

## What's local in D.C. Public School meals?

A report on the quantity and variety of locally-grown produce in D.C. Public School cafeterias



*A DCPS student enjoys locally-grown strawberries and leafy greens with lunch!  
Credit: Kathy Brown*

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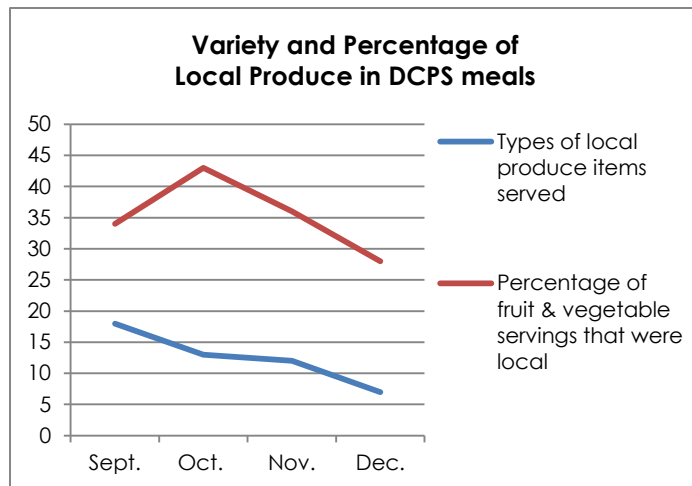
## Introduction

Washington, DC is a leader in the nationwide movement to serve locally-grown food in school meals. As part of the Healthy Schools Act, Washington, DC schools receive an extra five cents for each breakfast or lunch meal served that includes a fresh, locally-grown fruit or vegetable.<sup>i</sup> Farm to school programs that provide local options in school meals have been proven to increase consumption of nutrient-dense foods, leaving students nourished and ready to learn.<sup>ii</sup>

The D.C. Farm to School Network examined breakfast and lunch menus at a subset of District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) from September to December of 2011.<sup>iii</sup> We identified which fruits and vegetables were served, which were locally-grown, and if they were locally-grown, which farms they came from.<sup>iii</sup> Our goal was to paint a picture of the local food landscape in DC school meals in order to identify gaps and formulate recommendations for increasing the diversity and quantity of local foods available to DCPS students.

Three food service vendors provided breakfast, lunch, and in some cases dinner each day at 122 DCPS school sites for approximately 45,000 DCPS students. The vendors for the 2011/2012 school year were Chartwells-Thompson Hospitality (“Chartwells”) serving 108 schools, DC Central kitchen serving seven schools, and Revolution Foods serving seven schools. We analyzed a representative sample of meals at 88 schools across Washington, DC where about 37,000 meals on were served each day. See **Appendix A** for a complete list of schools in our sample.

The three foodservice vendors for DCPS bought produce from 24 different farms located within the seven states in the mid-Atlantic region defined as “local” by the Healthy School Act.<sup>iv</sup> See **Appendix B** for a map of the farms used by DCPS’ vendors. Vendors sourced 23 of the 36 total varieties of fruits and vegetables used on school menus from September to December of 2011 from these 24 local farms. Of the 4.8 million servings of fruits and vegetables served in our sample, just over 1.7 million servings were local. In other words, 35% of the fruits and vegetable components served were local.



In September, 34% of all fruit and vegetable servings were locally-grown, coming from eighteen different farms and including eighteen different varieties of fruits and vegetables. The number of servings increased in October such that 43% of all fruit and vegetable servings were local, including thirteen items from eighteen farms. In November, 36% of fruits and vegetables were local, including sixteen types from eighteen farms. In December, seven fruit and vegetable options from ten local farms comprised 28% of the produce served.

TABLE 1: Local Produce in DCPS Meals September – December 2011					
	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Average
<b>Types of local produce items served</b>	18	13	12	7	14
<b>Number of local farm sources</b>	18	18	18	10	16
<b>Percent of produce servings local vs. non-local</b>	34%	43%	36%	28%	35%

## What's Local by Vendor

Chartwells provided breakfast and lunch for 64 schools in our sample, serving on average 14,500 breakfasts and 17,350 lunches per day.<sup>v</sup> Chartwells served a variety of local fruits and vegetables from a total of fourteen different farms, including Crown Orchard, Batesville, VA; Plochs Farm in Clifton, NJ; Gulfstream Produce in Wendell, NC; Dan Graiff Farms in Newfield, NJ; and Richardson Farms in Owings Mills, MD. Over the four-month period from September to December 2011, 1.5 million portions of the 5.4 million portions of produce served by Chartwells (or 37%) were locally-grown. Some of the local products on Chartwells menus were apples, bok choy, arugula, broccoli, cauliflower, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, pears, tomatoes, and collard greens. See **Appendix C** for a complete list of produce served by Chartwells each month (local and non-local) and local farm sources.

Revolution Foods provided meals for seven DCPS schools and served on average 784 breakfasts and 1,373 lunches daily. Revolution Foods served one of five different fresh fruits (apples, pears, oranges, bananas or grapes) with each meal. From September to December 2011, apples and pears were sourced locally coming from either Colora Orchard in Colora, MD or Rice Orchards in Gardners, PA. In addition to the five fresh fruits served, Revolution Foods offered thirteen different types of vegetables between September and December. None of these vegetables were labeled as locally-grown on Revolution Foods' menus. From September to December 2011, Revolution Foods served approximately 400,000 servings of produce; 110,000 of which came from local farms. So 27% of Revolution Foods' produce servings were local. See **Appendix D** for the complete list of local and non-local fruits, vegetables, and farm sources for Revolution foods.

DC Central Kitchen prepared meals for seven DCPS schools averaging 1,400 breakfasts and 1,800 lunches daily. Of the 275,000 servings of produce DC Central Kitchen served from September to December 2011, 100,200 were locally-grown. In other words, 36% of the produce in DC Central Kitchen's fruit and vegetable servings came from local farms. Local items included apples, broccoli, butternut squash, collard greens, peaches, pears and sweet potatoes from nine local farms, including Kilmer's Farm & Orchard in Inwood, WV, Toigo Orchards in Shippensburg, PA, and the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction. See **Appendix E** for a complete list of produce served by DC Central Kitchen and farm sources.

## Conclusions

DCPS did a very impressive job sourcing local produce for its school meals from September to December of 2011. The following are observations based on the data presented above, and recommendations for how DCPS can increase the quantity and variety of local products available to students.

- 1. A large portion of fruits and vegetables served in DCPS meals were locally-grown.** DCPS should be congratulated for serving approximately **35%** of all fruit and vegetable servings from local farms.

Recommendation: DCPS should more widely publicize their exciting commitment to supporting local growers, and celebrate their success in providing fresh, local options to students.
- 2. Storage crops that keep fresh for months are prominent in DCPS meals.** These crops, such as apples, pears and sweet potatoes, are especially prevalent during the winter when other fruits and vegetables are not in season.

Recommendation: DCPS may want to identify and form contracts in advance of the winter months with farmers who can store crops specifically for use in school meals, knowing that a large volume of these storage crops will be used during the school year.
- 3. The variety and quantity of local products slightly declined from September and December.** Because of the growing season in the mid-Atlantic region, less than half of the number of local products available in September were served in December, dropping from eighteen different local options to seven. The percentage of fruits and vegetables servings that were local declined from 34% to 28%.

Recommendation: DCPS should work with growers that use season extension techniques such as greenhouses; hardier varieties of products that can withstand colder temperatures; and items available year-round such as hydroponic lettuces.
- 4. The variety of local products served in the majority of schools is somewhat limited.** On average, vendors served twelve different local products each month, compared to the dozens of local products available.

Recommendation: DCPS should work with its vendors and suppliers to increase the diversity of local products served, and should work on food education and school gardens to assure that students accept those products.
- 5. The availability of local produce varies among DCPS' three foodservice vendors.** The quantity and variety of local products is different from vendor to vendor.

Recommendation: DCPS should work with its vendors to assure some level of consistency and equity, so that all students are exposed to a baseline level of local products.
- 6. DCPS purchases local products from a relatively small number of farms.** The 1.7 billion servings of local produce served in our sample were sourced from just 24 farms.

If DCPS were to source from a wider variety of growers, they would support more local farms and minimize their risk, but this may be hindered by a lack of aggregation of local products to the scale that DCPS requires.

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> For more information about the Healthy Schools Act, visit [www.dchealthyschools.org](http://www.dchealthyschools.org).

<sup>ii</sup> For a compilation of research demonstrating the impact of farm to school programs, see Bearing Fruit: Farm to School Program Evaluation Resources & Recommendations (<http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/bearingfruit.htm>)

<sup>iii</sup> Our sample included seven schools served by Revolution Foods, seven schools served by DC Central Kitchen and 64 schools served by Chartwells. Find a full list of schools in the sample in Appendix A. This includes all of the schools served by DC Central Kitchen and Revolution Foods, and only the elementary schools and education campuses served by Chartwells. We did not include high schools served by Chartwells because Chartwells served multiple options to high school students, such that any given local food on the menu was only one of many options. We did not analyze supper meals because the Healthy Schools Act does not provide the extra 5 cents per meal if a fruit and vegetable component is served at supper, and therefore we did not have information about local products served at supper. All calculations were based off the self-reported average number of students served and under the assumption all students choose the main entrée, not alternate choices if alternates were offered. The amount of local food in school meals reported here may be on the low end, considering there may be additional local items that were not reported as local on DCPS' menus.

<sup>iv</sup> Local is defined by the Healthy Schools Act as food grown within the District of Columbia, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, North Carolina, New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. We identified a fruit or vegetable components served from the name and address the local farm listed on the school's menu in order to claim the extra 5-cent per meal reimbursement for serving local products created by the Healthy Schools Act.

<sup>v</sup> Chartwells served meals in a total of 108 DCPS schools, averaging 16,700 breakfasts and 23,800 lunches each day.

## APPENDIX A: List of 88 Schools in Representative Sample

- Adams Educational Campus
- Aiton Elementary School
- Amidon-Bowen Elementary School
- Anacostia High School
- Bancroft Elementary School
- Barnard Elementary School
- Beers Elementary School
- Brent Elementary School
- Brightwood Educational Campus
- Brookland @ BH Educational Campus
- Browne Educational Campus
- Bruce Monroe Elementary School
- Burroughs Educational Campus
- Burrville Elementary School
- Cleveland Elementary School
- CW Harris Elementary School
- Davis Elementary School
- Deal Middle School
- Drew Elementary School
- Eaton Elementary School
- Ferbee Hope Elementary School
- Francis Stevens Educational Campus
- Garfield Elementary School
- Garrison Elementary School
- HD Cooke Elementary School
- Hearst Elementary School
- Hendley Elementary School
- Houston Elementary School
- Hyde Elementary School
- Janney Elementary School
- JO Wilson Elementary School
- Kelly Miller Middle School
- Kenilworth Elementary School
- Ketcham Elementary School
- Key Elementary School
- Kimball Elementary School
- Lafayette Elementary School
- Langdon Elementary School
- Langley Educational Campus
- LaSalle Elementary School
- Leckie Elementary School
- Capitol Hill Montessori @ Logan
- Ludlow Taylor Elementary School
- Malcom X Elementary School
- Mann Elementary School
- Marie Reed Elementary School
- Marshall Elementary School
- Maury Elementary School
- McTerrell Elementary School
- Miner Elementary School
- ML King Elementary School
- Moten Elementary School
- Murch Elementary School
- J.C. Nalle Elementary School
- Noyes Elementary School
- Orr Elementary School
- Oyster Elementary School
- Patterson Elementary School
- Payne Elementary School
- Peabody Elementary School
- Plummer Elementary School
- Powell Elementary School
- Prospect Educational Campus
- Randle Highlands Elementary School
- Raymond Elementary School
- River Terrace Elementary School
- Ross Elementary School
- Savoy Elementary School
- Seaton Elementary School
- Sharpe Health Elementary School
- Shepherd Elementary School
- Simon Elementary School
- Smothers Elementary School
- Santon Elementary School
- Soddert Elementary School
- Takoma Elementary School
- Thomas Elementary School
- Thomson Elementary School
- Truesdell Elementary School
- Tubman Elementary School
- Tyler Elementary School
- Turner @ Green Elementary School
- Walker Jones Educational Campus
- Watkins Elementary School
- Webb/Wheatley Elementary School
- West Elementary School
- Whittier Elementary School
- Winston Elementary School

## APPENDIX B: Farm Sources for Local Food Served by DCPS

### Key:

Flag = The White House

Red = Farm sources for local products served by Revolution Foods

Purple = Farm sources for local products served by DC Central Kitchen

Yellow = Farm sources for local products served by Chartwells



For interactive map with farm names and addresses, visit <http://bit.ly/DCPSLocalFarms>

**APPENDIX C: Local and Non-Local Products served by Chartwells, and Local Farm Sources**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Farm Source (if local)</b>
<b>Apple</b>	Crown Orchard or Bear Mountain Orchard
Applesauce	
<b>Arugula</b>	Plochs Farm or Dan Graiff Farms
Banana	
<b>Bok Choy</b>	RJ Ferrari
<b>Broccoli</b>	Parker Farms
<b>Butternut Squash</b>	Gulfstream Produce or Arnold Farms
Cabbage	
Carrots	
<b>Cauliflower</b>	Arnold Farm
<b>Collard Greens</b>	Richardson Farm or Burch Farms
Corn	
Green Bean	
<b>Kale</b>	Richardson Farm or Burch Farms
<b>Nectarine</b>	Crown Orchard
Orange	
<b>Peach</b>	Crown Orchard or Bear Mountain Orchard
<b>Pear</b>	Bear Mountain Produce
Pineapple	
Potatoes	
Romaine	
Root Vegetables	
<b>Spinach</b>	Dan Graiff Farms
<b>Squash</b>	Parker Farms
<b>Sweet Potato</b>	Scott Farms or Muzzarelli Farms
<b>Tomatoes</b>	Godfreys Farm
<b>Watermelon</b>	Lois Produce
<b>Zucchini</b>	Parker Farms

**APPENDIX D: Local and Non-Local Products served by Revolution Foods, and Local Farm Sources**

Product	Local Farm Source (if local)
<b>Apple</b>	Colora Orchards or Rice Orchards
Arugula	
Banana	
Bok Choy	
Broccoli	
Butternut Squash	
Carrots	
Celery	
Corn	
Grapes	
Greens	
Orange	
<b>Pear</b>	Color Orchards or Rice Orchards
Potatoes	
Romaine	
Squash	
Sweet Potatoes	
Zucchini	

**APPENDIX E: Local and Non-Local Products served by DC Central Kitchen, and Local Farm Sources**

Description	Local Farm Source
<b>Apple</b>	Kilmers Farm & Orchard
<b>Applesauce</b>	Kilmers Farm & Orchard
Banana	
<b>Broccoli</b>	Woodbridge Farm
<b>Butternut Squash</b>	Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction
<b>Cabbage</b>	SC Burton Farms
<b>Cantaloupe</b>	Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction
Carrots	
<b>Cole Slaw</b>	SC Burton Farms
<b>Collard Greens</b>	Richardson Farms or Bartenfelder Farms
Corn	
Cucumber	
Honeydew	
<b>Kale</b>	Bartenfelder Farms
<b>Melon</b>	Toigo Orchards
Orange	
<b>Peach</b>	Kilmer Orchards
<b>Pear</b>	Toigo Orchards
<b>Potatoes</b>	Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction
Romaine	
Spinach	
<b>Sweet Potato</b>	N.N. Ellis Produce
Swiss Chard	
Tomatoes	
<b>Watermelon</b>	Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction
Zucchini	