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## Trend of Homegrown Food for School Lunches on the Upswing

Whether it's from a farm, a garden or a greenhouse, students are increasingly learning about their food and where it originates. Not only that, it's becoming more common for students to grow and harvest food that ultimately ends up on the school lunch menu.

In Portland, Maine, students from several elementary schools spent part of their day recently digging up potatoes that they had planted in their school gardens last spring. Also, the students harvested leaks.

The two homegrown veggies will come together for a special school lunch menu item: potato leak hash.

“Involving (students) in growing, harvesting, taste-testing and preparing food makes them much more willing and excited to eat healthy foods,” said Lily Chaleff of Cultivating Community, a farm-community education group, to the *Forecaster*.

The gardening effort also includes a curriculum tie-in with vocabulary, math and science, she said. Once harvested, the students observed the vegetables by looking, tasting, touching and smelling.



## New Experiences

For some students, this is their first exposure to growing food and eating it. “We have a real issue with nature proficiency,” these days, Chaleff told the *Forecaster*, and the school gardening program helps students to “become more comfortable with nature.”

Similarly, in Tioga Center, New York, students planted and harvested corn and potatoes (with the help of local farmers) on property

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## Legislation in the News

### New California Bill Would Require School Districts to Enroll Low-Income Families in Free and Reduced-Price Meals

California, a state that produces more than a third of the country's vegetables and two-thirds of its fruits and nuts, still has one in four children go hungry, affecting a child's health, learning and behavior, according to a recent report in the *Press Democrat*.

As an answer, state Senator Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg) wants to minimize paperwork for families and schools and automatically enroll them in free and reduced-price meals through his bill known as Feed the Kids Act, that recently passed both houses.

If the bill receives Governor Jerry Brown's signature, it would

automatically enroll an estimated 650,000 low-income children statewide currently covered under Medi-Cal.

"We produce the majority of the food in America. Yet, we have more kids in poverty now than we did prior to the recession," McGuire said to the *Press Democrat*. "It's simply unacceptable. We have to declare a war on childhood poverty in the state.

"This is one of the best tools we have to combat childhood poverty and to increase childhood success in public schools. There is no bigger bang for the buck for California kids."

#### What It Entails

The bill calls for school districts to use Medi-Cal data to qualify income-eligible students for free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch. While it would cost California \$1.13 million to provide the meals, it would receive more than \$15 million in federal reimbursements, according to Sen. McGuire. For instance, the state contributes 23 cents toward each lunch meal, while the federal government gives \$3.24.

Federal reimbursements aren't the only way that schools can benefit when low-income students participate in the school lunch program. They can also take advantage of the Local Control Funding Formula, said the Petaluma City Schools' chief business official. The funding formula takes into account the number of students on free and reduced-price meals.

"It goes to support the general fund, and being able to offer educational programs that target those students," she said.

While some districts already use Medi-Cal data, McGuire said not all districts in the state do.

"Every data shows when a student has a full stomach at school their test scores go up. Kids are more successful when they're not going hungry,"

#### New Bill Would Help Florida Families with School Lunch Debt

In Florida, new legislation introduced by Representative Katie Edwards (D-Plantation) could require schools to distribute free or reduced-price meal applications to all students, not just those in need. And if a student owes money for five or more meals, the bill would require the school to inform parents and encourage them to complete and file the application, according to a recent report by WFSU news.

"A first or second grader might be in line, they get to the cafeteria only to learn that mom or dad hasn't put any money into their account and then so the child publicly in front of the rest of the classmates is told to either go to the back of the line or they are given a different type lunch and basically the child is singled out, shamed or ridiculed," said Rep. Edwards to the news station.

The goal of Edwards' bill is to ensure that more eligible students are enrolled in free and reduced-price meals to prevent the shame of having unpaid meals, she said.

Source: wfsu.org, 9/25/17

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## Legislation in the News

### New California Bill Would Require School Districts to Enroll Low-Income Families in Free and Reduced-Price Meals

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McGuire said to the paper. “We should be making it as easy as possible for families to enroll.”

**Source:** [pressdemocrat.com](http://pressdemocrat.com), 9/25/17

**““We produce the majority of the food in America. Yet, we have more kids in poverty now than we did prior to the recession. It’s simply unacceptable. We have to declare a war on childhood poverty in the state.”**

— California Senator Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg)

### New California Law Aims to Redirect School Lunch Waste to Food Banks

Uneaten school lunches that end up in the trashcan are an ongoing problem throughout the country. But starting Jan. 1, 2018, in California, public schools will have the option of donating their leftovers to food banks and charities, as a result of a newly passed law.

“Here’s a way to get food that was being wasted and thrown away into the hands of nonprofits to be able to feed people,” said state Senator Ed Hernandez (D-West Covina), who wrote the bill, to CBS 13 news.

The state health code currently prevents schools from donating any leftover food. But Senate Bill 557, recently signed by Governor Jerry Brown, will provide schools the ability to effectively give away their food.

“They were required to throw

that food away,” Hernandez said. “There was no connection between giving that food to a food pantry, a homeless center or a nonprofit. They couldn’t do it because of health codes.”

their food. And while it’s difficult for school districts to put a number on how much food is currently thrown out, Hernandez estimated that it could amount to hundreds of millions of dollars.

Regardless, a representative from Sacramento City Unified School District stated that districts will likely welcome the opportunity to see how their food donations can assist people in their communities.

“It’s going to be very helpful to have guidelines on how we deal with that process and how we make sure that the meal ends up with somebody who really needs it,” said the spokesperson for

Sacramento City Unified School District.

**Source:** [sacramento.cbslocal.com](http://sacramento.cbslocal.com), 9/26/17



#### Schools Hoping to Help

Thousands of schools across the state will now be able to donate

## In the News

# Action for Healthy Kids and National PTA Launch Parents for Healthy Kids Initiative

Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) and National PTA have teamed up to support parents in creating healthier schools through a new initiative, Parents for Healthy Kids, according to a news release from PR Newswire. The new program, Parents for Healthy Kids, features a website (<https://parentsforhealthykids.org>), an online community forum, training and grants to educate, engage and empower parents nationwide to improve school and student health.

Evidence shows children who attend schools that promote physical activity and healthy eating perform better academically, noted the news release. Healthy school environments also set the stage for children to adopt a healthy lifestyle into adulthood.

However, studies and statistics show many schools face challenges when it comes to implementing policies and programs that help address childhood obesity and enhance learning.

### School and Student Health Worries

Additionally, according to a survey\* conducted by AFHK and National PTA, nearly all parents said they are concerned about the future of school and student health in the U.S.

“Parents and parent groups are a powerful force for change in schools and can help bring together school staff, other parents and community partners to improve student health

and learning. We are excited to be able to help mobilize parents around school health issues through Parents



for Healthy Kids in collaboration with National PTA and our generous sponsor, ALDI,” said Rob Bisceglie, CEO, AFHK, in the news release.

At [ParentsforHealthyKids.org](https://ParentsforHealthyKids.org) parents can:

- Learn how to engage with school leaders and decision makers on health issues
- Find ways to help bring more physical activity and healthy eating to the school day
- Share opinions, exchange ideas and connect with like-minded parents in a community forum
- Be inspired by stories from parents nationwide and share their own
- Find tips and ideas for reinforcing healthy habits at home.

School grants, training and workshops for parents are also being provided as part of the initiative. For the 2017-2018 school year, 150 schools have been awarded grants, providing

funds and technical support to the schools and parent groups to implement health and wellness programs that include a family engagement component.

“PTA leaders, members and families play an important role in helping schools create and maintain healthy practices that contribute to the well-being and long-term success of our nation’s children. We are pleased to team up with Action for Healthy Kids and ALDI to equip parents and schools with resources to engage families and provide a healthier environment for all students,” said Jim Accomando, president of National PTA, in the news release.

Parents for Healthy Kids is sponsored by ALDI. ALDI’s support of the initiative builds on the company’s commitment to helping children and families live healthy lives, the news release stated.

*\*A survey of 558 parents of kindergartners through sixth-graders was conducted among members of Action for Healthy Kids and National PTA in February 2017.*

**Sources:** prnewswire.com, 9/19/17; portal.shapeamerica.org, 2016; pewtrusts.org 12/16; parentsforhealthykids.org

For more information, visit [ParentsforHealthyKids.org](https://ParentsforHealthyKids.org). A complete list of schools awarded ALDI-funded grants can be found at [ActionforHealthyKids.org/ALDI](https://ActionforHealthyKids.org/ALDI).

## In the News

### Virginia Students are Learning Composting in the Lunchroom

Students are no longer just tossing their lunch trash in the garbage — at least not all of their trash — at one Virginia school. A science teacher from Providence Middle School in Chesterfield County recently started a program to help educate students on composting uneaten lunch fruits and vegetables.

Last year, the school's sixth grade informally started composting lunch trash. But this year, the science teacher received a grant from the Chesterfield Education Foundation's Making a Creative Difference worth about \$3,165 that has helped expand the vermicomposting program schoolwide, according to a recent article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. (Vermicomposting differs from traditional composting because it uses worms to help with the process.)

#### From Trash Can to Compost Bin

Already this school year, the middle school has prevented 765 pounds of fruits and vegetables from going to the landfill and instead is composting it into fertilizer.

"I thought this was a great opportunity to touch every kid and to have them see what composting is and engage with it," the science teacher told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

Students in grades six through eight collect leftover fruits and vegetables at lunch. Next, compost worms help turn the trash into fertilizer. Later, the fertilizer will

be used in school garden beds and other garden projects.

While it started out with just one compost bin last spring, the school now has 10 bins. As a result of the increased presence of the bins, the science teacher said she's seen a boost in interest in the program.

"They want to walk around with the buckets. They want to put food in the compost bins. It's fun for them," she said, adding that she has about 10 students who help her with the program after school.

Another aspect of the compost program is to have students build

a garden using their math skills — designing and planning the foundation of the garden.



"It's math-related, and we can throw in all kind of applications," said a sixth-grade math teacher at the school.

Source: Richmond.com, 10/1/17

## We'd love to hear from you!

Contact our editor, Christine McLaughlin,  
at [christine@paper-clip.com](mailto:christine@paper-clip.com)  
with comments, questions and suggestions.

## In the News

### New York City Provides Free Lunch for All Students, Washington, D.C., Introduces Free Lunch Bill

For all 1.1 million public school students in New York City, lunch is on the house this school year. Food policy advocates and members of the New York City Council have long been lobbying for the move, stating that some students would rather go hungry than admit they can't afford to pay for lunch.

"This is about equity," Carmen Fariña, the schools' chancellor, said to the *New York Times*. "All communities matter."

Roughly 75 percent of the city's students are from low-income families and qualified for free or reduced-price lunches, according to officials. Even those who qualified for lower cost meals received them for free. But the new move will include another

200,000 students and save their families about \$300 per year. The price of a school lunch is about \$1.75 per day, the *Times* reported.

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***"This is about equity. All communities matter."***

— Carmen Fariña, Chancellor of New York City Schools

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#### Free Lunch Bill in D.C.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., a city council member, Brandon Todd, introduced a new bill to enable free lunch for all students, according to a recent report by WTOP news. Called, "Universal Free Lunch for All Amendment Act of 2017," the bill would

provide free lunch for students in public schools, public charter schools and also some private schools that choose to participate.

All students already receive free breakfast, but this bill would add lunch to the free offerings.

"This bill would provide financial relief for families and ensure that all District students are receiving healthy meals so they have the opportunity to succeed," Todd said to WTOP.

Also, the legislation will help alleviate the "lunch shaming" attached to the stigma that results from students who do not have the cash to pay for meals, according to Todd.

**Sources:** nytimes.com, 9/6/17; wtop.com, 9/22/17

## Tools for Schools

### No Kid Hungry Youth Engagement Tool Kit Available

One in six kids in America can't count on always getting the food they need, according to information from the nonprofit group, Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign. No Kid Hungry and the Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation firmly believe that the No Kid Hungry promise to connect every kid to healthy food every day cannot be fulfilled without help from the next generation of young leaders. This new toolkit provides an understanding of "what works" in

engaging youth with tools that can be used to broaden the base and immediately engage youth support in the fight to end childhood

hunger, according to the No Kid Hungry information.

**Source:** nokidhungry.org

#### Free Toolkit Online

To learn more, download the free toolkit at <http://nkh-toolkit.squarespace.com>.



# Management Matters

## Five Recruitment Tips to Use During Low Unemployment

Nationwide the unemployment rate is less than 5 percent — its lowest rate since 2008. This is mostly good news for workers but a definite disadvantage for employers who are trying to attract the best and the brightest in their respective fields.

Unfortunately, school nutrition is no exception and recruiting can be especially challenging because of the inherent part-time hours, lack of benefits and lower wages. But it's not impossible to fill those vacancies: It just might take a little more ingenuity and a lot of persistence.

To help you figure out a plan, we thought we'd offer some recruiting tips from some of the leaders in the human resources industry.

### 1. Offer Competitive Wages and Benefits:

Be sure to know what other school districts are paying and the benefits they're offering for similar jobs before making your next hire, according to information from a recruiting firm, DePaul Industries. You can find out a lot of information on available jobs on job sites like Craigslist.com, ZipRecruiter.com or Indeed.com. Knowing what the competition offers makes you more competitive because you can match or come close to what they're offering. And don't forget about other forms of compensation like bonuses, retirement plans, transit passes or remote working options because they also really matter to employees.

### 2. Use Social Media to Grow a Candidate Pool:

Much like companies try to build their brands on social media, school districts can do the same. This can be a positive recruitment tool because candidates can find your district before you have to find them. Sites like LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can be used to build your base of potential hires and employees, according to information from Creative Business Resources (CBR), a human resources outsourcing company. Communicating with prospective hires through these sites can be more efficient and may result in new hires who are genuinely interested in your district and its mission.

### 3. Get Creative:

It's no longer possible to just post a job ad and be done with it. Nowadays, nutrition directors need to go where their candidates are. If stay-at-home moms or veterans are your target market, try posting job openings or handing out flyers at the local library or local grocery stores, Target, Walmart, Starbucks or 7-11.

### 4. Make Sure Recruitment Efforts are Mobile-friendly:

Roughly 43 percent of job seekers use a mobile device, according to a 2014 Jobvite survey.

And according to a 2017 Pew Research Center survey about 77 percent of Americans own a smartphone. As a result, the number of job candidates using mobile devices is expected to increase. So, it's wise to ensure that your district websites are mobile-friendly and the job search apps you use should create an interactive experience for the candidates, according to CBR.

### 5. Consider Individuals Who Face Barriers to Employment:

You may want to cast as wide a net as possible, so think about hiring qualified people with disabilities or people who have experienced homelessness. "Hiring people who face barriers to employment isn't charity — it's a business decision that can be good for your bottom line. Partnering with an alternative staffing firm or a local nonprofit organization can help you connect with candidates you may have otherwise overlooked," the DePaul report stated.

Sources: jobvite.com, 10/14; cbr.com; depaulindustries.com, 4/28/16

For more on hiring people with disabilities, visit [www.ThinkBeyondtheLabel.com](http://www.ThinkBeyondtheLabel.com).

For more on hiring people who have experienced homelessness, visit National Center on Employment and Homelessness at [www.heartlandalliance.org](http://www.heartlandalliance.org).

# Trend of Homegrown Food for School Lunches on The Upswing

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near the school district. The school will serve the harvested food once a month as part of school lunch.

“The new menu program not only involves partnering with more farms and processors to offer new recipes and healthy local foods to schools, it really provides an opportunity to integrate classroom and cafeteria education and involve the entire school and community with connecting with their regional food system,” said Tioga Center’s Food and Health Network Director, to [BinghamtonHomePage.com](http://BinghamtonHomePage.com).

In North Carolina, 19 schools across the state recently received grant money from United Healthcare and Whole Foods to start or expand gardens as learning tools, reported WRAL news.

One teacher explained how much students enjoy working in the vegetable garden at her elementary school. “It’s truly amazing to watch the kids, just their excitement level as we come outside and work in the beds,” she said to the news station. “It’s incredible to see.”

Some of their fresh vegetable bounty was used in Thanksgiving baskets that provided food for 20 local families last year.

**“Involving (students) in growing, harvesting, taste-testing and preparing food makes them much more willing and excited to eat healthy foods.”**

— Lily Chaleff of Cultivating Community, a farm-community education group

## Homegrown School Lunch Week

In Maryland, the state hosts its annual Homegrown School Lunch Week (Sept. 25 through Sept. 29) to help educate students on their food’s origin. Students in public schools get a taste of fresh, Maryland-grown-and-produced food in their lunches during the week (some of which they grow themselves). One elementary school in particular, Crellin Elementary in Crellin, Maryland, has its own agricultural instructional program that involves barnyard animals like cows, goats, sheep and hens, reported the *Garrett County Republican*.

Students are involved with all aspects of farming like feeding the animals, cleaning the barns and the barnyards, and collecting the eggs and the produce, which are later used in school meals or sold to the community.

Likewise, in the Holmen

School District in Wisconsin, students are not just learning the ropes of growing their own produce like corn, potatoes and asparagus, but also raising hogs. In fact, the student-grown pork will be featured on the school menu. Made possible by the school’s Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter and the district’s Farm-2School program, students work closely with farms in the region to help raise, process and prepare pork. When the project is over, the hogs will generate thousands of pork chops for the lunch program, reported the *Lacrosse Tribune*.

“When we serve this, it’s also going to provide education about food, education about pork and education about nutrition,” said the FFA adviser and agriculture teacher.

**Sources:** [theforecaster.net](http://theforecaster.net), 9/26/17; [lacrossetribune.com](http://lacrossetribune.com), 9/20/17; [wral.com](http://wral.com), 9/22/17; [theet.com](http://theet.com), 9/28/17; [binghamtonhomepage.com](http://binghamtonhomepage.com), 9/25/17

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