

# Annual Evaluation Report Executive Summary

Davis Farm to School &  
Davis Joint Unified School District  
School Lunch Program  
School Year 2013 – 2014

Prepared under contract with  
Davis Farm to School  
Yolo Farm to Fork

By

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# Executive Summary

This report, prepared by the University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC SAREP), evaluates progress on three goals that comprise an agreement between Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD) and Davis Farm to School (DF2S) for the 2013-2014 school year:

- 1) Promote farm fresh foods in schools
- 2) Reduce solid waste through a comprehensive district recycling program
- 3) Provide school garden and farm-based education opportunities

This report will also address activities related to a fourth goal that is not included in the recently updated Memorandum of Understanding between DJUSD and DF2S, but which is an ongoing goal that has been outlined in previous reports and will be highlighted here as well:

- 4) Research and evaluate programs and provide information to the community

## Goal 1: Promote farm fresh foods in schools

### Procurement

The purchasing records for school year 2013-2014 show that **55.4%** of produce purchases were sourced locally, up from 52.7% in 2012-2013<sup>1</sup>. DJUSD changed their primary produce distributor from Fresh Point to Rohrer Brothers in November 2013. Rohrer Brothers provides produce to the district directly and also through the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

### Participation

Participation in the school lunch program is expressed as a percentage of total student enrollment. In 2013-2014, participation averaged 21.1% overall for the lunch program, slightly down from previous years (21.7% in 2012-2013; 22.1% in 2011-2012). Of those students eligible for free or reduced lunch, 56% (free) and 45% (reduced) participated in the program.

### School Food Environment

#### New USDA Meal Pattern

The new USDA school food pattern took effect in 2012-2013, and has primarily impacted salad bar offerings, grain-based offerings (bread, pizza, etc.), and sodium content in meals. Redesigned salad bars include more orange and red options and also now include legume options. All grain-based products must now be at least 51% whole grain and the new sodium limit is reduced. SNS staff report that students are less likely to accept food prepared under the new pattern.

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<sup>1</sup> Percentages are based on the cost of produce in dollars, adjusted for inflation, as detailed on distributor invoices

### **“From Scratch” Offerings**

Student Nutrition Services (SNS) Director Dominic Machi is committed to reducing consumption of processed foods by increasing the percentage of meals made from scratch at the Davis Central Kitchen, and is also looking to expand local menu options to include local proteins and bread products.

### **Professional Development Cooking Classes**

Three professional development cooking classes were offered again in 2013-2014 as a part of a Yolo County Farm to School grant aimed at increasing district procurement of local fruits and vegetables. The classes were well received by SNS staff.

### **Taste Testing**

More than 500 elementary school students participated in taste testing activities in the spring of 2014 and student response was overwhelmingly positive. The most popular recipe was gnocchi in a vegan marinara sauce with olives, spinach, and navy bean puree.

## **Goal 2: Reduce solid waste through a comprehensive district recycling program**

Both DavisRISE and the ALL Compost program continued in 2013-2014, and a new community service program supporting these programs is scheduled to be piloted in 2014-2015.

### **Recycling Is Simply Elementary (DavisRISE)**

DavisRISE coordinators reported a successful year that included high levels of student engagement and steady or increasing levels of waste reduction.

### **ALL Compost Program**

The ALL Compost Program maintained the levels of waste reduction that were achieved in the pilot year across all participating schools. The total waste that has been reduced (redirected to compost) since the program started in 2012 is 1,296 cubic yards.

### **Community Service for Elementary and Middle Schools**

Community Service for Elementary and Middle Schools is a program that has been in development for the last two years and will be piloted during the 2014-2015 school year. It is being developed to recognize the contributions of students to both the DavisRISE and ALL Compost programs.

## **Goal 3: Provide school garden and farm-based education opportunities**

### **Garden-based Education**

Davis Farm to School awarded \$4,000 to school garden programs through the School Garden Matching Grant program in the 2013-2014 school year. A total of 16 schools received grants of \$250 each. Three of these schools were located in Woodland and are not included in data presented in this report.

Of the 8 DJUSD schools reporting back, total garden income (not including the garden grants) was \$28,309, well over last year's total of \$10,400<sup>2</sup>. Matching funds and additional income came from grants, donations, and fundraising. Many schools also reported in-kind donations of supplies and expertise from community members, businesses, or other organizations.

About 1300 students, 35 teachers, 30 parents, and 260 volunteers participated in some aspect of gardening at these 8 schools.

### **Farm Visits**

Three schools participated in Farm Visits in the spring of 2014: Marguerite Montgomery (3 classes), Cesar Chavez (4 classes), and Birch Lane (2 classes). A total of 229 students participated in these tours, slightly down from 250 students last year. Classes visited three regional farms – Capay Organic, The Center for Land-Based Learning's Farm on Putah Creek, and Good Humus. Feedback from teachers was positive.

### **School-to-Cafeteria Pilot Program**

A School-to-Cafeteria program was piloted in 2013-2014 at two schools, Harper Junior High and Birch Lane Elementary. Harper Junior High sold over 700 lbs. of broccoli and cauliflower to SNS in spring 2014, which was used in soups and on the salad bar. Birch Lane Elementary sold small batches of lettuce to SNS that were then returned for use on their own salad bar.

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<sup>2</sup> Last year's total of \$10,400 was based on 6 schools reporting back. The average garden income per school participating in the garden grant program this year was \$3,538.63 (2013-2014), compared to \$1,733.33 the previous year (2012-2013).

# Goal 4: Research and evaluate programs and provide information to the community

## Community Connections

As in the past, DF2S sponsored and/or participated in a number of community events. Signature events included:

- **Village Feast:** The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Village Feast, held under the sycamore trees in Central Park, raised \$14,743<sup>3</sup> this year (August 2013).
- **Tour de Cluck:** This spring event was popular once again, and brought in \$7,603<sup>4</sup> to support Davis Farm to School. (May 2014).

Yolo Farm to Fork also helped to promote and market the efforts of DF2S and DJUSD in a variety of ways, including through various media outlets (television, radio, print, web, and social media) and outreach events.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### Goal 1: Promote farm fresh foods in schools

#### Procurement

- Continue regular check-ins with the SNS Director regarding local purchasing and “from scratch” cooking.
- Encourage SNS to expand relationships with growers in the Yolo/Solano/Sacramento region; e.g., continue discussing the idea of purchasing from UC Davis Russell Ranch.
- Consider providing funds to SNS to offset some of the costs of local food procurement.

#### Marketing to Increase School Lunch Participation

- Identify specific ways in which DF2S could support the SNS Director’s efforts to increase participation rates, especially among students who are eligible for Free & Reduced Priced meals. This could be via PTAs, parent groups, or the district’s Wellness Policy.
- Discuss with the SNS Director how DJUSD could use menus more for marketing school lunch, regional purchasing, and scratch cooking. Emphasize the importance of highlighting Harvest of the Month items.
- Continue seeking opportunities for DF2S to become more visible in the Davis community (more media mentions, etc.)
- Support the SNS Director’s outreach and engagement activities with the community and consider providing funds to DJUSD to support this goal.

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<sup>3</sup> This is down from \$18,000 in 2012-2013

<sup>4</sup> This is down from \$20,000 +in 2012-2013

## School Food Environment

- Meet with the SNS Director to discuss the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Program's *Smarter Lunchroom Movement*, which aims to create sustainable research-based lunchrooms that guide healthier student choices. Support the SNS Director in incorporating any ideas that seem feasible, possibly through a pilot program at 1-3 schools. Consider involving UC Davis interns.
- Discuss how DF2S could support the SNS Director's efforts to address concerns that school lunch program participation is limited by students not have enough time to eat their meal and also enjoy recess. Efforts could include finding ways to move students through lunch lines more quickly, providing more healthy "finger food" options that can be eaten quickly or carried outside, or looking into the possibility of extending the lunch period.

## Professional Development

- Continue to support the offering of professional development cooking classes for food service staff.

## Nutrition Advisory Committee

- Explore with SNS Director how he might use the Nutrition Advisory Committee to achieve his goals for Student Nutrition Services. Assist as appropriate.

## Taste Testing

- Continue to support SNS Director's Taste Testing program.

## Goal 2: Reduce solid waste through a comprehensive district recycling program

Recommendations taken largely from program evaluation forms filled out by RISE Coordinators:

- Explore ways DF2S could work with DJUSD to integrate recycling and waste management more thoroughly into the curriculum, with the garden program, the school lunch program, and into the school culture.
- Continue holding meetings of RISE Coordinators dedicated to challenging issues such as recruiting volunteers, managing children at the lunch site.
- Continue the ALL Compost Program and consider expanding it to additional schools.
- Consider purchasing more recycling bins to have near all trash cans (this was reported as a particular need at Da Vinci).
- Consider a districtwide "Recycling Challenge" (friendly competition) to achieve recycling goals.
- Conduct regular student trainings at each school about how to participate.

## **Goal 3: Provide school garden and farm-based education opportunities**

### **School Garden Program**

- Continue garden and custodial awards. Involve as many teachers and parents as possible.
- Continue Walkabouts to identify and address challenges collaboratively.
- Explore ways to involve more teachers in school gardens.
- Continue the practice of the DF2S Program Coordinator checking in periodically with garden coordinators to assess progress and challenges. This resulted in a better return of annual reports in 2014 and gave DF2S a clearer picture of needs for school gardens.

### **Farm Visits**

- Begin communication with teachers in the fall about the spring tours.
- Davis Farm to School Steering committee needs to re-visit the structure and content for the farm visits, including the pre-trip classroom visits and post-trip evaluations.
- Review the curriculum connections between the farm visits and classroom. Ensure that appropriate lessons are being presented in the pre-trip sessions and that instructors are comfortable with content.
- Clear instructions and expectations need to be laid out for volunteers.
  - Volunteers need to be thoroughly trained.
  - Internship expectations need to be very clearly explained and discussed at the beginning of the internship.
  - Pursue farmer training to help them with appropriate on-farm activities for students. Suggest more produce tasting.
  - Be sure teachers know about payments and schedule for payments. Complete all payments by the end of the School Year.

### **School to Cafeteria Pilot Program**

- Rethink the program from the ground up. Involve all parties from the beginning and establish clear roles, including a role responsible for ensuring clear communication among all parties. Challenges should be addressed collaboratively.
  - Increase and improve communication
  - Discuss back-up plans for garden produce if sales to SNS do not go through as planned for any reason.
  - Discuss with SNS how to increase institutional commitment and financial support, if possible.

## **Goal 4: Research and evaluate programs and provide information to the community**

- Continue to take advantage of statewide and national opportunities for promoting the Davis Farm to School program.
- Continue to develop relationships with local and Yolo County organizations through Yolo Farm to Fork.
- Continue discussing how to best implement our signature fundraising events: The Village Feast and Tour de Cluck.

### **Program Development**

- Continue conducting short- and long-term planning to assess program personnel duties in light of changing priorities and coordination with Yolo Farm to Fork.