

The Pennsylvania Farm to School Network Success Story:

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY HEALTHY BODIES PROJECT

Centre County, PA



The Healthy Bodies Project is a child health and wellness nutrition education outreach project funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the PA Department of Human Services. This project is a part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and is housed within the Department of Biobehavioral Health at Penn State University. The project focuses on guiding teachers, children and families on ways to improve healthy eating, increase active play, and help children develop healthy behaviors.

This past school year, the Healthy Bodies Project equipped classrooms with Plant Grow Kits to grow produce in the classroom from seeds and food scraps. This provided an opportunity for the children to learn how plants grow, and

taught responsibility as the students were in charge of watering and taking care of the growing plants. In fact, 49 classrooms participated! Many of the classrooms saw success with their grow kits, especially with the garlic. Some teachers even took the initiative to use the growing supplies to experiment with growing other vegetables. The classrooms grew cherry tomatoes from seed packets, garlic bulbs from food scraps and romaine lettuce from seed packets and food scraps.

"I loved the garlic growing kits," said one teacher. "As a class we monitored their growth. It was great to have this happening throughout the year. The kids were very proud when they took their plants home."





Thirty-eight classrooms requested Cherry Tomato grow kits in the fall. One classroom from Bright Futures Learning Center experienced great success with their Cherry Tomato Grow Kit for the year. The children planted the seeds and watched the plants grow, some to over 6 feet tall! Before the end of the school year, they were able to harvest and taste some of the cherry tomatoes they grew. At the end of the school year, the teacher took the classroom tomato plants home to transplant to her garden, where they continued to flourish.



Healthy Bodies also invited preschool teachers at CenClear to bring their students to the Penn State Arboretum to help children learn and make connections outside of the classroom. Healthy Bodies hoped that this experience would elicit more excitement for learning about and trying new foods in the classroom.





Four classrooms visited the Arboretum in September. For many of the children, this was their first field trip and they were very excited. The visit began with a reading of Katherine Ayres' book *Up, Down, and Around*. Then the children were divided into small groups for a Sensory Scavenger Hunt around the Children's Garden. After the scavenger hunt, the children discussed what they saw, felt, and smelled while exploring the garden, which included Swiss chard, rosemary, beets and mums.



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