



News Release

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A Lot of Dimes: Michigan 10 Cents a Meal Now Providing Fruits, Vegetables to 135K Children 143 Farms in 38 Counties Participating

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LANSING – Michigan’s nationally-recognized 10 Cents a Meal for School Kids & Farms program is filling 135,000 young bodies across the state with a cornucopia of nutritious produce and building relationships with local farmers.

Fifty-seven grant-winning school districts purchased 93 different fruits and vegetables grown by 143 farms in 38 Michigan counties so far this year under the program. The districts span the western Lower Peninsula and the state’s Washtenaw and Thumb regions.

Providing these schools up to 10 cents a meal in matching funds to purchase locally-grown fruits and vegetables, the successful farm-to-school cafeteria program has more than doubled the number of children served since 2016.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) recently released the pilot program’s latest results to the state Legislature in a mid-year report. Now in its third year, the program consistently has shown increases in the numbers of nutritious products served to students and of participating farms.

“Michigan recognizes food as an education issue and when we all meet the needs of the whole child, serving healthy food to our children, we all contribute to Michigan becoming a Top 10 education state in 10 years,” Interim State Superintendent Sheila Alles said.

“Students are taking more fresh apples this school year and more importantly they aren’t throwing them away once they leave the register,” Jessica Moody, Food Service Director for Mancelona Public Schools, stated in the report. “The switch to all local apples, which taste better, have made a huge difference.”

Of the 93 products purchased under the program, food service directors cited 67 new Michigan-grown fruits and vegetables that they tried for the first time with their students, according to preliminary results of monthly surveys conducted by the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems.

Program records, examined by Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities, showed that besides farms, food processors, distributors, food hubs, and other types of businesses also benefit from the program supply chain.

School food service directors said the 10 Cents program’s top benefits are the increase in variety of produce served to students, followed by directors’ greater certainty in planning of produce purchases.

“Our distributors know we are committed to local farmers and 10 Cents has made them better at sourcing and identifying the source,” one food service director said in the monthly surveys. “I describe it as a ‘win, win, win’ situation,” said another. “The farmers are happy, my food service budget is happy, and the students are happy.”

The report includes data from taste tests and surveys of students; quotes from farmers, food service directors, and other school officials; and “ideas in action” at 10 Cents grantee districts. In all, schools listed 588 different promotional or educational activities they’d implemented through December of the 2018–2019 school year, including taste tests, Harvest of the Month features, and nutrition education in the cafeteria and classroom.

The full 2018–2019 legislative report is available here: <https://bit.ly/2CIzB4b>

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