

The Pennsylvania Farm to School Network Success Story:

ERIE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Erie County, PA



The Erie City School District has a robust farm to school program with 14 school gardens throughout the district. **Doreen Petri** is the Project Director of Erie Farm to School and has established the theme BELONG within the program: Becoming Empowered by Living Our Natural Gifts.

Ten elementary schools in the school district participate in spring and fall educational programming. In the springtime, the students prepare the beds, plant seeds and nurture the garden throughout the year. In the fall, students harvest produce and put the beds

to rest for the winter. Some students and their families participate in summer programming, as well.

October is an exciting month for the students as they participate in the Penn State Master Gardeners Pumpkin Walk. Students carve their first pumpkins for the walk at the beginning of the month and their second pumpkins at the end of the month to take home to their families.

The three middle schools participate in four different themes related to farm to school: fall gardening, culinary, indoor gardening and spring planting. During the four weeks of the culinary theme, local chefs and bakers come in to cook foods like lavender cookies and homemade pesto pasta with the students. During the indoor gardening session, students learn about microgreens and how a local farmer runs their own business.

One of the middle schools visited Wild Field Urban Farm and participated in a salad dressing competition. Students tasted different ingredients and were judged on which dressing was the most flavorful. Then, students picked vegetables and made a salad for lunch.





The two high schools in Erie City School District also participate in farm to school activities. The Collegiate Academy focuses on environmental justice and careers relating to agriculture. They have taken field trips to Edinboro Market and have gone on foraging walks. Landscape Management students from Erie High School are a huge help in the many gardens throughout the school district.



The many gardens throughout the district produce a lot of food. In 2020, while the schools were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents and volunteers harvested 1,551 pounds of food to be donated to the local community.

The Erie City School District Farm to School Program is largely grant funded and supported by volunteer participation and community partners. Partners include the Penn State Master Gardeners, who do most of the teaching at elementary schools, Groundwork Erie, who helps employ some of the students, and Edinboro Market, who connects the program with local growers. Mercyhurst University's culinary program also cooks with the middle school garden club.

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