

The Pennsylvania Farm to School Network Success Story:

CHICHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Delaware County, PA



Nichole Taylor developed a love of fruits and vegetables while helping her grandparents in the gardens of her family's farm in New Mexico. So, when she began her career as a food service professional, she was surprised to find that many of her students weren't interested in fruits and vegetables. Nichole began to think about how she could make produce more appealing to students.

Nichole is the Director of Food and Nutrition at **Chichester School District** in Delaware County. The district is 100% Community Eligible Provision (CEP), a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. "We can't function if we

don't eat," Nichole says. "If a child has to worry about where their next meal is coming from, their upcoming math test is not going to be on their mind. This is why I do what I do."

In her role as Director of Food and Nutrition, Nichole is committed to improving her students' nutrition through food and garden programming. Nichole incorporated terraponic gardens into the school's garden program with the help of a Pennsylvania Farm to School Grant. The gardens were placed in the cafeteria so students could watch the progress of their plants each time they ate lunch. The fourth-grade students have become ambassadors of the gardens, helping seed and manage the plants, and ensuring that their peers are respectful of the gardens.

"We can't function if we don't eat. If a child has to worry about where their next meal is coming from, their upcoming math test is not going to be on their mind. This is why I do what I do."

- **Nichole Taylor, Director of Food and Nutrition**





Nichole has found that when students are having a difficult day, working with the plants becomes an excellent grounding space for them. She invites students to harvest, seed and work with the plants in the cafeteria so they can reset before they return to class.

The terraponic gardens have produced a variety of produce including lettuce, tomatoes, herbs, strawberries, watermelon, onions, garlic, pumpkins and sunflowers. If a plant does not grow as well, she uses it as a learning opportunity and asks the students, “Why might this plant not be doing well and what can we do differently next time?”

Nichole and her team gained a lot of insight for their farm to school activities by attending the Pennsylvania

Farm to School Institute in 2022. “It allowed our team to think through the entire farm to school process. We were able to see how a change in one area, such as implementing a school garden, affects the other pillars of farm to school. This helped us get all of our stakeholders on the same page.”

Most recently, Chichester School District received a SNAP-Ed grant to build a garden center at Marcus Hook Elementary. Marcus Hook received funding for a ForkFarm tower garden and the first crop is being planted in the Spring of 2024.

“I love what I do. I love sharing a positive food experience with students and providing them with nutritious, high-quality meals.”



Find more farm to school success stories:

pafarmtoschool.org/news/success-stories



**PENNSYLVANIA
FARM TO SCHOOL
NETWORK**