

# 2008-09 Garden to School Café Pilot Project

## What is Garden to School Café?

Garden to School Café is a pilot program of NYC Department of Education, SchoolFood and NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets in collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension; GreenThumb; Added Value; and more than 20 community-based organizations. The goal is to connect school gardening and school lunch menus through seasonal harvest events and supporting educational activities.



## Objectives of the Garden to School Café Pilot

- Increase student's healthful eating by promoting consumption of plant-based menu items and connecting kids to local food and farming
- Connect school gardening with SchoolFood's broad-based efforts to source more local foods
- Build awareness of the benefits of school gardening
- Demonstrate the learning opportunity of integrating school gardening and school lunch.

## Pilot Participants

In the spring, twenty schools were recruited to participate in the pilot program. Participation in the Garden to Café pilot project required that schools and partner community-based organizations meet basic criteria. Schools were chosen through an open competitive application process.

### Participation in the program required:

- An established garden or farm
- An established children/youth gardening program
- Liability insurance for community gardens or urban farms
- Safe soil demonstrated through soil test results or proof of new soil from a safe source.

### Participating Schools:

New Design HS	International HS/HS for Violin and Dance	PS 295
NEST+m	Automotive HS	Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment (BASE)
Food and Finance HS	IS 71	Urban Assembly School of Music & Art
PS 171	Brooklyn New School	PS 89 @ IS 302
Millennium Art Academy	PS 15	John Bowne HS
PS 28	PS 27	PS 219
Bronx Green MS	PS 29	

### School Site Partners

The pilot relied heavily on partner organizations to provide garden sites and/or gardening expertise:

- Open Road
- Cornell Cooperative Extension (Hydroponics Program)
- Union Settlement
- Montefiore School Health Program
- CENYC-Learn It, Grow It, Eat It
- NYRP & FamilyCook Productions
- Slow Food USA/Harvest Time Program
- Added Value (4 schools)
- 6/15 Green Community Garden
- Brooklyn Botanic Gardens
- City of NY Parks and Recreation (Highland Park Children's Garden)
- John Bowne High School



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## What Happened?

### *In the Gardens*

Pilot participants gardened on school sites in outdoor raised bed gardens, in classrooms with EarthBoxes, at nearby community gardens and in much larger urban farm sites. Some began growing for a fall harvest event in the spring. Others started growing in September. Many varieties of vegetables were grown including an array of salad greens, collards, peppers (bell and hot), squash, cauliflower, herbs (loads of basil!), tomatoes, carrots, and potatoes.



### *Garden to Café Educational Activities*

Every school site was different. Harvest Day events included:

- Auditorium assemblies where students, teachers, and farmer experts discussed the process and benefits of growing foods to the entire student body.
- Individual classroom sessions where student farmers, agriculture professionals, and culinary experts interacted with students more closely. Some sessions included cooking demonstrations.
- Student farmer-operated information booths in the cafeteria to share materials and experiences with fellow students.
- Student photo and video projects
- NYS Ag & Markets provided posters, produce seasonality charts, farmers' market maps and other materials to promote local food in NY.

### *On the Menu*

- SchoolFood utilized existing and developed new recipes to best feature gardened produce to appeal to students and stretch their taste palettes. For example, food service staff prepared spicy vegetable burritos, Spanish squash stew, pasta pesto, collards and chickpeas, colcannon, and other dishes across the 20 sites depending on the harvest.
- Where necessary, student-grown foods were supplemented by other fresh vegetables. Where possible, locally-farmed produce was used.
- SchoolFood staff assembled tasting tables and in some cases worked with students and volunteers to encourage school kids new to these foods to try them.

## What's Next for 2009?

There will be limited expansion of Garden to School Café in 2009 to include more school sites in Harlem and kick off participation in Staten Island. Our main goal will be to institutionalize the program within existing sites through more seasonal harvest day events, increased gardening technical assistance, and new partnerships to increase gardening and cafeteria staff capacity.

## For More Information

To find out more or to get involved, contact Billy Doherty at [williamd@schools.nyc.gov/718.707.4478](mailto:williamd@schools.nyc.gov/718.707.4478) or Christina Grace at [christina.grace@agmkt.state.ny.us/718.722.2834](mailto:christina.grace@agmkt.state.ny.us/718.722.2834).

