



10 Cents a Meal for School Kids & Farms

What It Is: 10 Cents a Meal for School Kids & Farms just completed its third year as a state pilot program that provides matching funds to grant-winning school districts to purchase Michigan grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans. It is administered by the Michigan Department of Education and was funded at \$575,000 for the third year; and the 57 school district grantees served more than 135,000 students.

Purpose: The purpose of 10 Cents is to improve the daily nutrition and eating habits of children through the school setting, where children eat up to two meals a day; and to invest in Michigan's agricultural economy. Michigan agriculture is the second most diverse in the country and primed to serve our kids.

Status: Gov. Gretchen Whitmer included 10 Cents a Meal in her proposed state budget, expanding the bipartisan support this program has received over the last three budget cycles. Republican legislators led the way for the program in the past, with Democratic lawmakers also supporting it. However, 10 Cents also was one of the 147 line-item vetoes made by the governor (the Local Produce in Schools line item in the School Aid Budget.)

Next Steps: The exact funding amount and geographic reach of the program will be decided in upcoming negotiations between the state House, Senate, and the Governor's office. The House and Senate had expanded the program to \$2 million, changed it from a "pilot" to a "program," and expanded it to be available through competitive grants to school districts statewide. In addition, Child and Adult Care Feeding Program sponsors for early child care centers also would have been eligible grantees.

Michigan Recognition: 10 Cents a Meal has now proven itself as a powerful way to introduce healthy, delicious food to children in Michigan schools while investing in Michigan agriculture and local economies. Michigan is seen nationally as a cutting-edge leader in this emerging trend.

Return on Investment: The program doubles the state's investment, because schools must match the grant dollars. They do this by directing existing school food purchasing dollars that they already spend on food (including federal dollars) to specifically purchase Michigan grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans. Schools can already buy locally grown foods with those dollars, but they typically have only \$1 to \$1.20 to spend on food for each lunch they serve, with 20-30 cents of that for produce.

Results for Kids: Food service directors say the additional funding allows them the flexibility within their tight budgets to try new foods with their students. Last year, grant-winning districts said they tried 65 new fruits, vegetables, and dry beans that they hadn't served to their students before. They also said they've discovered local farms can provide more varieties, such as differently flavored apple varieties and multi-colored carrots, that children love.

Food Service Director Quotes: "A lot of elementary kids don't know what things are. The second or third time we menu something, we serve more of it. I was amazed we went through so many Brussels sprouts!!" "The custodial staff literally grab my arm, walk me to the trash, and show me how much food is not wasted anymore. It's just huge." "The quality of the products we are getting locally is leagues beyond what we were getting from our vendor. It really gives us a sense of pride to offer the kids such great food."

Results for Agriculture: Schools provided invoices that showed they purchased 93 different fruits, vegetables, and dry beans grown by 143 farms in 38 Michigan counties, and that their business also resulted in sales for another 20 related businesses such as distributors, processors, and food hubs.

Support: Those who have signed up as 10 Cents supporters or provided statements of support include Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Farmers Union, Michigan Food and Farming Systems, the School Nutrition Association of Michigan, the Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Healthy Kids-Healthy Michigan, Michigan League for Public Policy, and school districts ranging from those in the Detroit region to the state's Upper Peninsula, both regions where schools are hoping for their first opportunity to apply for the grant this year if it becomes available statewide. See supporter list: www.tencentsmichigan.org/all_supporters

Learn More: www.tencentsmichigan.org.