

ARACELY LOPEZ | ZUCCHINI AND SUMMER SQUASH



HARVEST OF THE MONTH

ZUCCHINI & SUMMER SQUASH

WATCH FOR FRESH LOCAL ZUCCHINI AND SUMMER SQUASH ON THE MENU AND SALAD BAR!



LOCAL FARMER

Dew Farms is a small family farm located in Boulder County. In addition to its current acres, Dew Farms has added more land that will be certified organic in 2014, and they are very excited this year to be growing produce for BVSD on the new property owned by the City of Boulder Open Space just off of Jay Road and the Diagonal Highway.



DID YOU KNOW? A ZUCCHINI HAS MORE POTASSIUM THAN A BANANA, CONTAIN 95 PERCENT WATER AND HAS JUST 25 CALORIES.

CASE STUDY:

USDA Farm-to-School Grant 2014–15

Boulder Valley School
District

Food Services Department
Boulder, Colorado

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Background – USDA Farm-to-School Grants

The earliest Farm-to-School activities began in the late 1990s in a small number of school districts across the United States. The concept grew as a grassroots movement that was supported by many organizations working to reestablish and expand regional food systems. The activity did not go unnoticed at the federal level, and in 2004 the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act established a federal Farm-to-School program, although it was not funded at that time. Engagement in Farm-to-School activities grew at a rapid rate, supported by a collaborative association of organizations known as the National Farm-to-School Network. In the last ten years forty-six states passed legislation further strengthening the procurement and education aspects of Farm-to-School.

In December of 2010, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was signed into law. This Act authorized and gave funding to the USDA to provide technical assistance and competitive matching Farm-to-School grants. The grants may be used for training, supporting operations, planning, purchasing equipment, developing school gardens, developing partnerships, and implementing Farm-to-School activities. According to the Act, individual grants are not to exceed \$100,000. Eligible schools, state and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to receive the Farm-to-School grant to improve access to local foods in schools. Currently Farm-to-School grants totaling \$5 million a year are in effect across the country; a diverse array of projects is being implemented through this funding.



Figure 1. Boulder student with her Harvest of the Month collector card

Farm-to-School in the Boulder Valley School District

Over the past eight years, the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) has gone from having cafeterias serving mostly processed foods and selling junk food to dining rooms that serve fresh, cooked-from-scratch meals incorporating locally sourced ingredients. This journey began with the School Food Project, which comprised a group of community stakeholders, parents, administrators, and community members, led by the president of the school board. They garnered support for an assessment of the department in 2008, and later that year the district adopted a strategic plan for food services with recommendations that have guided the profound change that has followed. Led by Food Services Director [Chef Ann Cooper](#), the district's School Food Project is now recognized as a unique contributor to the health and

well-being of BVSD students. The project has continued to engage many of the original stakeholders as it has grown, while attracting many new ones.

Scratch Cooking

Boulder's focus on fresh, whole ingredients and scratch-cooked meals has provided a platform for expansion of Farm-to-School procurement, lunchroom education, and community collaboration. Since 2009 the district's procurement has shifted drastically. By making the reimbursable meal the primary focus and removing all a la carte packaged foods, a la carte snack foods, and the processed foods used for many entrees, the food services department (FSD) expanded its ability to procure and cook fresh, whole foods. For example, processed chicken products like nuggets and patties were replaced by bone-in chicken roasted onsite; pre-cooked beef patties with soy were replaced with raw ground beef patties. Salad bars, which had just begun to be installed in elementary schools in the 2008–2009 school year, were placed in every school site in 2009–2010, and the selection of available choices was expanded. Because of this and other changes, produce purchases increased four-fold. By issuing requests for proposals, the FSD located a produce vendor that could deliver to every site, and found a local baker to provide organic bread products made with Colorado wheat. The FSD purchased Western Slope apples and had them shipped directly to the district warehouse. Furthermore, the individual plastic bottles of plain and chocolate milk that had been offered to students were replaced with Colorado-sourced bulk plain organic milk.

Organizational Model

To accomplish this immense shift, the department restructured its management team, developed new job descriptions for all positions, reorganized how labor was assigned to the school sites, implemented staff development and training for all positions, and increased meal counts through expansion of breakfast and snack programs. Another key infrastructure shift was implementation of and training in software systems to manage ordering and receiving, vendors, and inventory at both site and warehouse level. The district's transition from serving primarily processed food to a fresh, whole, scratch-cooked model created the platform for expansion of Farm-to-School procurement. Boulder also identified key local partners for foods that could not be prepared onsite, such as tamales, tortillas, muffins, breakfast burritos, and bagels. Each year since the fall of 2009, the BVSD School Food Project has taken another step toward creating the freshest, most local, and most engaged school-food community possible.

In the 2010–2011 school year, the FSD consolidated its food production to five regional kitchens located in school sites, later reducing this number to three, in an effort to create consistent and efficient production of scratch-cooked foods. The shift to consolidation created large procurement efficiencies, resulting in a savings in overall food cost and greater control of inventory management for the FSD. The district restructured its procurement of Western Slope fruit to enable its Denver-based produce supplier to receive the shipments and deliver the fruit by site. The regional kitchens took over the preparation of the salad bar vegetables, which increased labor efficiency and consistency of the product across the district and eliminated the problem of smaller schools requiring more expensive broken cases of vegetables. Regional kitchens also made it easier to utilize the often inconsistent supplies of local vegetables like potatoes or butternut squash, which some farms had available.

The USDA Farm-to-School grant awarded to the district in late 2013 provided funding to expand and better define local procurement, improve the strategic placement of local foods in the menus, and

create interactive learning opportunities that will support continued growth in participation in the district.



Figure 2. "What Local Means to Me" poster contest winners

Grant Project Goals and Objectives

The primary focus of the grant project was on education and marketing. Its overarching goal was to develop a year-round educational/promotional program to increase student meal counts at breakfast and lunch and improve student acceptance and consumption of locally sourced foods as part of their meals.¹

Methodology

To accomplish the overarching project goal, the district focused on key infrastructure that will support Farm-to-School-based programming for the long term. With its mature Farm-to-School-focused meal program, BVSD's breadth of engagement is impressive, but the district continues to strive for improvement of the food quality and the dining environment. Creating more intersections of food and learning will give students a deeper understanding and greater potential for growing up with food

¹ Boulder-USDA F2S grant narrative page 5

knowledge and an appetite for fresh, whole foods. From engaging teachers in garden education training and curriculum development to bringing the farmers to the school sites, BVSD continues to explore new avenues for its Farm-to-School programming.

Farm-to-School & Events Coordinator – The FSD hired a full-time Farm-to-School & Events Coordinator (see [job description](#)) to facilitate the objectives of the grant as well as longer-term goals. In the previous three years, part-time coordinator positions for marketing, education, and Farm to School outreach had been supported by grants to the FSD, but these did not offer the stability for program development that a permanent position provides. The decision to add a full-time position as part of the FSD is a commitment to the department’s long-term vision with regard to Farm-to-School as a sustaining pillar of the department’s mission statement: “All children of Boulder Valley School District will have daily access to fresh, flavorful and nutritious food made with wholesome and, when possible, local ingredients so that every child may thrive.”

Garden as a Classroom – Professional Development, Garden Collaborators, and New Gardens
BVSD has welcomed school garden collaborators for many years. Prior to the grant, the district had 27 gardens, many of which were managed by partner organizations Growing Gardens, the GROWE Foundation, and Kitchen Community. The USDA grant created an opportunity for the current garden partners to join together in collaboration and view the garden work across the district as a whole, rather than as competing or separate entities. The installation of six new gardens through the USDA grant provided a hands-on district-driven model to test the process of establishing garden classrooms from the bottom up. This created a foundation for the [Garden as Classroom manual](#) that was written documenting Boulder’s process and lessons learned to be shared with the public.

Farm Visits and Harvest of the Month – Student Engagement Strategy

Boulder has used student engagement as a key tool for improving participation and acceptance of their scratch-cooked meals since 2009. From student art contests to [Rainbow Days](#) at the salad bars and “Iron Chef” competitions, every year BVSD has increased its lunchroom education activities. Activities related to the current grant focused on ten school sites that had a combination of high poverty and relatively low meal counts. Though the entire district participated in the Harvest of the Month (HOTM) program, these sites in particular were targeted for increased engagement, with 50 HOTM tastings added to district-wide efforts like the 67 Rainbow Days events and the 70 tastings and chef demos that occurred during the school year.



Figure 3. Harvest of the Month tasting

Food, Menus, and Procurement

The student engagement and education that resulted from the USDA grant would have been impossible without the behind-the-scenes work of procurement and menu planning. The FSD has expanded its capacity for Farm-to-School by utilizing as many locally sourced ingredients in recipes as possible, as well as by forming partnerships with local food businesses for items that cannot be made in-house, such as muffins, breads, tortillas, and tamales. BVSD takes very seriously the task of balancing the higher cost of items like locally produced “Never-Ever” beef patties, meatballs, or chicken thighs, along with its commitment to using whole fruits in every menu and providing “endless” salad bars at every site, in its very limited school-food budget. Software and accountability protocols are used throughout the system to maximize efficiency and control costs. The district has built capacity through its ability to inform vendors, growers, and producers how much product they expect to use and by being able to develop a market that has driven competition for BVSD’s business. Businesses now seek out and engage with the FSD as a known and serious entity.



Figure 4. Locally procured spinach and peppers

Communication, Community Engagement, and Collateral Materials

BVSD created several pathways to accelerate community engagement while laying a foundation for the future of Farm-to-School in Boulder. Two events were held during 2014-15: the [Fall Harvest Festival](#) in October and the [BVSD Day at the Boulder Farmers' Market](#) in May. These events provided direct student and family contact with farmers, food, and community collaborators like Eco-cycle and Boulder County Farmers' Market. Local chefs prepared Harvest of the Month squash for tastings, and families learned about composting and soil.

Parent engagement is a critical pathway to increasing student buy-in and participation in the reimbursable meal program. This was facilitated by offering tastings and presentations at PTO meetings, as well as by inviting parents to lunch to experience Harvest of the Month items at school and illustrate what Farm-to-School means to the educational experience.



Figure 5. Parents enjoying a Harvest of the Month lunch in Boulder

Since 2009, the district has been creating a full-color calendar of FSD menus. This has continued to evolve as a tool for sharing FSD activities and events with families, while also engaging students directly through art competitions to be featured in the calendar. Program updates, recipes, and stories from the Iron Chef Competition all become part of the annual calendar, which is sponsored by FSD vendor contributions.

Posters and HOTM vegetable trading cards were also created to support Farm-to-School project awareness. Student artwork from an art contest called “What Local Means to Me” was selected and made into [posters](#) that hang in the dining rooms throughout the district. A Colorado Education Initiative grant paid for a set of nine four-color HOTM food trading cards (fig. 6) that were created for each HOTM vegetable and offered to the students on HOTM feature days in all the elementary schools.

Another innovative concept to grab the attention of the middle school students in the cafeteria was the installation of monitors will project images of BVSD farmer partners, local produce, lunch menu items, fun photos of kids enjoying healthy food, and student created videos featuring local food. School year 2015-16 will be the introduction of these monitors and the school district will monitor the students’ engagement.

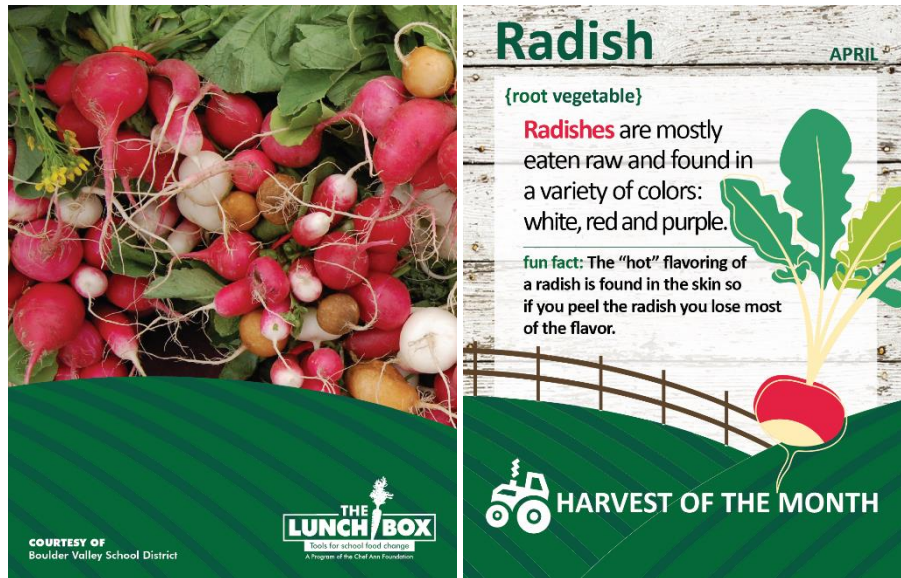


Figure 6. Front and back of a Harvest of the Month collector card

The USDA grant also funded the creation of the [Garden as a Classroom manual](#) and the [Farm-to-School manual](#). These manuals collate all of the proven techniques utilized in BVSD’s efforts and offer them in a “how-to” format so that other districts can learn about the programs in detail and consider implementing them in their own schools. These manuals will continue to be a resource for BVSD as well, and will help retain the continuity required for the ongoing growth and improvement of Farm-to-School efforts in the district.

A unique [website](#) for the School Food Project created with support from the USDA Farm-to-School grant is another resource for Boulder. The website will serve as a hub for the district community and outside collaborators to communicate and share resources and events.

Measures of Success

Participation

Boulder Valley School District has been flooded with success stories from the past year. What the district accomplished with the support of the USDA grant, compounded with its already deep commitment to student engagement, provides replicable models for districts across the country. The methodology and step-by-step guides for each of the primary areas that Boulder focused on can be reviewed in the [Garden as a Classroom manual](#) and [Farm-to-School manual](#). Comprehensive descriptions of the Rainbow Days, tastings, chef demos, and Junior Chef Competitions, as well as the posters, trading cards, and stickers are all available on [The Lunch Box](#), a program of the [Chef Ann Foundation](#).

The measure used to assess school program change is always meal counts. Meal participation drives a district’s programs and provides the revenue required for continued improvement. In districts like BVSD, which have low free- and reduced-eligible populations (fig. 7), the challenge to raise participation is even greater. Constant vigilance and innovation are required to attract the full-pay students back to the reimbursable meal. Student engagement is essential, but it has to be backed up with delicious meals and outstanding customer service; these are aspects BVSD has excelled at. Boulder’s participation has

continued to increase each year (fig. 8). The USDA Farm-to-School grant work clearly demonstrates the effort of a district team that continues to strive for excellence and battles for every meal count.

Enrollment and Eligibility	SY15		SY14		SY13	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Total Enrollment	30,544	100%	30,145	100%	29,718	100%
Free Eligible	5,329	17%	4,949	16%	4,711	16%
Reduced Eligible	859	3%	725	2%	922	3%
Full-Pay	24,356	80%	24,471	81%	24,085	81%
Total Free/Reduced	6,188	20%	5,674	19%	5,633	19%

Figure 7. BVSD meal eligibility, August 2013 through May 2015 (data source: Special Programs, BVSD website)

Breakfast	Increase since SY13	SY15	SY14	SY13
Total Bkfst Served				
Average Daily Participation	49%	3,383	2,492	2,264
District Wide Participation	48%	605,879	429,597	408,077
Free/Reduced Participation	26%	375,847	291,431	298,031

Lunch	Increase since SY13	SY15	SY14	SY13
Total Lunch Served				
Average Daily Participation	14%	8,623	8,025	7,541
District Wide Participation	12%	1,440,843	1,338,839	1,290,478
Free/Reduced Participation	6%	605,044	579,937	568,953

Figure 8. Breakfast and lunch participation, August 2013 through May 2015

Procurement

Procurement in BVSD has been evolving since the 2008 assessment. The FSD has a full-time district manager–registered dietician who handles all food procurement. The FSD management team works together on the [cycle menus](#), which have also evolved over time.² The district was well ahead of the meal requirements that were introduced as part of the 2010 Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA), and its menus, which integrated salad bars as part of the reimbursable meal, had already created a great format for offering fresh produce. The number of local farms and producers that the district has identified and worked with has increased each year as well. The Harvest of the Month programming implemented through the USDA grant resulted in a distinct push to connect with greater numbers of area farmers individually and through the Boulder Farmers’ Market. Identifying more growers helped

² Boulder’s cycle menus are featured on The Lunch Box at <http://www.thelunchbox.org/recipes-menus/menu-cycles/>

offset the common problem of a single farm not producing enough to meet Boulder’s needs. Furthermore, the district used purchasing volume data from the 2014–15 school year to inform its plans for 2015–16. The featured monthly vegetables were adjusted for SY 2015–16 based on the previous year’s experiences (fig. 9).

MONTH	2014-15 HARVEST OF THE MONTH	MONTH	2015-16 HARVEST OF THE MONTH
Aug-14	Peaches	Aug-15	Peaches and Summer Squash
Sep-14	Tomatoes	Sep-15	Tomatoes and Corn
Oct-14	Zucchini and Yellow Squash	Oct-15	Peppers and Apples
Nov-14	Beets	Nov-15	Pumpkin
Dec-14	Pumpkin	Dec-15	Beets
Jan-15	Winter Squash	Jan-16	Winter Squash (butternut and spaghetti)
Feb-15	Potatoes	Feb-16	Cabbage
Mar-15	Carrots	Mar-16	Carrots
Apr-15	Radishes	Apr-16	Spinach
May-15	Spinach	May-16	Radishes

Figure 9. Harvest of the Month featured vegetables for 2014–15 versus those for 2015–16

Because salad bars use a lot of vegetables, and make it possible to use variable amounts of available vegetables, they are very useful when working with farmers. The FSD is able to track site-specific details regarding the quantity of produce used on the salad bars and offered for fruit, allowing it to forecast volume needs for the farmers with outstanding accuracy. The procurement manager sends out a weekly needs email to the farmers and then coordinates the responses to match each site’s HOTM and salad bar needs. Sometimes that means accepting multiple deliveries to the warehouse from different farms. The produce is then distributed and delivered to the production kitchens by FSD drivers.³ Apples, peaches, and pears are delivered from the Western Slope to the local distributor, who then delivers according to the school-site orders. This is an efficient method for optimizing the purchase and delivery of Colorado-grown whole fruits from farmers to the district. The district does utilize Department of Defense Fruit and Vegetable ordering as part of its USDA commodity purchases, and some of that produce is Colorado-grown as well. The district’s produce distributor also delivers Colorado-grown produce when available. Accurate identification of Colorado-grown product by both the DOD program

³ BVSD USDA Farm-to-School manual pages 8-10

and the produce distributor has been unreliable, but as more districts demand transparency, the accuracy of product origin identification should improve.⁴

In 2014–15, local produce procurement increased by 106%. This jump was due to the HOTM program and increased purchases of Western Slope apples (which rose by 169%), combined with greater volumes of Colorado-grown produce obtained through the DOD and the produce distributor. Produce continues to be a great opportunity for increasing local procurement, as the district’s volume needs far exceed the quantity currently obtained locally (fig. 10).

Local Produce Purchases by Category SY14 and SY15					
Local Food Item	Category	Purchased 2013-14	Purchased 2014-15	DIFF +/-	DIFF %
Apples	Apples, Pears, Peaches	21,801	47,749	30,024	138%
Pears	Apples, Pears, Peaches	14,231	3,349	(10,882)	-76%
Peaches	Apples, Pears, Peaches	16,225	12,973	(3,252)	-20%
Vegetables	Local Farm Produce	2,393	30,781	28,388	1186%
Vegetables	Produce Distributor Local	6,093	11,715	2,153	35%
Vegetables	DOD Local	13,544	19,068	5,524	41%
Totals	All Fruits and Vegetables	74,286	125,635	51,349	69%

Local Produce as a Percentage of All Produce					
Summary of Total Produce Expense		Purchased 2013-14	Purchased 2014-15	DIFF +/-	DIFF %
* Total DOD		68,287	97,976	29,689	43%
Total Federal (Distributor)		136,950	0	-136,950	-100%
Total Freshpak (Distributor)		333,767	510,068	176,301	53%
Totals		539,004	608,045	69,041	13%
Local Produce % of Total Produce Purchases		11%	19%		8%
Note: * DOD total sales pulled from FAVORS reports; DOD "Local" determined through item description from Freshpak velocity reports.					

Figure 10. Summary of local produce procurement in SY14 and SY15

Meats and poultry is another area in which local procurement strategy has developed over several years. The district succeeded in identifying chicken, ground beef, beef patties, and beef meatballs that are raised without the use of antibiotics within a 500-mile radius of Boulder, and continues to refine the Request for Proposal process.⁵ In SY15, local meat procurement increased by 39% (fig. 11).

⁴ http://www.thelunchbox.org/assets/uploads/documents/SAMPLE_BVSD_PRODUCE_RFP_2015-16.pdf

⁵ http://www.thelunchbox.org/assets/uploads/documents/SAMPLE_BVSD_BEEF_PATTY_RFP_2015-16.pdf

http://www.thelunchbox.org/assets/uploads/documents/SAMPLE_BVSD_BONE_IN_CHICKEN_RFP_2015-16.pdf

Sustainably Produced Meat by Category SY14 and SY15					
Local Foods	Category	TT SALES 2013-14	TT SALES 2014-15	DIFF +/-	DIFF %
Ground Beef	Beef and Meats	105,400	102,319	(3,081)	-3%
Beef Patties	Beef and Meats	104,163	113,485	9,322	9%
Eye of Round	Beef and Meats	-	9,801	9,801	100%
Chuck roll	Beef and Meats	-	6,542	6,542	100%
Brats and Sausage	Beef and Meats	6,650	6,402	(248)	-4%
Meatballs	Beef and Meats	9,868	48,654	38,786	393%
Hot Dogs	Beef and Meats	-	27,260	27,260	100%
Totals		226,081	314,463	88,382	39%

Figure 11. Local meat procurement in SY14 and SY15

Another aspect of BVSD procurement is working with local companies to supply food items that cannot be prepared in-house. This practice supports the district’s mission to buy local and allows for very detailed requirements for ingredient specification and serving sizes. Furthermore, the district is a stable and reliable customer for these small businesses. Tamales, bagels, muffins, and breakfast burritos are represented in this category and are included in the district’s definition of “local”⁶ (fig. 12). Bread and tortillas represent another area that the district has continued to refine, although the new grain requirements have posed many challenges in this regard. Having a local tortilla company develop a tortilla that appealed to the students of Boulder and met the requirements was a win-win in this region of the country, which is known for its fresh tortillas.

Locally Produced Prepared Foods SY14 and SY15					
Local Food Item	Category	TT SALES 2013-14	TT SALES 2014-15	DIFF +/-	DIFF%
Tamales	Prepared Lunch	56,525	27,300	(29,225)	-52%
Muffins	Prepared Breakfast	41,900	50,770	8,870	21%
Bagels	Prepared Breakfast	31,664	41,913	10,249	32%
Burritos	Prepared Breakfast	31,400	33,228	1,828	6%
Totals		161,489	153,211	(8,278)	-5%

Figure 12. Locally sourced prepared food procurement in SY14 and SY15

As a percentage of total expenses, BVSD’s local procurement is holding steady at 32%. Increasing the ability to purchase Colorado-grown produce could easily raise this percentage (fig. 13). One goal of the SY16 produce distributor RFP is to identify a vendor that wants to partner with a cutting-edge district. This would include being willing to invest in packaging reduction through the use of reusable food-grade plastic bins. BVSD added this feature to its local meat and poultry procurement in SY15, as well as its

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http://www.thelunchbox.org/assets/uploads/documents/SAMPLE_INFORMAL_REQUEST_FOR_PROPOSAL-TAMALES.pdf

Western Slope fruit, with the assistance of a Stop Waste grant. Smaller local farmers are also supportive of this concept; one goal in SY16 is to expand use of reusable bins for potatoes.

Food Cost Expense Summary SY14 and SY15				
Type	2013-14	*2014-15	DIFF +/-	DIFF %
Total Food	2,486,640	2,928,507	441,867	18%
Food Truck	0	14,614	14,614	100%
Catering	3144	47,948	44,804	1425%
Vending	0	33,874	33,874	100%
A la Carte	171,901	200,091	28,190	16%
Other non school FC	67,660	0	-67,660	-100%
Adjusted Sub total	2,243,935	2,631,981	388,046	17%
Total Local	707,754	848,022	140,268	20%
% Local	32%	32%		

Source: Provided from BVSD FSD Procurement and Accounting.
 *SY15 unaudited YTD as of 7/11/15
 A la Carte FC is factored at 39% of sales; USDA Commodities included in total
 Missing Aug. and Sept. detail records SY14 for former produce distributor.

Figure 13. Total food cost expense summary for SY14 and SY15

Gardens – Stakeholder Engagement and Community Collaboration

The USDA grant provided a platform to establish more defined engagement between BVSD and local community partners. School garden development requires many partners: teachers, parents, interested neighbors, and school garden specialists as well as students and food-service staff. The six gardens that were established as a result of the USDA grant have the unique attributes of the school teams that created them. BVSD will continue to evaluate the garden activities for results, particularly in light of the BVSD teachers’ expanded understanding of how to connect the garden to the classroom curriculum. Thirty-five teachers were trained in the USDA-supported “Garden as a Classroom” workshops; the grant also paid for the Garden as a Classroom manual, which can be used for future garden projects. Stakeholder engagement in gardens is essential, as a solid network of support is needed to maintain school gardens throughout the “off season” and the matriculation of students.

Parent Volunteer Network

To support the level of student education activities that have become the norm in BVSD, a viable group of parent volunteers throughout the district is critical. The HOTM events, tastings, Rainbow Days, community events, farm field trips, school gardens, and Iron Chef Competitions all benefit from parent volunteers and parent engagement. BVSD has established a parent liaison for the School Food Project at each school; this role has become a key information link between the Farm-to-School and Events Coordinator and the school sites. The Project’s ability to maintain and expand this network is a key

measure of success for the sustainability of the rich student education experiences that will support the continued growth of the meal program.

Challenges

Sustainability is the most common challenge of projects, events, and activities that are created or enhanced with the support of a large grant. Boulder benefits from a highly skilled and organized district team both at the central office level and the site level; their ability to provide continuity in their work is due in large part to their efficiency. The grant supported growth areas like teacher training, garden building, lunchroom education events, harvest events, and collateral material that strengthened the foundation of the Farm-to-School work BVSD had performed prior to receiving funds. Marketing, writing grant applications, and fundraising are considered a key part of the FSD's annual work; the newly hired Farm-to-School and Event Coordinator will also take part in that ongoing but very challenging process.

Like all school districts, BVSD must closely monitor all aspects of its program, from the products it purchases to every meal count, in order to support its mission. In procurement, the district continues to push the envelope by demanding transparency from its distributors and greater engagement and volume in the local farm offerings. The Front Range food-shed doesn't grow everything BVSD uses, but the district will continue to develop farmer relationships and increase local volume as much as possible, encouraging competition and greater selection of local foods. Procuring sustainably produced meats is challenging, as the high demand for the products pushes the prices beyond a school district's budget, but BVSD joins other cutting-edge districts across the country that are demanding sustainably produced poultry and meats. As school-district demand grows, the market will adapt its production practices, and sustainable meat will be more accessible at a better price.

Ensuring continued engagement by the BVSD community is a marketing challenge. The day-to-day work includes sending regular emails from Chef Cooper to parents, identifying committed parents as their children age up, and involving the school board and local businesses with the FSD on a continual basis. Participation is always a challenge—the FSD will continue to train, organize, and innovate to increase students' food literacy and their desire to choose fresh, whole, local foods every day. The manuals produced as a result of the USDA grant will allow other districts to develop or enhance their own programming and embed experiential learning into their day-to-day work.

Conclusion

Boulder Valley School District's Farm-to-School emphasis is a model for the nation. Boulder combines a commitment to freshly prepared foods with the student engagement required to offset our society's focus on fast food and instant gratification. The district knew from the beginning of its transformation in 2009 that it could not simply "change the food." BVSD has worked diligently for every increase in meal participation, and its efforts to educate the students, parents, and extended community about the food have been tireless. It has created a community that reflects its mission: "All children of Boulder Valley School District will have daily access to fresh, flavorful and nutritious food made with wholesome and, when possible, local ingredients, so that every child may thrive." The USDA Farm-to-School grant has supported this commitment and provided many new opportunities to continue the mission.