team***
- ★ ***Develop prioritized list of garden improvements or build-outs to take place in the next five years***

As an extension of its citywide work to better connect Providence children with opportunities to engage in the natural world, the Healthy Communities Office has been developing a Green Schoolyards Plan to guide schools and the City's Public Properties Department in creating schoolyard environments that include outdoor classrooms, school gardens and other "green" features. A pilot "Providence Green Schoolyard," including a new school garden, will be created at Bailey Elementary School in 2020, made possible by a grant to the City of more than \$600,000 from Rhode Island Housing. In FY 2020 and 2021, the City has dedicated an additional \$2.5M in capital improvement funds for the creation of Green Schoolyards. It is recommended that an additional five schools be identified for Green Schoolyard transformations that include school gardens.

- ★ ***Identify five schools for Green Schoolyard interventions in 2020-2021***



Elementary school Harvest Festival poster



## TEACHER SPOTLIGHT:

### SHANNON AND BENJAMIN GORMLEY

Benjamin developed the William B Cooley CTE (Career and Technical Education) [Biomedical program](#) at the Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex, where students are exposed to a variety of careers through courses in healthcare and lab sciences and mentoring and employment experience with local universities and companies. To support this work, Benjamin developed the JSEC school garden as a visible, thriving space that creates new opportunities for students to explore the natural sciences, soils science, composting, and associated career opportunities. What started as a garden used in the biomedical program has now expanded into the Cavaliers Garden and Performance Space, an interdisciplinary teaching space named after the school's mascot. Numerous partners have been engaged in the success of the garden, including Southside Community Land Trust, URI Master Gardeners, the Providence After School Alliance, and the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. Theater and English classes use the small stage in the garden to rehearse plays, poetry readings, speeches and more. Groundwork Rhode Island has been enlisted as a partner in improving the Cavaliers Garden and Performance Space in 2020.

Shannon integrates food systems education into her courses, with a current focus on food waste education and management. In 2018, Food Education for Change students developed [JSEC Goods](#), an in-school food pantry that sends backpacks of food home with fellow students who struggle with food insecurity. In the current and next school year, the class hopes to focus on recycling and reducing food waste, including piloting a school compost program. In partnership with Sodexo, students are examining ways to reduce food waste and compost it to augment garden soil.

Shannon's Community Development classes learn the basics of food security and policy, engage with Benjamin's work in the school garden, explore root causes, and develop skills in advocacy and community organizing. The courses include reaching out to decision-makers and influencers to make changes on student-selected issues, working with her non-profit JSEC Goods and Sodexo's backpack program, and exploring lessons from the [Stone Barns Food Education Curriculum](#).

Ben and Shannon continue to improve their school's garden and engage students in the important food systems issues that impact their lives. Plans for the Cavaliers Garden include installing picnic tables decorated by art students, installing stage seating for performances and outdoor classroom, and student creation of fence art to make the space more welcoming to students and amplify student voice to the surrounding community. The Gormleys also hope to identify funding and other opportunities to hire students to maintain the garden throughout the summer.



## II. GETTING BUY-IN

Ongoing requests for support and assistance demonstrate the strong demand for school gardens among PPSD teachers. However, the disconnect between this demand and the District's individual schools' capacities to build and maintain the gardens presents a challenge to broader buy-in among school and District administration. The considerable environmental considerations on school properties present intimidating financial challenges, and the June 2019 Johns Hopkins report spurred immediate concern about long standing challenges with building safety and stability. While these concerns could overshadow efforts to supplement the student experience through gardens and other amenities, they also open new opportunities to reimagine school buildings and grounds to truly meet the community's hopes for Providence students.

School properties, including outdoor spaces where gardens may be located, are owned and managed by the City of Providence's Public Property Department. As a part of the school turnaround process, RIDE has requested that the Public Property Department submit a facilities improvement plan that significantly re-envision many of the District's most challenged buildings, and the District's approach to capital improvement overall. It is recommended that the Healthy Communities Office and other partners continue to advocate for the Green Schoolyard model, including judicious use of the \$2.5M in Green Schoolyards funds, to ensure buy-in from RIDE, Public Property and other key decision-making parties.

### ★ ***Continue to advocate for Green Schoolyard model in development of school facilities improvement plan***

As a part of its commitment to Farm to School, Sodexo has committed \$5,000/year to teacher training, including conference registration fees and payment to teachers for training time. It is recommended that the On the Ground Team work with curriculum heads and other administration to identify Farm to School-based training opportunities that are eligible for paid Professional Development credits, and to navigate the administrative processes to direct funding to the teachers. In the meantime, conferences and other training opportunities can be offered free of charge to the teachers through Sodexo's funding.

### ★ ***Develop timeline for engagement of Teaching and Learning staff in identifying Farm to School curriculum connections and professional development (PD) opportunities in support of new curriculum resources being introduced***

### ★ ***Work with Curriculum Heads annually to identify PD opportunities***

### ★ ***Engage RIDE/PPSD fiscal staff in development of structure and strategies to direct funding from Sodexo to teachers for participation in eligible PD***

### III. PLANNING AND DESIGN

A number of considerations should inform design for a new school garden or improvements to an existing one. A primary consideration is the intended use, which requires that the process be guided by invested teachers or other staff members who will direct the end use of the space.

Providence school environments present a variety of challenges to establishing a successful garden. Due to the City's dense urban development, most schoolyards are small and irregularly shaped. Sun exposure and water access are challenges in any garden design, especially in the narrow lots or courtyards that serve as schoolyards throughout the City. Several Providence school gardens have been unsuccessful because they have not been sited with these vital factors in mind. Most school yards are paved. Raised beds and small container gardens are accessible solutions to the contaminated soil left by the City's industrial legacy, which is frequently unsafe for food production or even exposure by young children.

URI's Providence School Garden Initiative engages certified URI Master Gardeners to advise gardens on development and curriculum, and can be a vital resource in designing a garden that is suited to each school's goals, needs and environment. In 2017, the School Garden Initiative developed the [How-To Guide for Rhode Island School Gardens](#). The URI Master Gardeners and the How-to-Guide should be the first stop for teachers or schools planning a new garden.



Del Sesto MS garden revitalization by CAPP summer program

★ ***Distribute and promote the How-to-Guide for Rhode Island School Gardens to teachers throughout the District***

As noted above, plans for new gardens should be coordinated with the City's plans for school repairs and improvements. This will both ensure that planned construction on a school site will not interfere with the garden plans, and can leverage facilities improvement funds for garden creation.

★ ***Ensure that teachers' plans for new gardens are coordinated with the City's facilities improvement plans***

## IV. FUNDING

In many cases, Providence school gardens have been developed through fundraising efforts of individual teachers who have been awarded small charitable or corporate foundation grants, or through other small-scale fundraising activities. While this level of support and investment from the individual school community is laudable, it places an undue burden on individual teachers and is disconnected from the system of support that is possible through a district- and city-wide funding effort.

The committed \$10,000/year support from the FSMC and the above-referenced \$2.5M in Green Schoolyard funds are significant accomplishments in the creation of a district-wide funding strategy. In addition to these funds, which are managed by the City, teachers and individual schools will benefit from syncing their fundraising activities with each other and with the District through the PPSD Development Office. It is recommended that the On the Ground committee work with the PPSD Development Office to identify the administrative structures to ensure that fundraising efforts are coordinated with the District and that resulting funds are appropriately earmarked and disbursed.

- ★ ***Ensure that teachers, schools and the PPSD Development Office are regularly sharing info and coordinating fundraising for Farm to School activities***
- ★ ***Partner with Executive Directors to ensure that proper grant application procedures are communicated to garden teachers and others***
- ★ ***Engage RIDE/PPSD fiscal and development staff in developing strategies to earmark and appropriately disburse funds raised for Farm to School***

## V. MAINTENANCE, TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Ongoing maintenance has been a central challenge in Providence's school garden efforts to date. Poorly maintained gardens are perceived as a cleanliness problem by the surrounding community, and frustration with lack of maintenance presents a barrier to support of garden initiatives by school staff, administration and maintenance staff. Developing an ongoing maintenance strategy needs to be integral to the process of garden development and design.

School garden funds committed by Sodexo,



Beds in bloom at Del Sesto MS garden



the Food Service Management Company (FSMC), can assist with small repair and maintenance needs, especially purchasing materials and supplies. It is recommended that the On the Ground Team work with the FSMC and other invested parties to develop strategies such as volunteer days or hired contractors to execute repairs and improvements that cannot be performed by volunteers. These strategies must be in concert with PPST administration and Public Property to ensure that they coordinate with insurance requirements, union contracts and other mitigating factors.

★ ***Create volunteer opportunities to engage community in garden maintenance***

★ ***Identify need and method for engaging contractors in garden repairs***



Careful design, like making sure that the garden has access to a water source and is positioned for ideal sun exposure, is a first step towards establishing maintenance from the start. A bigger challenge lies in the incompatibility of the school calendar and the growing season in Rhode Island.

Development of strong community partnerships for use and maintenance of school gardens when school is not in session is vital to the success of a school garden program. Planting of vegetable seeds in US Department of Agriculture Plant Hardiness Zone 6b, which includes Providence and much of Rhode Island, typically takes place between April and June, just before schools close for the summer. Intensive watering, weeding and some harvesting takes place in July and August, while schools are inactive or occupied by alternative uses for the summer. During this time, many gardens are unmaintained and the plants that students saw sprout in the spring die from lack of water, or become overwhelmed by weeds. Summer is prime time for school facility maintenance, and gardens can be identified as an eyesore to be clear-cut or mowed before the start of school at the end of August. In a well-maintained garden, September and October offer students the opportunity to see the fruits of their spring labor as they harvest from the plants they started in the spring. Too often, teachers and students return to school to find the garden dead, overgrown, or mowed down.

School gardens offer great opportunities to engage partners, create summer employment and get neighbors invested in the upkeep of school grounds. At Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School, a **hybrid school/community garden** offers beds and outdoor

classroom space to teachers and students, as well as growing space for many neighbors. These neighbors water and weed the school garden spaces while maintaining their own beds through the summer and on weekends and other school breaks, while their constant presence helps deter vandalism. Expanding this hybrid model to more schools is key to establishing a sound maintenance plan for Providence's Farm to School gardens.

★ ***Identify appropriate schools and community organizing partners for expansion of hybrid school/community garden model in District***

Maintenance and improvement of school gardens can offer summer employment opportunities to local teens and to those starting careers in landscaping or other “green” industries, as well as provide real-world employment training to students with a variety of needs. There are several local non-profit organizations that offer **summer youth gardening employment** and/or landscape apprenticeship programs, including Southside Community Land Trust and Groundwork Rhode Island. Establishing partnerships between schools and these summer employment programs is an important step in overcoming maintenance challenges.



The Providence Transition Academy is a unique program serving students with documented disabilities who have Individualized Learning Plans (IEPs) and have met all the requirements for high school graduation. The Transition Academy provides students opportunities to develop skills to successfully transition into the working world, including development employment skills, and become more informed about individual life and career choices. Development of a summer garden maintenance employment program for Transitions students can be an important step in making sure these students benefit from the career exploration and life skills education possible through Farm to School, while assisting schools and the District in successful garden operation.

★ ***Develop summer employment program(s) for local youth to maintain school gardens***

★ ***Develop partnerships toward development of a Transition Academy Summer Garden Program***

Day-to-day maintenance of school facilities, including outdoor spaces, is the responsibility of the District's facilities management vendor, Aramark. The limited scope of this contract

has presented a challenge to the maintenance of any specialized schoolyard features like gardens, resulting in the clear-cutting described above and a general lack of support for outdoor areas tailored to a school's specific needs. The current intervention by RIDE includes a review of all District contracts, including Aramark's maintenance contract. This presents an opportunity to develop new strategies and divisions of responsibility for maintaining school grounds. These new strategies are an important factor in ensuring garden upkeep and success.

★ ***Identify opportunities in maintenance contact to clarify roles and increase management of green features on school grounds***

★ ***Engage facilities management representatives in on-the-ground work to familiarize them with individuals gardens and garden teachers***

Several active local organizations support school gardens to varying degrees and can be better engaged to offer training and other support to teachers, school staff and other vital partners:

### **The URI Master Gardener Program**

mission is to educate citizens in environmentally-sound gardening practices through the dissemination of factual, research-based information. In 2015, the **Providence School Garden Initiative (PSGI)** was formed as a collaborative partnership between the URI Extension Outreach Center and PPSD. The PSGI uses school gardens as engaging learning platforms, to build PPSD students' understanding of standards-based Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) concepts with hands-on engagement. PSGI seeks to harness children's enthusiasm for the natural world, foster environmental awareness, ecological literacy and wellness, and bolster students' understanding of nutrition and food access through outdoor engagement and applied learning in a "living laboratory" - the school garden.



Esek Hopkins MS students learn about vegetables they grew

The PSGI uses school gardens as engaging learning platforms, to build PPSD students' understanding of standards-based Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) concepts with hands-on engagement. PSGI seeks to harness children's enthusiasm for the natural world, foster environmental awareness, ecological literacy and wellness, and bolster students' understanding of nutrition and food access through outdoor engagement and applied learning in a "living laboratory" - the school garden.

Ideally, each Providence school with a garden will have two identified point people: an invested teacher, and an administrator to help support the work and ensure longevity of the garden program in case of teaching staff transitions. The school will be supported by a PSGI School Garden Mentor (a trained Master Gardener) and the Providence Regional Manager in planning, designing, constructing, funding, and sustaining the garden. The School Garden Mentors meet with the Providence Regional Manager monthly.



The PSGI School Garden Mentor program works successfully in several schools but has struggled in developing into a district-wide strategy. Contributing factors have been a lack of connection to and continuity in designated staff at specific schools, a shortage of volunteer Master Gardeners available to work in Providence Schools, and struggle in establishing the necessary agreement with PPSD to work throughout the District. It is recommended that , as resources from the State’s Land Grant College,PSGI and Cooperative Extension continue to be engaged to offer support and training to individual teachers, while connecting schools to the knowhow and support necessary for a successful school garden.

- ★ ***Support On the Ground Teachers in identifying and developing network of peers at all schools***
- ★ ***Identify and engage support of an administrator at each school with a current or planned garden***
- ★ ***Continue to engage URI Cooperative Extension, including PSGI and the URI Master Gardeners, in supporting and training teachers***
- ★ ***Develop necessary partnership with PSGI to expand School Garden Mentors to every school with a garden***

Groundwork Rhode Island (GWRI) is a nonprofit community-based environmental organization that is dedicated to creating healthier and resilient urban communities in Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence. This is achieved through urban stewardship programs that create economic opportunity for urban residents. It is recommended that Groundwork be engaged in Providence Farm to School as a key partner in garden building and repair, garden-based education and/or engaging community in activating and maintaining gardens in out-of-school time.

- ★ ***Explore opportunities for connecting garden repair and maintenance needs to GWRI’s employment and training programs***

**Southside Community Land Trust (SCLT)** is Providence’s largest and best-known urban agriculture organization. SCLT owns or manages 21 community gardens in Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence, and partners with schools, housing and community



A Webster Ave. ES student learns about plant biology

organizations to manage another 37 gardens. SCLT operates three production farms in Providence and Pawtucket that practices bio-intensive, small-scale agricultural production. SCLT educates people about diet and nutrition, agriculture and the environment; builds and manages community gardens and farms, and provides resources and support to community gardeners and training for beginning farmers on how to sell produce. It is recommended that SCLT be engaged as a Farm to School partner to provide gardening education and expertise, to connect schools that have limited gardening space with nearby community gardens and farms, and to assist with the purchase of bulk seeds, compost or other garden needs.

- ★ ***Explore partnerships with community gardening organizations to connect schools to nearby community gardens and farms, engage community in school gardens, and activate school gardens in out-of-school times***

The **City of Providence Parks Department** employs a part-time City Gardener to provide support and resources to community gardens located in City parks. It is recommended that this role be expanded to support schools by connecting schools to gardening opportunities in nearby parks, connecting neighbors who garden to the schools, and creating programs to activate school gardens in out-of-school times.

- ★ ***Expand the City Gardener position to include connecting school gardens to Parks resources***



Beds ready for gardening at the Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex

Springfield, MA is also served by Sodexo as its Food Service Management Company (FSMC). The Springfield Public Schools' garden coordinator organizes cleanups, connects teachers to resources, pursues financial support and business sponsorships, delivers garden education programs throughout the district, and maintains the gardens during the summer and other out-of-school times. This position is funded and supported by the Springfield food service program, through Sodexo. Creation of a similar position in Providence could be key to supporting teachers in sustaining their gardens.

Engage a food service program-supported School Garden Coordinator to provide support to teachers and gardens throughout the District.

## VI. USING GARDEN PRODUCE

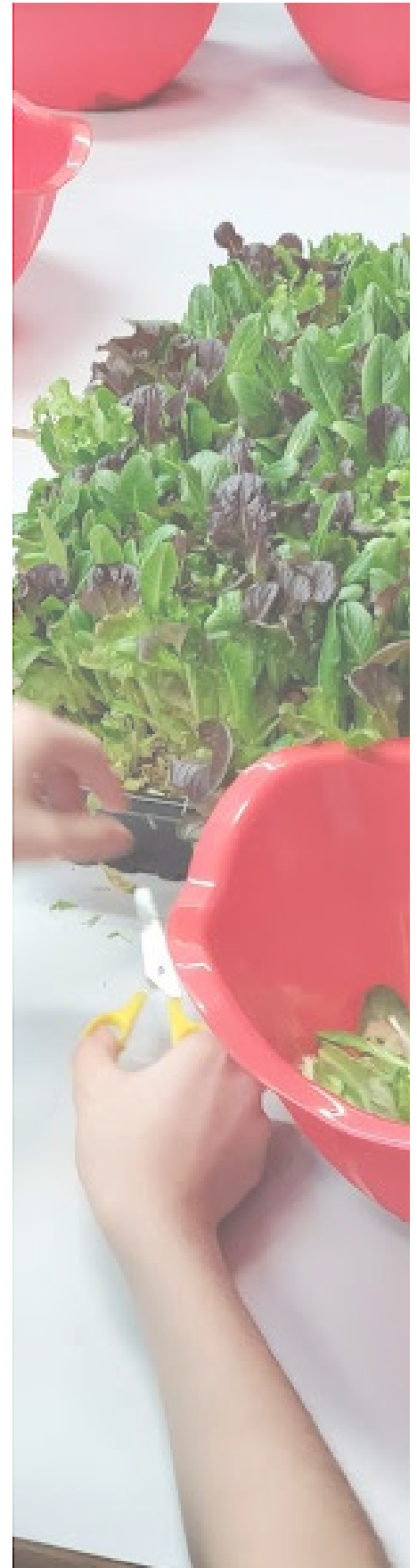
As described elsewhere, meals for most PPSD schools are prepared at a large scale that does not easily incorporate foods grown in individual school gardens. However, partnership with cafeteria staff at individual schools, URI-SNAP Ed and other organizations who specialize in cafeteria tastings offer opportunities for creative integration of foods grown on-site. School gardens can partner with URI-SNAP Ed and cafeteria staff to highlight and increase familiarity with foods grown in a school's garden. Student-grown cilantro can be featured in a tasting of a student-developed salsa recipe. This recipe can be tailored for large-scale food service by cafeteria staff (including wholesale rather than garden-grown ingredients) and highlighted as a component of a complete lunch served throughout the District.

### ★ ***Develop tastings based on produce grown in school gardens***

Food safety considerations need to be taken into account when serving garden-grown produce. Foods grown in a school garden are permitted in school meals as long as food safety standards are followed. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided guidance in the school garden section of the [Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs](#).

Teachers should familiarize themselves with food safety regulations in order to use school garden produce for taste tests, food pantry donations, or to be sent home with students. While Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) are industry best practices that can be used, the USDA does not require GAP or GHP certification for school gardens. Dozens of districts and states have created comprehensive school garden food safety manuals and checklists. Further information about food safety requirements and other considerations for serving garden produce in school cafeterias can be found in the Resources section.

### ★ ***Offer food safety trainings to Providence teachers who teach in school gardens***





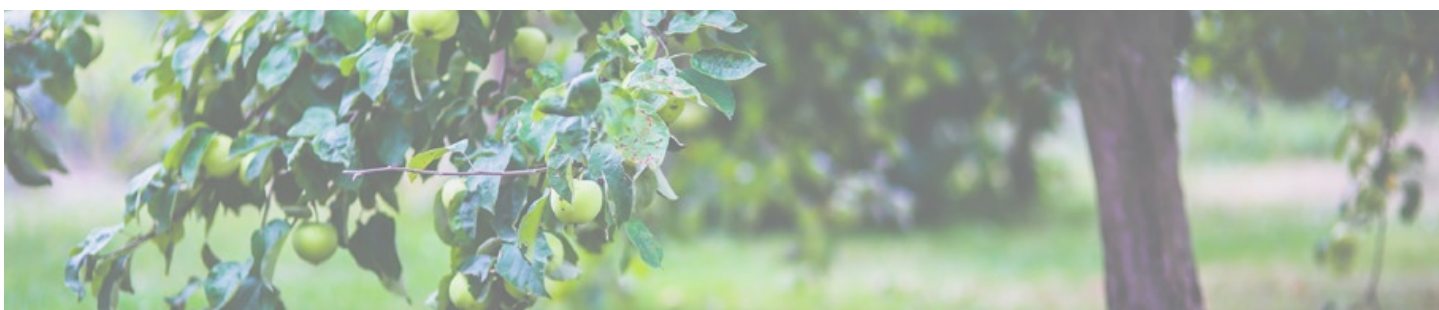
I. BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS TO DATE

Farm to School has the potential to enhance curriculum delivery in health and physical education, mathematics, science, social studies, English Language Arts, visual and performing arts and more, helping students to build their understanding of topics including climate change, nutrition, economics, world cultures, civics and community engagement, life skills and career exploration. As noted elsewhere, many individual teachers have independently integrated garden and food systems education into their classroom activities. Additionally, the PPSD Science Supervisor has worked with teachers and partners throughout the District to integrate garden-based education into the science curriculum and lessons, aligned to the international Next Generation Science Standards. However, delivery of specific lessons is at the discretion of each teacher and a select few teachers are inspired by and comfortable with garden-based learning. Even at schools where an individual teacher is dedicated to using the garden in their lessons, the garden is often seen as the territory of that teacher and is not used equitably throughout the grades or subject areas. Providing equitable opportunities for all students will depend on increased teacher comfort with garden-based learning and expanded teacher ownership of outdoor learning spaces.

In January 2020, mobile terraponic gardens were placed in Special Education classrooms in Esek Hopkins, Nathaniel Greene, and Nathan Bishop middle schools. A special harvest event was held on February 6th. The indoor gardens were provided with funding and support from Sodexo. Representatives of EvanLEE Organics, which produces the gardens, hosted an introduction and planting demonstration for teachers and students about how to prepare the soil and care for the plants, and provided instructions for maintaining the garden system. The PPSD Manager of Specialized Instruction and Services for Middle Schools coordinated with teachers to place the systems and incorporate the garden racks into academic activities and the broader curriculum. The District’s Science Supervisor aligned the garden processes with existing and future middle school science curricula. Sodexo and the PPSD Director of Specialized Instruction will work together in the coming year to place these mobile gardens in Special Education classrooms in the remaining four middle schools.

**URI SNAP-Ed** has been a central partner in many Farm to School-related education programs in the district and throughout the state. Based out of the University of Rhode Island’s Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, the mission of URI SNAP-Ed is to teach SNAP (formerly known as the federal Food Stamp Program)- eligible participants to choose and prepare healthy foods and be physically active on a budget. URI SNAP-Ed also provides professional development for staff who work with the eligible population, and conduct policy, system and environmental efforts to sustain healthy behavior change.

In PPSD schools currently, URI SNAP-Ed offers the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Curriculum to all Physical Education (PE) and Health teachers and school nurses in elementary schools that participate in the RIDE- administered Federal Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. The curriculum offers lesson plans and handouts to encourage children at all elementary grade levels to learn more about and try the fruits and vegetables they are offered through the program. Technical assistance and yearly updates are offered to all participating teachers. URI SNAP-Ed also creates monthly “FFVP Fun Facts” that go to every elementary classroom teacher to read aloud to the class as students try the offered fruit or vegetable. URI SNAP-Ed also offers a “FFVP Rainbow Challenge” to classrooms to encourage students to try the fruit/vegetable tasting, with winning classrooms receiving an interactive nutrition education lesson with smoothie tasting by URI SNAP-Ed.



In the past, URI SNAP-Ed has offered multiple programs directly to Providence school children that supported Farm to School goals, including:

- The **Students Take Charge! Program** was piloted during the school day in Spring 2016 with fifth graders at Spaziano Elementary School. Through this six-month nutrition education project, 50 students experienced firsthand how persuasive student voices can lead to positive change in school cafeterias. Students completed environmental scans in the cafeteria to learn about the types of fruits and vegetables currently served for school lunch, and barriers to eating them. After group discussions and at-home interviews about family recipes, the students worked in the classroom to develop their own produce-based recipes and conduct taste tests with their classmates. From 40 submitted recipes, with the support of Sodexo, the students chose a final winning recipe to feature as a new school lunch menu item. On Spaziano Garlic Roasted Potatoes Day, students tasted the winning recipe during lunch and voted on whether this recipe should be incorporated into the regular meal program, with an overwhelming majority voting YES. Spaziano Potatoes have been added to all elementary and secondary school lunch menus. This process was replicated at Young Woods Elementary School in Spring 2017, resulting in Young Woods Spring Roll Salad, at Carnevale Elementary School in Spring 2018 (ACE Salsa) and Fogarty Elementary School in Fall 2018 (Fogarty salad). After these successes, URI-SNAP Ed’s goal was

to expand to additional schools. Due to administrative challenges at the District level, Students Take Charge is not currently being delivered in any Providence schools.

- **Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) Program:** This Policy, Systems and Environment (PSE) change and direct education intervention aims to prevent childhood obesity in school-age children. Goals of the program are to help children identify and choose healthy foods and increase physical activity. CATCH's training and curriculum materials provide the information and resources teachers need to implement strategies to improve child health. The program is based on the Centers for Disease Control's Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model and has four main components: the Eat Smart school nutrition program, Classroom curriculum, a Physical Education program, and a Coordination Kit. The Coordination Kit includes family materials and provides a step-by-step guide to facilitate collaboration among administrators, teachers, nutrition staff, parents, and other important stakeholders. CATCH provides trainings for teachers and other educators who will be implementing the program. This 4-week curriculum was delivered at Spaziano Elementary school for 71 youth in 2017 and for 72 fifth graders at Feinstein at Broad Elementary School participated in 2018. The lessons took place every other week. On alternate weeks, URI SNAP Ed promoted fruits and vegetables from the cafeteria garden cart during lunch periods. 429 students participated in the cafeteria activities. Due to administrative challenges at the District level, URI SNAP-Ed is not currently delivering CATCH in any Providence schools. URI SNAP-Ed does provide PE/Health teachers in Elementary, Middle and High schools with yearly professional development on CATCH -related nutrition materials.
- **Cooking with Kids for a Healthy Future:** In this 6-week program, students learn hand-on cooking and nutrition skills. Simultaneously, parents learn a variety of nutrition and positive parenting skills, and the groups come together to sample and enjoy healthy foods prepared by the young students. In April 2019, 11 youth and 9 parents/caregivers participated in this four-week program at Spaziano Elementary school.

SNAP-Ed programs are data-based, using USDA evidence-based curriculums that require before-and-after tests of student behavior to maintain the federal funding that supports the programs. URI SNAP-Ed has successful data-sharing agreements with public school districts throughout Rhode Island, including Pawtucket, Cranston, Central Falls and Woonsocket, as well as memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with those districts that define the partnerships between URI and the schools. Development of a data sharing agreement and MOU with PPSD has been a barrier to continuation and expansion of SNAP-Ed programs in Providence schools.



## II. CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

As noted above, the PPSD Science Supervisor has been actively engaged in integrating garden-based lessons into science curriculum throughout the District. In addition to the teacher-to-teacher peer outreach described above under “Reaching Teachers,” next steps will include presenting the plan to the supervisors of other curriculum areas for input and to begin to build a base of support for integration of food systems lessons into areas such as Health and Physical Education, Social Studies, Art and Mathematics. Meeting with the curriculum area supervisors several times a year will create a pathway to deliver Farm to School-based lessons and other support to teachers throughout the District.

- ★ ***Present Farm to School plan to Content Supervisors for input and buy-in***
- ★ ***Connect curriculum area supervisors to Farm to School lessons and other curriculum supports for distribution to building coaches***



Vegetables grown on indoor garden carts by middle school Special Ed. students

As the RIDE-led turnaround process continues, it is likely that the structure for supervision and dissemination of curriculum in the District will change. It is important that the Farm to School teams adjust strategies and build new relationships as needed to ensure that the Farm to School goals survive through District changes.

- ★ ***Adjust strategies and continue to build relationships with curriculum heads as turnaround process proceeds***

Multiple community partners work throughout PPSD cafeterias and classrooms on integrating food-based learning into students’ days.

**Farm Fresh Rhode Island** (FFRI)’s mission is to “grow a local food system that values the environment, health, and quality of life of the farmers and eaters in our region.”

FFRI has worked in PPSD in a variety of ways with students of all ages, food service professionals and community members to cultivate a growing Farm to School culture.

At Mount Pleasant High School, FFRI has modeled food justice and food sovereignty lessons that have been replicated throughout the school. In partnership with Inspiring Minds, a local tutoring and mentoring program, FFRI has provided hands-on educational, cooking, and gardening series at Webster Avenue, Pleasant View, Reservoir Avenue, Spaziano and Lima elementary schools, and Nathanael Greene and Nathan Bishop middle schools.

In the 2018-2019 school year, FFRI partnered with Esek Hopkins Middle School to secure funding to build up the school garden, deliver teacher lesson plans, and create a school Farm to School culture, culminating in a student-led school-wide taste test. FFRI is currently working with Esek Hopkins and Nathanael Greene middle schools, among others, to plan a variety of activities for 2020 and 2021.

FFRI also provides Harvest of the Month materials and support to PPSD, including creating custom Harvest of the Month materials for Sodexo in the Providence district.

In the coming year, FFRI will be drafting a plan for its statewide Farm to School program. URI SNAP-Ed will partner in this process to align FFRI's Farm to School activities with the Common Core curriculum. It is recommended that the Providence Farm to School team engage in FFRI's planning process and explore opportunities to connect FFRI to curriculum in Providence.



Esek Hopkins MS indoor garden cart

★ ***Engage with FFRI Farm to School planning process to support alignment with Providence Farm to School goals and increase access to programming***

The RIDE-administered Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) is used throughout the District, delivering samples of fruits and vegetables to elementary students at non-meal times. Approximately 20 Providence elementary schools connected with URI SNAP-Ed's FFVP educator between 2018 and 2020, but stakeholders report that the URI SNAP-Ed Curriculum that supports this program as an educational opportunity is not widely implemented. It is recommended that Providence Farm to School partner with RIDE to ensure that local products are prioritized for this state-wide program to emphasize promoting fruits and vegetables that are locally sourced and/or reflective of the geographic and cultural origins of Rhode Island's school children. It is also recommended that the Curriculum be promoted to all elementary Physical

Education and Health teachers and School Nurses and that Farm to School teacher training funds committed from the food service budget be used to offer professional development regarding curriculum delivery, though a partnership with Sodexo (which provides the fruit and vegetable samples) and URI SNAP-Ed.

★ ***Integrate local and/or culturally appropriate produce into FFVP education and procurement priorities statewide***

★ ***Promote and offer teachers professional development in FFVP curriculum delivery***

URI SNAP-Ed is strongly driven to work in the city, which is home to a large proportion of the eligible families who are at the core of its mission. Challenges with data sharing agreements and MOU development have been brought to the forefront as the district turnaround strategy has formed, and success of the Farm to School effort will depend on resolution of these challenges.

★ ***Raise awareness of challenges to creating and facilitating partnerships, including development of data sharing strategies; build upon successful partnership models in neighboring RI districts***

In Spring 2020, URI SNAP-Ed will be drafting a 3-year plan to serve as a blueprint for its work throughout the state. It is recommended that Providence Farm to School team members, especially school staff, engage in this planning process to develop strategies to effectively engage SNAP-Ed in the schools.

★ ***Engage with URI SNAP-Ed planning process to support alignment with Providence Farm to School goals and increase access to programming***

★ ***Explore how local foods can be integrated into Cooking with Kids for a Healthy Future and how the program can be expanded to reach more schools***

### III. GARDEN ACTIVITIES

To date, the reach of teacher-led garden-based education activities in the District have not been documented. In addition to the above-recommended assessment of existing school gardens and garden needs, it is recommended that the Farm to School teams develop strategies to survey all schools about the educational activities, learning goals and curriculum connections currently taking place in the gardens. This survey will serve as a baseline from which to identify needs and goals for expanding garden education activities.

★ ***Develop and implement baseline survey of all garden education activities being conducted by PPSD teachers***



## IV. CULINARY ACTIVITIES

**THE LOCAL FOOD AMBASSADOR PROGRAM** is a collaboration between Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition (RIHSC) and Farm Fresh RI (FFRI), funded through the RI Department of Education's Child Nutrition Program (RIDE CNP). The program's goal is to create a volunteer network of Local Food Ambassadors (parents, community members and students). The Ambassadors conduct school cafeteria taste tests to increase exposure and consumption of locally grown produce and raise awareness and support for local foods in the school community and in schools. Through the program, RIHSC and FFRI staff train volunteers to work with food service and school staff (principal, school nurse teacher and other engaged teachers) to plan and conduct local food taste tests. Planning includes development of a recipe featuring a locally-grown fruit or vegetable, highlights of the farm where the produce was grown, promotional strategies to encourage students to sample and communication ideas to inform the school community and educate about the local food system. RIHSC provides a step-by-step toolkit to guide volunteers through the process for future taste tests and ideas to make taste tests and incorporation of well-received recipes into menus a regular occurrence. RIHSC received approval to implement the program in seven Providence elementary schools in the 2019-2020 school year, but the execution of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with PPSD presented a barrier to implementation, as did identification of necessary resources. An additional barrier may be the program's dependence on parent/volunteer participation, which is an ongoing challenge in Providence and districts serving communities with similar economic challenges and linguistic diversity. Through partnership with a committed Health teacher at Nathanael Greene Middle School, a pilot student peer-to-peer LFA program was started in 2020 by training students in the afterschool wellness club and conducting one cafeteria taste test in 2020.

- ★ ***Partner with the RI Healthy Schools Coalition to identify additional opportunities to expand the Local Food Ambassadors (LFA) program in Providence schools and strategies to address challenges or adjust programming as needed***
- ★ ***Identify budget and other resources needed to implement Local Food Ambassadors in Providence***
- ★ ***Collaborate with Sodexo to align the LFA program with other sustainability goals***

As described above, Red's Best conducted demonstrations and tastings of local dogfish tacos at Classical High School in 2017. This program included a visit to the cafeteria from a local fishermen, who introduced the students to the fresh-caught fish and created an opportunity for first-hand learning about local foods and the people who produce them. According to Red's Best, demonstrations such as this increase students' interest in foods and result in dramatic increases in the number of meals served that day. It is recommended that Red's Best be re-engaged to explore options for future local fish tastings and education in the cafeteria.

- ★ **Explore partnerships to re-introduce and expand tastings and education about local fish in cafeterias**

The Providence Career and Technical Academy's (PCTA) Culinary Arts Program has strong potential to contribute significantly to the District's Farm to School strategy. PCTA has an existing relationship with Sodexo, and it is recommended that the culinary program be engaged in the development of Farm to School culinary strategies for the District.

★ ***Engage PCTA Culinary Arts in development of Farm to School culinary strategies***

Providence is home to Johnson & Wales University, which has one of the country's most highly-recognized hospitality and culinary arts programs. Development of a partnership with Johnson & Wales could significantly benefit PPSP's Farm to School efforts, including by connecting students to career training in food service and by bringing professional chefs-in-training into schools.

★ **Explore partnership with Johnson & Wales University culinary and sustainable food systems programs in support of Farm to School culinary activities**

**Fuel Up to Play 60** (FUTP 60), is a leading national in-school health and wellness program launched by the National Football League (NFL) and National Dairy Council (NDC) in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Fuel Up to Play 60's primary focus is to help schools meet their wellness goals and encourage youth to consume nutrient-rich foods (low-fat and fat-free dairy, fruits, vegetables and whole grains and lean protein foods) and achieve at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Fuel Up to Play 60, is offered to all schools with students in grades K-12, at no cost. Three quarters of the schools in the nation have enrolled in the program.

Beyond health and wellness, FUTP 60 offers students leadership opportunities that help them gain confidence and lifelong skills through teamwork with their peers and adults at their schools. Students are empowered to become leaders in their school and communities by becoming FUTP Ambassadors, who serve as examples and role models for fellow students and entire communities.

All Providence schools have enrolled in FUTP, but only three (Webster Avenue and Spaziano Elementary Schools and Nathanael Greene Middle School) are actively using the program.

★ **Identify and address barriers to expanding implementation of Fuel Up to Play 60 across the District**

## V. FIELD TRIPS

Food-related field trips connect students with their local food and agriculture systems in tangible and exciting ways. Student learning on field trips can reinforce classroom learning in real world settings in multiple areas, including science, English Language Arts, math, health, and social studies, and deepen understanding of connections among agriculture, diet, health and community well-being. Sodexo and Pezza Farm currently partner on annual fall field trips that include pumpkin picking and painting for elementary students.

- ★ ***Continue supporting elementary school field trips to Pezza Farm and/or new farms engaged through Adopt-a-Farm***



Harvest of the Month in the PCTA cafeteria

Providence's vibrant urban agriculture and other food-related businesses offer many opportunities for engaging, accessible and affordable field trips. Many schools are located within blocks of a community garden or urban farm operated by Groundwork Rhode Island, Southside Community Land Trust, the African Alliance of Rhode Island, West Elmwood Housing's Sankofa Initiative, Roger Williams Park Botanical Center, community garden and zoo, and/or other partners. Afoot field trips to these gardens and farms can help students connect to the foods produced by their own communities, and to other cultural communities surrounding their schools. They can demonstrate micro-business development, serve as biology labs, offer opportunities for community service, observe and measure climate and climate change, show the history of migration in Providence's communities, and many other important hands-on learning opportunities. It is recommended that individual schools or the district develop partnerships and pursue funding for local urban farming organizations to offer walking field trips to schools near urban farms and gardens. Development of maps for each school identifying locations of nearby community partners will raise awareness and assist in planning afoot field trips.

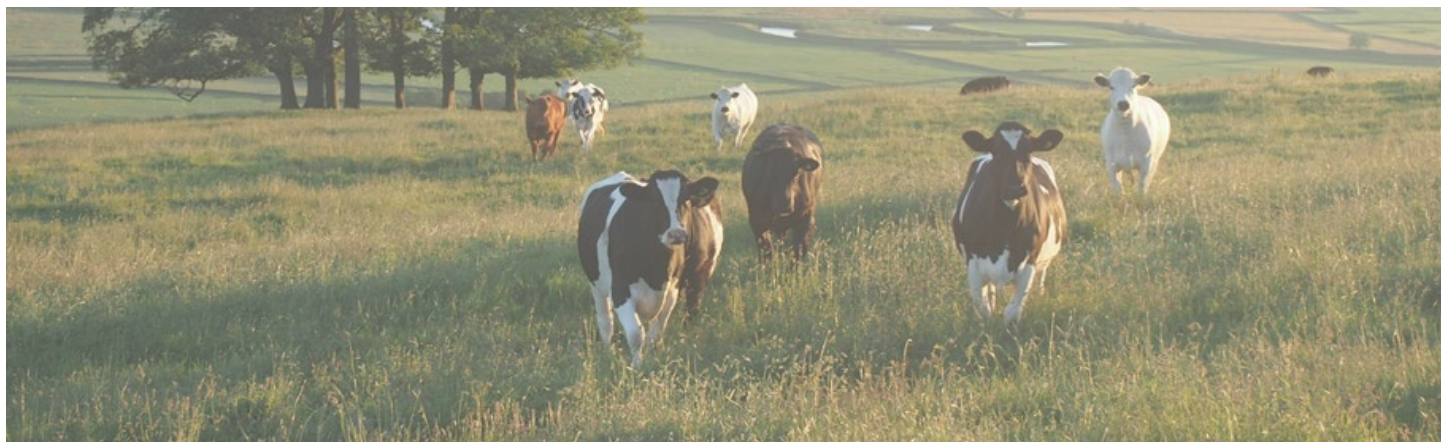
- ★ ***Explore partnerships with local urban farming organizations to facilitate Providence-based afoot field trips***
- ★ ***Raise awareness of nearby learning opportunities and support planning of afoot field trips by developing a map of each school identifying proximate opportunities***

Additional field trips to fishing ports and organizations specializing in marine science, such as Save the Bay, can connect students to the state's fisheries and increase awareness



of the place of the fish we eat in our ecosystem. Rhode Island has a strong network of food-based businesses, including hydroponic greenhouses, local pickling companies, and others. The New England Dairy Council provides funding every year for schools to send 5th-8th grade students to a local dairy farm and for a local dairy farm to visit the school. It is recommended that the District and its partners pursue funding and partnerships to make field trips to these important local resources available to students at all levels.

- ★ ***Continue and expand 5th-8th grade trips to local dairy farms through New England Dairy Council***
- ★ ***Identify opportunities for sea- and bay-based field trips for students at all levels***
- ★ ***Develop partnerships with hydroponic greenhouses and local food producers for field trips and career exploration opportunities***



## VI. AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER ACTIVITIES

As noted above, the afterschool supper and summer meals programs are not constrained by the same time and logistical limitations as the school day. These programs offer time for family-style meals, group conversations while eating, art and culinary activities, and other forms of creative education. Partnerships between the Providence Parks Department, which administers these programs, and food education organizations such as Southside Community Land Trust, URI SNAP-Ed or others can take advantage of these opportunities for creative learning time.

- ★ ***Partner with the Providence Parks Department to develop strategies to increase integration of Farm to School activities and education into summer and afterschool meals***

Providence After School Alliance (PASA) operates afterschool programs at middle schools throughout the Providence district. The Providence After School Alliance's mission is to help close opportunity gaps by expanding and improving the quality of afterschool, summer and other out of school time learning opportunities for all students in the city of Providence. Through PASA, individuals or organizations can propose afterschool activities for funding, to be delivered at select middle schools. Activities such as gardening or cooking classes would promote Farm to School throughout the district by taking advantage of this opportunity. Middle schools served by PASA participate in the afterschool supper program, creating an opportunity to coordinate Farm to School learning with meal service outside of school hours.

★ ***Explore options for local food systems, gardening or culinary partners to deliver Farm to School-based programming at PASA sites, potentially coordinated with supper service at the schools***

As described above under Garden Maintenance, youth summer employment programs offer an excellent opportunity to ensure that school gardens are activated and maintained during out-of-school times. These programs also present opportunities to bring agriculture and food systems education to participating youth.



Martin Luther King, Jr. ES Pollinator garden welcomes students



## EVALUATION

The Health and Wellness Committee's Food Service Ad Hoc Committee has drafted metrics for tracking how the school meals program is promoting health and wellness priorities. Many of these metrics overlap with Farm to School's goals for community engagement and student/community voice in menu development. Specific reporting and metrics pertaining to Farm to School include:

### STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

**Purpose:** Ensure student voice is centered in food service operations.

### MENU DEVELOPMENT

**Purpose:** Provide quality and culturally appropriate food for students to increase meal participation.

### SUSTAINABILITY

**Purpose:** Integrate food services operations and sustainability goals into Providence's sustainability goals as managed by the Sustainability Office.

### LOCAL PROCUREMENT

**Purpose:** Maximize local and regionally grown/produced foods in school food service.



Quantitative and qualitative measures have been developed for the meal program's achievements in Student Engagement and Menu Development. The Sodexo Director of Sustainability is partnering with the City's [Office of Sustainability](#) to develop metrics that support the City's [Sustainability Plan](#).

A draft [procurement tracking](#) form was created as a part of this planning process, which will be used to track local procurement for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. It is recommended that this form be regularly updated with input from the FSMC and its wholesale contractors, as well as other food systems partners.



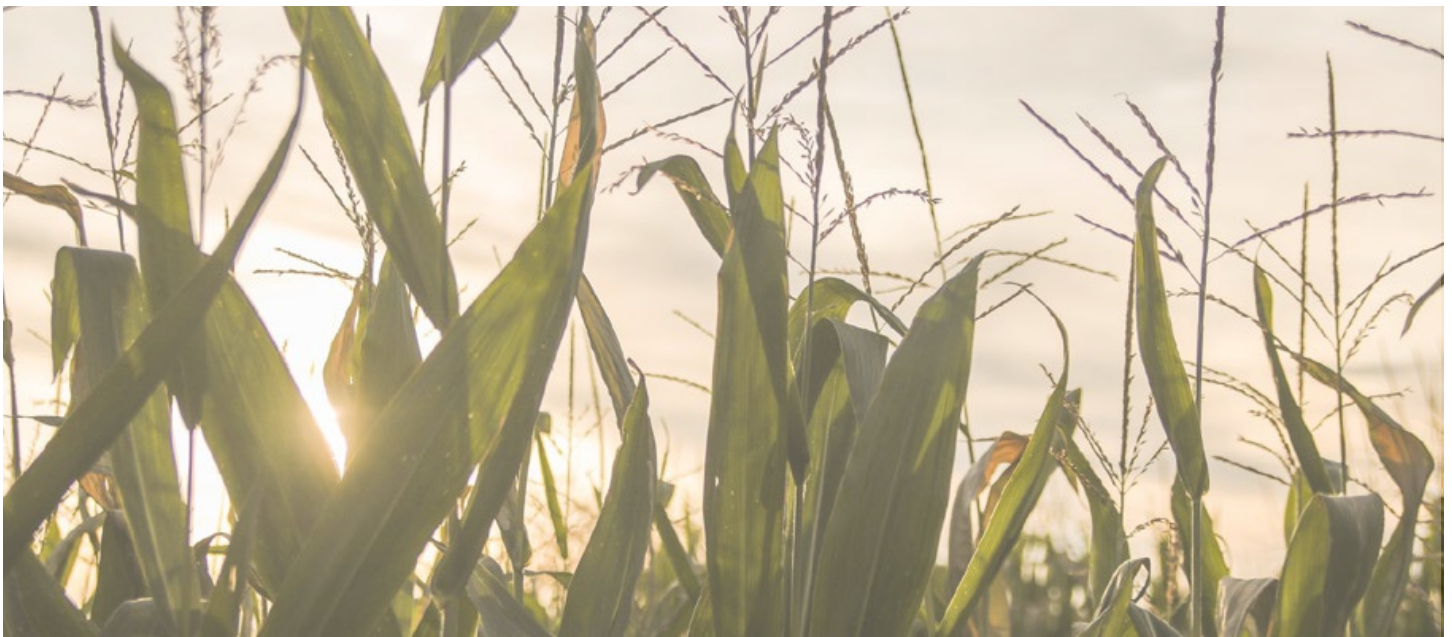
The FSMC will collect data on the above metrics monthly, to be reported to the Health and Wellness Committee quarterly.

★ ***Evaluate monthly FSMC reports to monitor progress toward Farm to School goals; update and refine strategies in response***

The USDA requires that districts conduct an implementation assessment of their wellness policy at least once every three years. The Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition developed the [Wellness Policy Implementation Checklist](#) to guide schools and districts in this assessment. It is recommended that Providence Farm to School stakeholders use the Implementation Checklist format to develop Farm to School metrics based on the goals of this plan, and use the checklist to guide an annual Farm to School implementation assessment and evaluation. It is further recommended that the Farm to School checklist be included in the three-year assessments to be conducted by the Wellness Coordinator in 2020 and 2023.

★ ***Create Farm to School Implementation Checklist to monitor implementation progress***

★ ***Integrate 3-year review of Farm to School into Wellness Policy assessment***



In addition to the checklist, it is recommended that the Farm to School teams pursue funding or partnerships with local academic institutions to develop and conduct an annual qualitative Farm to School assessment by Spring 2021.

★ ***Identify funding or partnership to develop and conduct annual qualitative assessment***

### I. BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS TO DATE

In its most recently accepted bid for the Food Service Management Company (FSMC) contract, Sodexo earmarked \$100,000 annually from the food service budget to PPSD's Farm to School and Sustainability goals. Recent conversations with the HCO and the PPSD Wellness coordinator clarified this commitment to include:

- \$28,000 for indoor garden stations in middle schools (\$7,000 each at 3 schools in the 2019-2020 year, 3 schools in 2020-2021)
- \$10,000 for building, improving or otherwise supporting school gardens
- \$10,000 for other sustainability initiatives in coordination with City of Providence sustainability goals
- \$10,000 in 2019-2020 for an assessment of sustainability capacities in cafeterias and kitchens (e.g. dishwashers to enable use of reusable vs. disposable dishes)
- \$10,000 for tastings and other special promotional activities
- \$5000 for teacher training and development (For PD hours or conference/training registrations)
- \$5000 for clean drinking water options (e.g. Hydration Stations or other options as appropriate)
- \$5000 for miscellaneous Farm to School and sustainability support requests from individual schools
- \$10,000 for Sodexo Sustainability staff

This commitment of annual support from the FSMC is a very positive development in ensuring sustainability of the Farm to School effort.

As noted above, the commitment of \$2.5M to creation of Green Schoolyards in 2020-2021 is another positive development that will drive Providence Farm to School forward in the next two years.



USDA offers Farm to School Implementation Grants annually. These grants are typically for work plans one or two years in length, for amounts between \$50,000 and \$100,000. The application process has historically opened each December. Because of the transitions in priorities and administrative responsibilities connected to the turnaround process, PPSD determined that December 2019 was not the appropriate time to pursue this opportunity or other sizable grants in support of Farm to School.



## II. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

A key step in moving this plan forward and in sustaining the effort will be the creation of a Farm to School Coordinator position. This position will be responsible for ongoing coordination between necessary partners, identification of needs and resources in support of individual schools' activities, driving key steps identified in the Action Plan. Given the current state of flux in PPSD administrative duties, it is recommended that this position be housed at an outside partner agency.

The City of Providence Healthy Communities Office will offer the City's ongoing support and participation by coordinating available City resources, partnering in fund development, and engaging key sustainability, food systems and other partners.

USDA requires that funds for the School Meals Program be applied to operating and/or improving the school food service program, and encourage innovative ways of meeting the goals of the school meals programs, citing that ["nutrition, food, and agriculture education and school garden activities may offer a viable opportunity for supporting the programs."](#) It is recommended that the PPSD Supervisor of Food Services and other key administration and partners review the PPSD school food service account to identify funds that can support Farm to School priorities.

- ★ ***Identify partnership and oversight structure for Farm to School Coordinator position***
- ★ ***Continue to work with Sodexo to refine, update and determine priorities for spending of support for Farm to School earmarked in the food service budget***



- ★ ***Continue to engage City of Providence Healthy Communities Office support in accessing City resources and partners***
- ★ ***Review PPSD school food service account to identify funds that can support Farm to School priorities***

### III. GRANTS

The PPSD Development Office's stated purpose is to "expand and diversify financial resources and secure additional local, state, federal, corporate and private resources, to address a wide range of diverse needs across our district." The Development Office aligns all grants with district goals, including health and support for diverse learners, which can be supported by school gardens. The Development office can support Farm to School by coordinating with partners to pursue grants at a larger scale than is in the capacity of individual teachers.

- ★ ***Increase coordination between Farm to School teachers and the PPSD Development Office to coordinate efforts and pursue large-scale grants***

It is recommended that the Farm to School teams develop an application for USDA 2021 Farm to School Implementation funds support of this plan, to be submitted in an upcoming grant cycle. If funded, this implementation grant would support activities taking place in the following two years. The next opportunity to apply is anticipated to be December 2020.

- ★ ***Submit application for a USDA Farm to School Implementation Grant in future grant cycle***



JSEC's school garden planned and maintained by dedicated educators