

SAY “YES!” TO GOOD FOOD EDUCATION

A Good Food Education Resource Guide



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SAY “YES!” TO GOOD FOOD EDUCATION: A RESOURCE GUIDE

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The document was completed as part of a collaborative project led by the Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship/Research Shop and Sustain Ontario. Advisory Group members who helped oversee the project included representatives of Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre, FoodShare, Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc., the Ontario Edible Education Network, and OMAFRA’s Business Development Branch.

Funding was provided by the OMAFRA/University of Guelph Knowledge Translation and Transfer (KTT) Funding Program.

Thanks to all those who participated in the research that contributed to this document.

Citation

Nelson, E., M. Korzun, S. Maksimowski, R. Salt, R. Sargent, K. Janz, and K. Stemshorn. (2013). *Say “Yes!” to Good Food Education: A Good Food Education Resource Guide*. Guelph, ON: Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship/The Research Shop and OMAFRA. Retrieved from www.theresearchshop.ca/resources

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Introduction

What is this resource guide about?

Across Ontario, and beyond, there are many wonderful stories of organizations inspiring young people to better understand and appreciate the food they eat, and creating opportunities for them to connect to good food. This document aims to share some of those stories, in the hopes of inspiring others.

There are many wonderful stories of organizations inspiring young people to better understand and appreciate the food they eat, and creating opportunities for them to connect to good food.

In addition to telling stories, this guide presents insights and recommendations about how to do effective good food education work based on the experiences of some leaders in the field. This information was collected in the fall of 2012 through online research, as well as 17 in-depth interviews conducted by graduate student interns from the University of Guelph’s Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship/Research Shop.

Because there is so much exciting good food education activity happening today, it was impossible to include everyone’s story here. Rather, this document highlights a sampling of organizations working in different contexts and in different ways. As more and more people become involved in this work, the stories will multiply. If you don’t yet have one to tell yourself, maybe you soon will!

Who is this resource guide for?

The short answer is that this guide is meant for anyone interested in helping connect children and youth to good food. In particular, it is aimed at people who are working in some way as educators and/or community organizers. You could be:

- ❖ A teacher looking for ways to do this in (and maybe outside of) your classroom
- ❖ An administrator or school board member hoping to promote this work
- ❖ A non-profit organization hoping to start or strengthen a food education program
- ❖ A public health (or other municipal) official interested in getting more involved in this area
- ❖ A parent hoping to lead an initiative at your child’s school or in your local community

Key Ideas from Good Food Education Leaders

Build Partnerships

When we asked people what helped make their work successful, the most common response focused on the importance of networking and building collaborative relationships. As one person put it: “The relationship-building piece is key to our success and the learning that takes place.” Another explained: “I find it very helpful to have time and space to meet with other people to improve on activities. Not just reading material, but brainstorming together...People are a great resource!”

The good food education leaders we talked to highlighted some specific things that can help ensure that partnerships are effective:

- ❖ Aim to build relationships with **multiple stakeholders**. Many successful projects involve linkages to a wide variety of actors.
- ❖ Have **informal conversations with as many people as possible**. You never know who might end up being a key champion.
- ❖ Make sure to build **partnerships with youth** themselves – as individuals and organized groups.
- ❖ Think about connecting with people who can fill **different roles at different times**. In particular, if your project involves growing food, consider how to involve people over the summer months when schools are closed.
- ❖ Try to get support at **different scales** – from grassroots community members and groups as well as from key decision-makers and people in positions of power.
- ❖ Make an effort for your project or organization to be seen as a **part of your local community**.
- ❖ Connect with **bigger networks and umbrella organizations**, such as Sustain Ontario and the Ontario Edible Education Network.

Common partners for good food education projects include local government, public health units, school boards, parent associations, farm businesses, community health centres, grocery stores, colleges and universities, chefs, nutritionists, and local businesses. Keep in mind that sometimes partnerships can be found in surprising places!

Partnerships are important for many different reasons. In particular, they can:

- ❖ Provide opportunities for funding and resources – having relationships with many different partners can make it easier to diversify funding and secure a variety of in-kind support, including volunteers.
- ❖ Facilitate exchange of ideas and sharing of resources.
- ❖ Contribute to awareness-building about good food education work within the community and beyond.
- ❖ Help keep project participants, including staff and volunteers, motivated and energized.

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Make Things Fun!

After networking and partnership-building, the most common key to success that people talked about was making sure that programs and activities are fun and engaging. As one person pointed out, “Fun activities usually do way more because they facilitate memories and change.” A teacher well-known for his good food education work explained things this way: “I’m an entertainer first, and a teacher second...my focus is not ‘this is healthy food’, it’s the fun factor, the hook.”

Some of the most common ideas about how to make sure that good food education work is fun were:

“Making healthy food fun and interactive is key. For example, we bought a Panini grill and made roasted vegetable and whole grain bun sandwiches. The first day we didn’t sell a single one, so we had to investigate: What’s the hook? Where’s the fun? I bought different hot sauces and put pictures of action celebrities on them. Now kids can order the ‘Chuck Norris’ and it has become a competition to see who can handle the hottest Panini.”
-Murray Zehr, Robert Bateman
High School Culinary Program

- ❖ Involve young people directly in planning activities – they will know best how to engage their peers and will be more likely to engage themselves if they have ownership over projects and programs.
- ❖ Create opportunities for kids to teach other kids, and for kids to teach adults.
- ❖ Get kids outside of the classroom, and encourage sensory experiences, such as smelling, tasting and touching good food.
- ❖ Make sure that activities are as hands-on as possible.
- ❖ Play games.
- ❖ Avoid using pamphlets or text-heavy posters that children and youth are unlikely to read.

Get Creative About Funding

There was almost unanimous agreement that finding funding is currently the main challenge for people interested in doing good food education work. In particular, it can be very difficult to find core funding that is sustainable over the long term. Even though funding can be a big challenge, many organizations are finding creative ways to secure the resources needed to do their work.

Some of the most important recommendations for how to deal with the issue of funding were:

- ❖ **Diversify funding sources** as much as possible.
- ❖ Build **strong relationships** with multiple stakeholders to encourage long term support.

Some good sources of funding include: municipal government, school boards, public health units, provincial government ministries (e.g. Agriculture, and Child and Youth Services), foundations (e.g. Trillium and Metcalf), donations from individuals or local businesses, corporate sponsorships, and social enterprise (e.g. selling food you grow, charging a fee for participation in workshops and events).

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- ❖ Seek even **small sources of funding** – many small contributions can add up quickly.
- ❖ Develop expertise in **writing grant proposals**, or find people who can help with that task.
- ❖ Consider becoming a **registered charity** to make collecting donations easier.
- ❖ Take advantage of **in-kind support** wherever possible, including volunteers, knowledge and expertise, publicity, physical space, land, and more.
- ❖ Consider trying to **grow your own food** and, if possible process it. That can help offset costs, and create opportunities to generate income.

Be Clear About Goals

With so much work to be done, it can be tempting to take on a lot of different activities all at once. While many successful organizations have a wide range of programs, the leaders we spoke to often recommended starting out with a more narrow focus and building gradually. Specifically, it is important to think carefully about a clear vision and specific goals early on in the development of a good food education initiative. Doing some strategic planning can be helpful, and focusing on the strengths and expertise of the people and organizations at the table is key. A good method for expanding the scope of work, especially in the early days, is to connect with other groups whose programs and projects may be complementary. Again, this points to how important it is to build collaborative relationships in your community and beyond!

Help Address Future Priorities

In addition to providing insights and recommendations based on their experiences, the people who contributed to this resource guide identified what they consider to be some of priorities for the future of good food education work. As you create, strengthen or innovate your own project or organization, keeping these priorities in mind could be helpful – to your own process, and also to the broader good food education movement in Ontario.

1. Evaluate Impact

One of the challenges of doing good food education work can be evaluating the impact of that work. Many people we spoke to talked about the powerful and inspirational changes that they saw taking place as a result of children and youth connecting to good food. Those changes occur at the individual, family, and community levels, and capturing them can be an important way to ensure continued funding and encourage the development of new programs and initiatives. Stories about impact can also be used to help advocate for broader, more systemic change.

Evaluation can involve collecting and crunching numbers, but it can also include stories about personal experiences. Getting children and youth to tell their own stories about the impacts that good food education has had on their lives – for example by keeping a journal – can be very powerful.

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2. Develop Effective Marketing Strategies

A second challenge that people considered a priority for the future is the need to develop more effective marketing strategies to promote good food in ways that are engaging for children and youth, as well as for their parents, and the general public. Just like it is important to make programs and activities fun, it is necessary – though not always easy – to design materials that are catchy and appealing.

3. Continue to Increase Collaboration and Networking

Finally, although it has already been repeatedly highlighted in this document, it would be impossible to overstate the importance of building collaborative relationships and networks. Strengthening those linkages in the future is essential for ensuring that existing resources are shared more widely, that ideas are exchanged more freely, and that the momentum to connect children and youth in Ontario to good food continues to grow.



The Ontario Edible Education Network offers an excellent opportunity for collaboration and exchange. For more information about the network's work, see <http://sustainontario.com/initiatives/ontario-edible-education-network>.

Good Food Education Success Stories

"Tell stories! Stories of children whose lives have been changed through their connection to food and farming... We learn and are inspired through narratives."
-Brendan Johnson, Everdale Organic Farm & Environmental Learning Centre

The following pages present snapshot stories of some effective, innovative food education organizations. For more information on any of the organizations profiled, check out their websites.

Community Food Advisor Program

Huron County, Ontario

“The collaboration between the health unit, social services and the community health centre have resulted in successfully reaching a broader scope of our county’s population with education and information on food safety and food skills.”

Gail Fraser

Vision

The Community Food Advisor (CFA) program was piloted in 1992 by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In 2001, the provincial program and coordination was moved to the Nutrition Resource Centre (NRC). Through trained volunteers, the CFA Program provides reliable information and education that promotes safe and nutritious food selection, preparation and storage practices to consumers. The Huron program started in 1995 and supports the work of our current host organizations, the health unit and social services and our partner community health centre. The program supports public health’s mandate to offer healthy eating and food skill building opportunities as a means of preventing nutrition-related chronic conditions. It also supports program partners to provide programs and services for priority populations including seniors, children and low-income families. The CFA peer education format allows the program to reach a broad audience throughout the county and increases the capacity of new and existing programs to teach food skills and reach more people.

Key activities

The CFA program provides of a passionate group of volunteers, called community food advisors (CFAs), with intensive leadership training and technical training on healthy eating. The CFAs offer cooking classes, displays, presentations and food demonstrations to a variety of audiences. The programs are offered in a variety of locations and they are becoming increasingly popular.

Successes

The biggest success thus far has been the intense growth of the CFA program in Huron County. The CFA has been a valued program in Huron since 1995. Since 2009, the program has grown over 200%. This success has been supported through the recruitment and training of CFAs to increase the reach of food skills education. The CFAs were able to

Community Food Advisor Program

Huron County, Ontario

recognize the need to work with priority populations and thereby increased the number of opportunities with these groups. This has also allowed CFA to partner with other organizations and increase support to further food education and work with priority populations. The CFA program has been profiled at the provincial level in Health Canada's report *Improving Cooking and Food Preparation Skills: A Profile of Promising Practices in Canada and Abroad*, 2010.

Challenges

Although the CFA program continues to run in many sites across the province, provincial coordination and the future of the program website www.communityfoodadvisor.ca is unknown. Along with the growth of the Huron program and changes at the provincial level, challenges have arisen. As the program continues to expand, it requires more resources and capacity in training and managing the volunteers as well as maintaining updated information and resources. The CFAs in Huron County cover a large geographical area requiring travel which can take up a substantial amount of time and resources. The CFA program does not have a guarantee of constant and continued financial support. Support from partners, other organizations, and grants are needed. Finding funding to continue the successes of the program has always been a challenge.

Hopes for the future

A key goal for the CFA program is to continue to foster new partnerships and relationships in the community to enhance and extend the reach and impact of the program. The CFA program will also focus on updating the resources to support work with various populations including schools and seniors. Opportunities for future recruitment and improved management of CFA volunteers are important objectives. The program will continue to work with other CFA sites across the province and is hopeful that provincial level support will return.

“We specialize in fun, hands-on programs that focus on how each of us can change our daily habits to become better environmental citizens!”

Ecosource Annual Report
2011-12

Vision

Ecosource's vision is to empower individuals to be more environmentally friendly in the community. Through innovative, interactive and fun learning activities, Ecosource educates the public about environmental issues and encourages them to make more environmentally friendly and responsible choices. They highlight five ways by which adult and youth community members can become more environmentally responsible. These include waste reduction, urban agriculture, community gardens, youth environmental leadership and local food.

Key activities

Ecosource has developed a wide variety of innovative ways that teach youth, adults and families environmental responsibility and accountability. The waste reduction programs help students engage and help them think critically about waste issues. The *Mississauga Sustainable Urban Agriculture (MSURA)* program was developed to help the community gain access to fresh, healthy, local food while teaching students and other community members about sustainable food systems in the Peel region. Ecosource manages four community gardens and one urban agriculture site in Mississauga. They also support the *Peel Environmental Youth Alliance (PEYA)* and the *Environmental Youth-Adult Partnerships (EYAP)*, which support youth in community actions to create positive change.

Successes

The innovative, practical and hands-on approach to addressing environmental issues, has resulted in many successes for Ecosource. They have increased youth engagement through community gardens and urban agriculture. Ecosource involves youth

Ecosource

Peel Region, Ontario

community participation in projects to evoke a sense of ownership and pride. In the past year, over 13,300 students engaged in PEYA initiatives. Ecosource has successfully established 110 community plots in 4 separate Mississauga parks and a 15,000 sq. ft. teaching garden from which they produced over 2,000 pounds of organic food and donated to local food banks. They support agencies across Peel on food and garden programs. They have also been successful in navigating cross-sector partnerships, in particular through the *School Food Action Coalition* which brought together a local school board, a health department and a food service provider to increase the local food offered in Peel secondary schools.

Challenges

Although Ecosource appears to have found a winning formula for engaging youth and community members in becoming environmentally aware and responsible and having fun at the same time, Ecosource continues to face the obstacle of long-term sustainable funding. Even with political support and interest, Ecosource continues to seek funding to provide land for the increasing demand for community gardens.

Hopes for the future

In the future, Ecosource will continue to develop programs that can positively alter individual behaviour towards the environment. They will continue laying the necessary foundations for community members as well as schools to make institutional changes in various policies and practices relating to food and the environment. They are looking to diversify their funding sources even further, and are in the site selection phase of creating a sustainability education centre as a means of providing a central location for growing food and their innovative programming.



Everdale

Hillsburgh, Ontario

Vision

The mission of Everdale is to be a teaching farm that provides hands-on, solution-based food and farming education to build and engage healthy local communities. They aim to educate and reconnect children to the story of their food through hands-on, farm-based programs as well as train the next generation of sustainable local farmers by providing them with growing and business planning skills.

Key activities

Everdale offers a wide variety of activities, including farmer training, school programs, workshops and events. Their events include farm visits and tours. Their *Farm School Program* offers creative and meaningful learning on their farm, which serves as an outdoor, living classroom. Students from junior kindergarten to grade 12, as well as preschools, guides and scouts, camps and homeschoolers have the opportunity from May to October to get their hands dirty with hands-on learning. In the off farming season, Everdale educators bring the farm into the classroom with their curriculum-linked programs. Summer camps, curriculum linked workshops and farm trips are other ways in which Everdale teaches youth about the relationships between plants, soil, animals and the food on their plates.

Successes

One of the greatest successes of Everdale is seeing students from their programs obtaining a career in food and environmental fields. The demand for their creative, farm focused programs is increasing amongst youth and from organizations that wish to deliver similar programs in their communities. They have also successfully

“We learn and are inspired through narratives. Stories of the children whose lives have been changed through their connection to food and farming or stories of new, young farmers who have created new farms.”

Everdale

Hillsburgh, Ontario

launched over 75 new farms across Canada through their *Farmers Growing Farmers* suite of farmer trained programs! Receiving over a dozen awards, Everdale is a great example that practical and hand-on learning are the key to creating a future where agriculture and environment work together.

Challenges

Everdale's most important and most difficult challenge is retaining funding. They do not receive direct funding from any level of government. Instead, they receive it from grants, fundraising and program revenue. Due to their limited budget, human resources can also be difficult to maintain. Despite the challenges, it is important for Everdale to retain the amazing people that they have on staff.

Hopes for the future

As Everdale grows and progresses, they aim to develop new collaborations and networks as well as evolve and enhance their current programming. With the help of funding and the government recognizing the value of their services, Everdale hopes to become the centre for training other organizations in successful food education programming.

“New partnerships and networks have moved the work forward in new and exciting ways.”

“As a mission and idea driven organization, it is vital to our growth and vitality to retain the amazing people we have on staff.”



Food Matters Manitoba

Manitoba

Vision

The mission of Food Matters Manitoba (FMM) is to engage *all* Manitobans, not just youth, towards healthy and sustainable food for all. It is holistic work that values health, environment, economic viability and poverty alleviation. *The Manitoba Food Charter* is the guiding document for the organization. The Charter was developed in a participatory manner with over 70 public consultations. Food Matters Manitoba focuses on cultivating community food skills, providing public education and building partnerships and networks.

Key activities

Food Matters Manitoba runs several activities targeted towards food education. For example, *Dig In Manitoba* targets parents and children and encourages them to spend part of their grocery budget on local food and to participate in food-related activities. *Dig In Manitoba* has three main goals: to eat close to home, learn a new food skill and take action towards fair food. *The Dig In Challenge* was held twice in the past and each time over 400 families participated. This program was developed on the belief that local parents and local farmers can learn from each other and work together to develop sustainable and healthy communities. The *School Gardening Kits* program engages schools to include small indoor gardens in their classrooms. The success and popularity of these gardens have inspired others to start outdoor gardens. Food Matters Manitoba also provides a variety of community-based programs in 13 communities in Northern Manitoba. These programs are unique to each community and incorporate the traditions of the community into developing community food plans. Other activities include fun and educational competitions. The *Golden Carrot Award* rewards community food champions, including a youth category. Youth also has the opportunity to create and cook with local chefs in the *Locavore Iron Chef Competition*.

“You need to be really in touch with the communities you are working with because that’s where change takes place. They are the ones that will carry this work forward.”

Stefan Epp-Koop

Food Matters Manitoba

Manitoba

Successes

Food Matters Manitoba has had many successes. Their community-level involvement, including communities in Northern Manitoba that bring holistic change beyond food has been one of their greatest achievements. For example, Food Matters Manitoba runs several projects in Cross Lake. These projects instill pride, enthusiasm, food skills and school participation. Their long-term partnerships and community interest have greatly contributed to the success of their programs. In 2011, they established over 220 partnerships. Over 35 food security projects in 55 communities were completed with the generous contribution of 6107 volunteer hours.

Challenges

The main challenge that Food Matters Manitoba faces is limited staff time and resources, including funding. Like many organizations, their funding is unpredictable. This makes it difficult to reliably offer programs. Additionally, the staff is forced to juggle many projects at once instead of being able to focus on single projects. These concerns are increasing as the demand for programs, especially school program is rising.

Hopes for the future

They hope that interest in their work will continue to grow. Building more relationships and diversifying funding sources will help in securing further support for their programming. They are hopeful that general public awareness and interest in food issues will continue to grow and that they will continue to play an essential role in developing a sustainable and secure food system in Manitoba.

“Keep it fun. Fun activities actually do way more because they facilitate memories and change. Food is just the tip of the iceberg, but it has the potential to facilitate holistic changes. These children will have these food skills the rest of their lives.”

Stefan Epp-Koop

“FoodShare Toronto addresses hunger and food issues through empowerment of individuals, families and communities through food-based initiatives while advocating for social enterprise and social justice.”

Vision

FoodShare Toronto is a non-profit community organization whose vision is 'Good Healthy Food for All'. FoodShare takes a multifaceted, innovative, and long-term approach to hunger and food issues. They work on food issues "from field to table" - meaning that they focus on the entire system that puts food on our tables: from the growing, processing and distribution of food to its purchasing, cooking and consumption. FoodShare promotes policies - such as adequate social assistance rates, sustainable agriculture, universal funding of community-based programs and nutrition education - that will make food a priority at all levels of society. As Canada's largest community food security organization, FoodShare has been recognized as an important innovator of effective programs that have been reproduced all across Canada. Each month, they reach over 155,000 children and adults through subsidized fresh produce distribution, student nutrition programs, community gardening and cooking, classroom curriculum support, home made baby food workshops and youth internships.

Key activities

For the past 6 years FoodShare's *Field to Table Schools* program has been providing students and teachers with hands-on, curriculum-linked Food Literacy education from JK to Grade 12. Through interactive student workshops, teacher trainings, events and school food garden projects, the Field to Table Schools team is reconnecting students across the GTA with the joys of growing, harvesting, cooking, eating and composting food. FoodShare has established and supported over 30 school food gardens and innovative after-school gardening programs in 13 of Toronto's inner city and model schools. Since 2008 when *their* signature event, *The Great Big Crunch* was launched, nearly half a million synchronized apple crunches have been registered by students across Canada.

In partnership with the school, FoodShare supports one of Canada's first school-based market gardens at Bendale Business and Technical Institute, where students plant, grow, and harvest vegetables on close to half an acre of arable land and cook the food in culinary arts classes to serve it in the cafeteria, proving that healthy food and food literacy can be fully integrated.

“This community development partnership model means that our work is leveraged exponentially, garnering impacts that grow as information and skills are adapted and passed along to others and ensuring that each dollar we invest in our programs multiplies, impacting the greatest number of people.”

2011 Annual Report

During the summer, FoodShare coordinates full time employment for five high school youth who support the maintenance and care for the market garden. This year the youth employment program will expand to include a new 16,000 square foot rooftop garden, 5 additional student positions from Eastdale Collegiate, offer a credit recovery option and include a new financial literacy and social enterprise training program.

Successes

Foodshare programs reach over 155,000 children and adults per month in Toronto. Establishing strong partnerships including working collaboratively with Toronto Public Health and the Toronto District School Board have significantly contributed to the success of FoodShare's education programs. FoodShare's creative and innovative campaigns have been recognized across the nation. These include *The Great Big Crunch*, that nationally promotes healthy snacking and the *Bike Blender*, which recycles bikes and blenders to create a healthy drink fueled by your own labour.

Challenges

Consistent funding can be a challenge for FoodShare's education programs. To combat this, FoodShare has diversified their funding sources and has found innovative ways to fundraise including establishing a youth led social enterprise through the sale of school grown foods.

Hopes for the future

FoodShare has been working with schools for over two decades to improve the health and well being of Toronto's children and youth by providing a multi-faceted approach to school food. FoodShare has taken their experience with Student Nutrition and Food Literacy work to a new level, mobilizing policy makers, students, parents, educators and key decision makers in the charge to embed good food education into the Ontario curriculum. They strive to ensure that all students learn how to make healthy food choices, access at least one healthy meal a day at school, and increase their physical activity through food activities such as gardening, cooking, and composting.

Halton Food for Thought

Halton Region, Ontario

Vision

It is undeniable that healthy food and regular meals are strongly linked to children's concentration, memory, participation and overall performance in school. Halton Food For Thought focuses on providing every child with the nutrition they need to excel in school. What started as a breakfast program in 6 schools has evolved into over 140 programs at 106 sites! Though they have grown tremendously, their vision remains the same – to promote the connection between healthy food and improved learning by providing breakfast, lunch or snacks at schools or community-based sites. More recently, Halton Food for Thought began incorporating local food and designing programs that teach children and youth about where their food comes from.

Key activities

Founded in 1997, Halton Food For Thought has grown to include many different programs that increase consumption of healthy food in schools for students aged 3 to 18. Some examples include breakfast programs that are run by senior citizen volunteers, which teach not only healthy nutrition but foster relationships between students and volunteers. There is the *Healthy Basket Program*, a bin of healthy non-perishable items placed in every classroom or at key stations, allowing students to have food throughout the day – whether a child forgot to bring lunch or is food insecure. Another is the *High School Meal Card Program* which feeds at-risk students with one meal a day for the entire school year in a non-stigmatized way. Additionally, there are programs that promote food education. The *Farm to School* program provides students with locally grown produce, along with weekly information and activity sheets to teach students about the role they each play in the food system. *Families are Munching* teaches students how fun and easy it can be to eat nutritiously with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables. A new partnership with the Halton Catholic School Board & Halton Food For Thought involves aquaponics, giving students the opportunity to participate in alternative food systems.

“What started as a breakfast program in six schools has evolved into over 140 programs at 106 sites!”

Halton Food for Thought

Halton Region, Ontario

Successes

Halton Food for Thought's chief success is the sheer volume of students for whom they are able to provide healthy food. Last year, they fed more than 16,000 children and youth with an increase of 10 new programs. 17 schools increased current programming to ensure students had access to healthy food every day. 100% of students evaluated said they felt more alert and active after participating in the programs. This would not be possible without the support of the many volunteers and partners, who provide not only monetary support, but also share ideas and information. "When it comes to our material we try not to reinvent the wheel, we seek out what kind of work is already being done, is successful, and how we can create new programs or enhance existing ones with this knowledge" says Gayle Cruikshank, Executive Director of Halton Food For Thought.

Challenges

As the Halton region develops, the number of insecure children and youth will increase. However, the staff and volunteers at Halton Food for Thought have reached maximum capacity in time and resources. Halton Food for Thought will require more staff, and therefore more funding to fill the increasing demand. One way Food for Thought is overcoming this challenge is by hiring a student to do a Return on Investment analysis, to better understand the cost of running the different programs. The agency wants to be more strategic in where staff time should be spent and how they could be more efficient moving forward.

Hopes for the future

Halton Food for Thought hopes to have a program in every school in the Halton region. They plan to continue spreading awareness about healthy food and to be involved with innovative programs such as edible gardens. Halton Food for Thought hopes to continue to network and collaborate with other groups, in hopes of reaching more children and youth to ensure they are well fed and ready to learn.

"When it comes to our material we try not to reinvent the wheel, we try to seek out what kind of work is already being done, is successful, and how we can create new programs or enhance existing ones with this knowledge."

Intergenerational Landed Learning on the Farm for the Environment

Vancouver, British Columbia

Intergenerational Landed Learning
On The Farm
For The Environment

“Community members want to volunteer their time. They get compensated in ways other than money such as food, knowledge and empowerment.”

Stacy Friedman,
Project Manager

Vision

The Intergenerational Landed Learning on the Farm for the Environment Project (LLP) was developed by two professors in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada. The goal of the project is to promote stewardship for the earth by uniting the generations in experiential community learning about land and growing food as the link between a healthy environment and human wellbeing. The project is committed to improving the wellbeing of people, communities and the planet through environmental education programs and research.

Key activities

The LLP offers a suite of programs for school-aged youth and educators. Landed Learning on the Farm is a school year program for students in grades 3 to 7. The students and teachers who participate in this program travel to the UBC farm, where community elders and young adult volunteers with farming and gardening backgrounds, referred to as 'farm friends', mentor the students as they learn to cultivate the soil, plant seeds, grow and harvest crops, cook and taste fresh food, and discuss various agricultural and environmental issues. Each class spends about 10 school days at the farm and engages in hands-on food growing experiences and learning in small, multi-generational groups. The program stresses the importance of an intergenerational approach to food and environmental education. Seniors, as well as undergraduate and graduate students at UBC work together on the program and with the youth. To extend its environmental programming and reach more youth, in 2005, the LLP initiated a summer day camp program called *FarmWonders*, which offers fun and innovative, science-based, farm learning for children ages 6 to 14 years. The *FarmWonders* program now offers 10 weeks of camps every summer at the UBC Farm. In 2010, the LLP added a program for teens called *Sustainable Opportunities for Youth Leadership (SOYL)*. The *SOYL* program is geared towards secondary students and helps them become environmental leaders through establishing and maintaining school gardens and educating their fellow students about the environment and sustainable local food systems. The LLP also offers and delivers hands-on, professional development workshops for teachers to support the integration of garden-based learning into school curricula.

Intergenerational Landed Learning on the Farm for the Environment

Vancouver, British Columbia

Successes

The LLP has been improving the lives of people and communities through environmental education and research for the past 11 years. During this time, they have reached over 1,300 students and had over 300 volunteers, 20 of whom have started their own environmental and farming related projects across Canada and internationally. The LLP and its staff have been recognized as leaders in the community through multiple awards including the Canadian Network of Environmental Education and Communication (EEDCOM) *Outstanding Postsecondary Individuals Award*, the BC Hydro *Community Champions Award* and the Canadian Council on Learning's *Sharing the Flames Award* for excellence in teaching about health and environment. Based on years of experience in helping teachers provide their students with environmental education through food and garden activities, in 2010 the Project team published a teacher resource, *Get Growing! Activities for Food and Garden Learning*. The book is written for teachers who are interested in bringing gardening into their schools and classrooms and integrating garden-based learning across the curriculum. The *Get Growing!* book includes over 300 activities, 44 ready-to-use handouts and over 100 online references and resources for teachers.

Challenges

The biggest challenge for LLP and its programs is securing funding. Support for its programs comes from government and industry grants as well as donations from individuals, small local businesses and larger corporations. Lack of ongoing funding, limits the organization's capacity to expand its programs and undertake long term planning. A source of ongoing support would also permit hiring more staff, which would help the project meet the increasing demand for its programs, resources and workshops.

Hopes for the future

The LLP's association with the University of British Columbia provides opportunities to reach and educate more teachers, as well as to continue to develop, expand, improve garden-based curriculum and programming through professional development workshops and initiatives, graduate programs, and research. The project team has also been collaborating with other local food education organizations to form the *Vancouver School Food Network*, which strives to support schools and teachers to grow food and teach skills and concepts that promote sustainable food systems.

“LL involves people of all ages in envisioning and developing the qualities, skills, and knowledge they want to have in their community.”

Stacy Friedman,
Project Manager

**“One of LCRC’s
greatest
accomplishments
is providing
opportunities for
community
members with a
chance to
participate in
activities that they
may not otherwise
get a chance
to do.”**

Linda Davies

Vision

Since its inception in 1974, the London Community Resource Centre (LCRC) has sought to improve the collective well-being of London residents by bringing together individuals, organizations and resources to foster community action and create positive social change. Over the years LCRC has acted as a launch pad and support centre for over 100 charitable and non-profit organizations. LCRC recognizes that food security is a global issue and affects residents in the city of London, Ontario. LCRC supports a number of projects that encourage sustainable, healthy and local eating.

Key activities

LCRC's food security projects are divided into three areas including community gardens, workshops and support and programming to local organizations. The culmination of these programs is referred to as *Grow Cook Learn*. The LCRC has 18 community and demonstration gardens which facilitate the *Grow Cook Learn* program. The workshops reach a wide and diverse group of people and vary from investigating meal planning, eating on a budget, low fat cooking, cooking for kids, and cooking for one; to working in gardens. These programs are designed so they can be modified for multiple age groups. In a recent program *Cook It Up*, at-risk youth were brought to rural areas to harvest crops. Their harvest was then brought back to the city, where local chefs taught them to make delicious meals with the food they harvested. The process of this activity has since been written into a manual, documented through the lens of how it could be delivered to different population groups.

London Community Resource Centre

London, Ontario

Successes

One of LCRC's greatest accomplishments is reaching a diverse group of people in London, Ontario. Seniors and low income families make up over 70% of garden plot members. The successes of the LCRC can be attributed to the support they receive from the community. The community helps shape the programs and provides constructive and creative feedback. In the case of *Cook It Up*, the youth participants contributed significantly to improve the programs design. Additionally, community partnerships are greatly important in helping secure resources and promoting the wonderful work the LCRC is doing.

Challenges

Like so many food access and education programs, the LCRC faces challenges related to securing sustainable monetary resources. Lack of funding puts pressure on programs as they have to constantly look for free or low-cost rental space. Secure funding would allow them to focus on improving programming rather than on secondary tasks such as looking for space. To cope with these obstacles the LCRC maintains close relationships with agencies that have funded them in the past, while networking and educating potential partners about the great work they are doing.

Hopes for the future

In the future, LCRC hopes to have its own facility. They are also interested in developing a social enterprise, possibly by selling harvested goods or tickets to local food events. Ultimately, the LCRC hopes to continue providing community members with unique and meaningful opportunities to engage with their food system.

"It feels so good to see people excited about what they grew, or learning how to cook something new – it is an amazing process."

Linda Davies

Michigan Youth and Community Food

Michigan, USA

Vision

Michigan State University Centre of Regional Food Systems (CRFS) brings together the applied research, education, and outreach expertise of faculty and staff at Michigan State University (MSU) to advance understanding of and engagement with regional food systems throughout Michigan, the United States, and the world. The CRFS launched the Michigan Youth and Community Food initiative in 2009 to help engage youth in various aspects of the food system. The vision of the program is to support and enhance the capacity of school and community food projects across Michigan through technical assistance, networking, participatory research and outreach. They aim to ensure awareness and accessibility to sustainable food.

“Observing a class while they participate in one of these programs is inspiring to watch.”

Anne Scott

Key activities

Michigan Youth and Community Food supports various activities. They help find and connect people to the appropriate resources, facilitate community dialogue around food initiatives, organize workshops, provide technical assistance for youth and community food projects and partner in community based research projects. Their *Youth Farm Stand* Project was implemented in 2005 under CRFS and has been active in over 16 low or reduced-income communities across Michigan. Youth grow and then market fresh and local food in their communities. Youth and Community Food also supports school gardens across Michigan, by partnering with community organizations to develop strong infrastructure necessary for networking, peer to peer support and resource sharing statewide. Another program of the CRFS, *Michigan Farm to School*, serves to promote and offer local food through school cafeterias, school garden programs, class visits by local farmers and field trips to local farms. This program also offers small grants and planning grants for various programming. Youth and Community Food also supports school gardens across Michigan, helps redevelop communities and reduce poverty via food initiatives.

Michigan Youth and Community Food

Michigan, USA

Successes

Michigan Youth and Community Food has been successful in developing strong partnerships between Michigan State University and community organizations. CRFS was a lead organization in developing the *Michigan Good Food Charter* that acts as a blueprint for achieving a sustainable food system in Michigan. This document was formulated with the help of the University as well as the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Department of Education, local farmers and the broader community. The charter provides six steps for growing Michigan's sustainable food system, including increasing agriculture education in schools, and improving nutrition standards for school food.

Challenges

Local and sustainable food is not always a priority in the classroom as teachers are very pressed for time. Michigan Youth and Community Food has worked to overcome this barrier by working with partner organizations to develop food system based lesson plans that fit the current curriculum as well as promoting gardening as a learning lab for educators to teach concepts across content areas. Although this is slowly changing, another major challenge is educating those with 'traditional food perspectives' to see the opportunities for sustainable and local food systems.

Hopes for the future

As a growing initiative of the CRFS, Michigan Youth and Food has big hopes for the future. They hope to become research leaders in food education, providing school guides, toolkits and doing relevant research. They hope to influence national policies and become recognized at national and international levels as food education leaders.

“Throughout this program, I have seen the participants’ attitudes change and they are able to see the change in their own community”

Anne Scott



Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc.

Milton, Ontario

“OAFE serves to connect people to their food and the industry of food production and consumption.”

Becky Parker

Vision

The vision of Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc. (OAFE) is to increase knowledge of food and farming, emphasizing the complexities and importance of the agri-food system. OAFE's goal is to encourage people to think critically about the social, environmental and economic aspects of agriculture. The organization is dedicated to creating impactful learning experiences for students with high-quality, objective and curriculum linked learning materials. It does so via collaboration with various partners to deliver education programming about food, farming and agriculture.

Key activities

OAFE develops curriculum-based resources that articulate a clear agri-food message, provides professional development services for educators in Ontario and provides consultative support to major agricultural events such as the *International Plowing Match* and the *Royal Winter Fair*. The primary audience are Ontario teachers, students and student influencers. OAFE distributes information about food and farming in the form of teacher guides, interactive programming, and video resources. An electronic game has also been developed called *Agri-Trekking*. This game explores the regions of Ontario and teaches students between grades 4-6 what agricultural products grow in those regions, what geographical aspects influence the growth of those products and provides healthy eating and food labelling facts. The game includes a 44 page teacher guide and student assessments. OAFE also offers Ontario Certified teachers an opportunity to become *Teacher Ambassadors*. *Teacher Ambassadors* are trained to deliver agricultural education across Ontario. They deliver lessons in classrooms and participate in various agriculture education events such as *Canada's Outdoor Farm Show* and the *Royal Agricultural Winter Fair*.

<http://www.oafe.org/>

Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc.

Milton, Ontario

Successes

OAFE has been successful in securing stable funding from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, which covers approximately 80% of OAFE's funding. OAFE's priorities align with those of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, allowing them to maintain a relationship of trust and collaboration with their major funder. The rest of the funding comes from memberships, donations, and grants. The *Agriculture Adaptation Council*, which administers government funding to help make agribusiness ideas a reality, recently provided funding to OAFE to develop a conduit for connecting secondary students with career opportunities in the agriculture sector. Another major success is that they are reaching many teachers and students. They have been successful in delivering agri-food education to classrooms for the past 20 years.

Challenges

It is sometimes difficult for teachers to incorporate agricultural lessons into the curriculum, as they are pressed for time in meeting the large amount of expectations. As well, it can be difficult for educators to teach about topics they are unfamiliar with, such as food and farming. Translating all the diverse materials from English to French can also be a challenge.

Hopes for the future

In the future, OAFE hopes to expand the *Teacher Ambassador Program* to include all counties in Ontario. As well, OAFE looks forward to developing innovative programs, such as *Ag in the Aisles* ©, which encourage teachers and students to think critically about food and farming.

“OAFE’s inspiration comes from the change agri-food knowledge makes in people’s lives. Children are the future and individuals that will make informed choices in the years to come.”

Becky Parker

Robert Bateman High School Culinary Program

Burlington, Ontario

Vision

The vision of the Robert Bateman High School Culinary Program (RBHSCP) is to educate students about healthy eating. They strive to ensure their product is healthy, delicious and affordable. The key messages are delivered through making healthy food fun and interactive.

Key activities

The RBHSCP offers nutritious breakfast, snacks and lunch for sale in the cafeteria. They have a 50-seat restaurant that is open to the public with an appealing social and physical environment. The school is also part of the *Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program* that allows students to gain training in the culinary field through cooperative education. Part of the success of the culinary program at the Robert Bateman High School is that it connects other areas of the school. For example, the communications and technology classes join the culinary program and develop a short TV program on healthy eating. The high school also hosts an *Iron Chef Competition* using healthy ingredients, which is streamed to the entire school.

Successes

The biggest success of RBHSCP is engaging kids with healthy food and healthy eating. These students have more energy and are more successful inside and outside the school. Integrating the program with other aspects of school life in combination with the immense dedication and collaboration of the staff who share the same vision, have been the foundation for making the program such a success. The school has also been successful in networking with community partners, allowing them to harness external human and physical resources to come up with new and creative ways to deliver

“[The kids] have to get out there, get their hands dirty and have fun. The learning just naturally happens.”

Murray Zehr

Robert Bateman High School Culinary Program

Burlington, Ontario

this program. The success of the program has been recognized across the province. The RBHSCP is visited by numerous teachers across Ontario to gain experience in teaching about healthy and sustainable food and to gain inspiration that they can transfer to their schools.

Challenges

Despite the popularity of the program amongst the students, the program faces direct competition with local fast-food restaurants. Some students continue to purchase fast food, but the school is not giving up on them. The staff continues to brainstorm and develop creative programming that appeals to the current high school student. The RBHSCP requires constant support and maintenance. They cannot be sustained by student volunteers alone. Advocating for improvements to the School Food and Beverage Policy and other provincial initiatives is an important role the school plays. The provincial initiatives in place do not reveal how to make healthy food delicious and fun for students. The current information dissemination for healthy eating does not successfully engage adolescents. RBHSCP believes that improved policies as well as a role model that students can relate to will successfully engage and educate students about healthy eating.

Hopes for the future

The RBHSCP hopes to become more self-sustaining and action oriented. They plan to decrease their footprint and save \$22 000 annually by growing their own fruits and vegetables. They also hope to incorporate renewable energy such as geothermal, solar or wind power as well as a tropical greenhouse and aquaculture into their programming.

“I’m an entertainer first, and a teacher second-we all are. My focus is not ‘this is healthy food’, it’s the fun factor; the hook.”

Murray Zehr



Roots to Harvest

Thunder Bay, Ontario

Vision

The mission of Roots to Harvest is to provide meaningful educational opportunities for youth to engage with sustainable local agriculture and help in creating healthy communities. They want youth to become leaders in their communities and help them connect a diverse community and cultivate food that is healthy and accessible. By increasing young people's opportunity to grow food, it allows for a better connection and understanding of how the food system works. At the same time, it exposes youth to unique ideas, concepts and flavours in the food system.

Key activities

The Roots to Harvest program is about connecting youth to themselves, food and their communities. The program allows youth in and around Thunder Bay to connect with mentors and experts in the community and learn about various aspects of the food system, including production, distribution, access, culture and sustainability. Roots to Harvest works with students in grade six and older, with an emphasis on at-risk high school students.

The *Urban Youth Garden* program hires students full-time for 6 weeks in the summer. The *Urban Youth Garden* is located on a one acre plot in the heart of downtown Thunder Bay, where youth plant, tend, harvest, sell and donate their produce. Much of their produce is donated to various food aid organizations to help alleviate food insecurity in the community. The students also have the opportunity to travel to surrounding regional farms, where they learn firsthand the realities and opportunities of farming. In 2012, the program hired 8 young people from diverse backgrounds between the ages of 15-18. The *Academic Year Program* is another aspect of Roots to Harvest and allows the summer students to continue their work with Roots to Harvest throughout the school year. Interested students continue to work on Saturdays and continue developing leadership skills and meaningful ways of engaging with their communities. *School Community Programming* allows the organization to engage with others interested in food education and help develop various workshops and events that will educate and engage youth and the broader community in the local food system.

“These spaces
act as a
community
hub, uniting
people
together”

Erin Beagle

Roots to Harvest

Thunder Bay, Ontario

Successes

Roots to Harvest focuses on quality over quantity, and delivers high quality programs to small groups of youth. A major success of Roots to Harvest is the emphasis on long-term investment in students, and providing them with opportunities to do meaningful and relevant work that allows them to become leaders in the food system. “The Urban Youth Garden and Academic Year Program offer paid positions to the youth interns” says Erin Beagle, Program Coordinator. “Paying them shows that their work is valued, relevant and serves a purpose. Young people are asked to volunteer all of the time and this is a way for them to be engaged at a different level” she adds. Having a strong relationship with partners from many different sectors who share their time, knowledge and space is a huge part of the organization's success. These partners also helped in making the year 2012 monumental as it marks the year when the organization became a legally recognized not-for-profit organization in Canada.

Challenges

Securing sustainable funding is a significant issue. Funding that will sustain income for the students is essential as it allows Roots to Harvest to draw in students who would not normally volunteer in such activities. Although paying students in their long term programming is important, there are still challenges associated with keeping at risk youth engaged in the work. There are also uncertainties associated with space, as they do not currently own the one acre plot, where the programming happens. A land owner not utilizing the land is lending it to them and the land is not guaranteed for a long term basis. More funds would mean greater security.

Hopes for the future

Roots to Harvest have many ambitions for the future. They hope to expand the urban space gardens, with a goal of one new urban space per year. To expand their reach to students, they hope to implement a ‘for credit’ program in partnership with the school board.

“Having a strong relationship with partners from many different sectors who share their time, knowledge and space is a huge part of the organizations success.”

Erin Beagle



Seeds For Change

Thornhill, Ontario

“We are facilitating York Region’s anticipated exponential growth, creating environmentally sustainable communities with a social conscience, increasing volunteerism throughout the region and emphasizing the importance of giving back.”

Vision

The vision of Seeds For Change (SFC) is to improve the health and well-being of local neighbourhoods; contribute to the sustainability of York Region's suburban communities; produce, harvest, celebrate and share locally grown food from school, community grounds and all underutilized spaces. SFC provides hands-on education of critical life skills to students and community members. They achieve this by collaborating, sharing ideas and resources with like-minded organizations; by ensuring that all schools have access to a garden; teaching children and youth the vitally important skills of growing their own food, the benefits of eating nutritionally and how to become better environmental stewards.

Key activities

SFC aims to provide programming to all age groups, from toddlers at the *Seedlings Child Care Centre* through to seniors. They encourage intergenerational and multicultural relationships. The programs at SFC can be classified into: a *School Food Garden Program*, a *Community Garden Program*, both with workshops, and advocating for change to create a better food system. SFC offers support to teachers, schools and other educators on how to integrate growing food into the Ontario school board curriculum. They offer a wide array of workshops that include: vermicomposting, cooking, seed saving, preserving, celebrating and sharing the harvest. They recently started a new campaign in York Region which aims to develop 2,015 new food garden plots by the year 2015, then throwing down the gauntlet to engage other Ontario community garden networks. This will help York Region be recognized as a mobilizer of sustainable food in Ontario and become a key player in the global food revolution. They also created the *York Region Community Gardening Network (YRCGN)* which facilitates making community gardening an integral part of suburban life. Anyone sharing the same vision is welcome to join. They share information, resources, through events and workshops and fundraise to sustain and promote all gardens within York Region.

Successes

The success of Seeds For Change has manifested from their strong partnerships with organizations such as the *York Region Food Network*, *Food*

<http://seedsforchangegardens.org/>

Seeds For Change

Thornhill, Ontario

For Learning, the Ontario Edible Education Network, Imagine A Garden In Every School, Heart & Stroke Foundation, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Master Gardeners of Ontario, Carrot Cache as well as their strong relationships with the municipalities, notably, the City of Markham and City of Vaughan, and their partnerships with large corporations such as Whole Foods, Home Depot, Garden Import, Green Roofs & Healthy Cities, TD Bank and Shell. Collaborating with them all and engaging community members, has ensured their success has blossomed. SFC has been very creative in their fundraising. For example, they were able to involve the local firefighters in an annual car wash fundraiser, which raises over \$2,000 each year. They are also partnering with L'Arche Daybreak whose team of men and women with intellectual disabilities are creating ceramic plant markers – where ½ of the profit will go back to the L'Arche programs and ½ will go to SFC.

Challenges

SFC currently operates with two part-time staff members, two part-time garden coordinators and a core of 10 volunteer committee members. They are, therefore, limited in what they can realistically and successfully accomplish. Although there is a large interest in developing more gardens in the area, SFC cannot always respond to the growing requests and they have a waiting list. They are in the process of developing a strong infrastructure for the organization in preparation for becoming a charitable organization. This will hopefully attract more sustainable funding. A strong infrastructure will also contribute to successfully recruiting volunteers.

Hopes for the future

The organization has developed a prioritized list of goals to accomplish in the next several years. By the end of 2013, they hope to develop a program titled *Train the Trainers*, which will train garden coordinators to run their own gardens. This will be a self-sustaining training program and will allow Seeds for Change volunteers to engage more people. In addition to the 2,015 gardens by 2015 campaign, Seeds for Change hopes to develop a scholarship program, develop international connections and reach marginalized groups in the York Region by 2015. By 2020, they hope to help establish a Canada-wide food policy.

“Start as a grass-roots organization, create a strong team empowering all those with different skills, use what’s already out there and collaborate!”

Sustain Ontario & Ontario Edible Education Network

Toronto, Ontario

“At the practice level there is nothing but potential.”

Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker

Vision

The vision of Sustain Ontario is to work collaboratively on research, policy, development and action by addressing the intersecting issues related to healthy food and local sustainable agriculture. Sustain Ontario is working towards a food system that is healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable. Sustain Ontario has also recently initiated a network that will bring together groups in Ontario that are working to connect children and youth with food. The goals of the Ontario Edible Education Network (OEEN) are to ensure that all children and youth learn how to grow, prepare and choose healthy food; have access to enough healthy and culturally appropriate food every day; and have a strong knowledge of the food system.

Key activities

Sustain Ontario's OEEN supports those who work with children and youth by providing inspiration, motivation and resources. The belief is that working together will make it easier to help children and youth make more sustainable food choices. With the help of an advisory group and a steering committee, OEEN has completed an environmental scan and a needs assessment of food education in Ontario. OEEN is now undergoing an action planning process to develop priorities for the network and to better support groups and individuals who are integrating food into the curriculum, creating spaces outside the classroom to educate students about food, helping students gain access to nutritious, farm-fresh food, developing food skills programs, and advancing other efforts to connect children and youth to good food. OEEN's work supports Sustain Ontario's goal of informing and improving provincial and national policies.

Sustain Ontario & Ontario Edible Education Network

Toronto, Ontario

“I would love to see regions of the province get together and talk to decision-makers. There is more potential for change at the municipal and regional level.”

Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker

Successes

OEEEN has brought together over 100 organizations and, via the needs assessment, is finding the common interests of these organizations. They were also successful in creating a policy document that reflects the needs and challenges of these organizations which was distributed to the government and policy-makers. These successes can be attributed to the shared vision of network members for system change. There is a lot of excitement and eagerness for collaboration amongst members, which will likely result in great achievements in food education.

Challenges

The main challenge faced by Sustain Ontario and the OEEEN is at the provincial and national policy levels where there appears to be a limited vision of what can be achieved with food education. For example, preventative health promotion via eating wholesome, healthy food is not part of the government's priorities. However, the potential and drive found amongst the organizations will continue to push for positive policy change.

Hopes for the future

Sustain Ontario is in the process of developing and promoting a provincial food and nutritional strategy. It hopes to achieve this via strengthening governmental relations and cohesive partnerships. The successes, needs and challenges of OEEEN's members will continue to be assessed and used to identify the evolving issues that are important to food education. With increased membership and stronger partnerships, OEEEN hopes to create programming that will overcome those issues.



The Food Project

Lincoln, Beverly, Boston, Lynn, Massachusetts

“Often you see a child involved in a school program and then the mom starts coming to adult workshops. There is an intersect with whole families.”

Kathleen Banfield

Vision

The vision of The Food Project is a world where youth are active leaders, engaged in diverse communities where people feel connected to the land and each other, and everyone has access to fresh, local, healthy, affordable food. The Food Project believes communities have to work together to produce sustainable food systems. At the core of those communities are youth and adult partnerships. The Food Project is well recognized for their *Youth Programs* that combine farming, enterprise and service to teach youth practical and transferable skills. Youth cultivate the farmland, partake in workshops and work with local organizations to provide food for hunger relief. Youth are given a great deal of responsibility and challenges, which in the end creates leaders amongst communities.

Key activities

The Food Project runs long-term, in-school and after-school programming on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Their target is primarily teenagers. The Food Project has been hiring teenagers to work on the farm for over 20 years. The *Summer Youth Program (SYP)* brings together over 100 teenagers from diverse backgrounds to work on farms and harvest 1,000s of pounds of produce while learning leadership, teamwork and civic participation skills. Other programs such as the *Academic Year Program*, aimed at youth from 14-17 years of age and *Internship Programs*, geared towards youth ages 15-18 continue to develop knowledge and skills amongst youth that will help mobilize their communities around food justice and food systems change.

Successes

The Food Project’s greatest success is their ability to reach many

<http://thefoodproject.org/>

The Food Project

Lincoln, Beverly, Boston, Lynn, Massachusetts

“It’s a simple concept, growing food with kids, but don’t underestimate the power it can have.”

Kathleen Banfield

children and families per year. In 2012, over 1,500 people attended youth-led workshops. Over 3,228 volunteers and 150 teens worked on 41.5 acres of farms. Those farms produced over 250,000 pounds of ecologically grown food and donated thousands of pounds to local hunger relief organizations. It is often youth that introduce healthy, sustainable food to their families. The Food Project provides children with recipes to try at home and the children elicit excitement about cooking in the home. The programs at The Food Project also improve academic performance amongst students. Teachers find that students are more focused in school after visiting the farms or gardens. The Food Project was also able to partner with residents to turn government-owned land into farms that provide fresh food to the community.

Challenges

One major challenge The Food Project faces is recruiting and maintaining commitment from teachers. Teachers are often limited due to demanding curriculum and testing standards. It is also challenging to incorporate food education activities and a trip to the garden within a school day. The Food Project also faced a challenge of lead contamination in the soil. They turned this into an educational program and solved the issue by using raised beds.

Hopes for the future

The Food Project has adjusted to meet the demands of local communities and it will continue to do so. It hopes its farms will become agricultural capitals within Boston. The Food Project plans to diversify their programming with the hope of reaching more community members and hopefully obtaining more funding. They have seen the demand for their programs increase and they hope that it will continue to rise.

<http://thefoodproject.org/>



The Stop Community Food Centre

Toronto, Ontario

Vision

The mission of The Stop is to increase access to healthy food in a way that maintains dignity, builds health and community, and challenges inequality. The Stop works towards sustainable solutions to food insecurity, "Everything we do is in-keeping with the goal of 'what can have a lasting impact?'" says Xuan-Yen Cao, Education Coordinator at The Stop. To enact this, one of The Stop's key tenets is that community members are involved in decision-making and participate in the operation of the organization. The Stop is neighbourhood-oriented and believes in the importance of healthy relationships sustaining the work that they do. The Stop believes that everyone plays a role in creating a healthy community.

Key activities

Founded in 1982, The Stop has grown from a food bank to a community focused organization that includes a wide variety of programs. Pre and post-natal nutrition programs, community cooking classes for adults, teacher workshops, a variety of day programs for children and youth, summer camps and after-school programs for children and high-school girls are just a few of the programs The Stop offers. The Stop works both with the Toronto Public and Catholic District School Boards to provide meaningful and practical programs for children and youth. In addition to those programs, The Stop also created a variety of programs that address issues of marginalization and poverty. *The Community Action Program (CAP)* empowers those living in poverty to challenge chronic income and food insecurity. The food bank, which distributed food to 19,090 people in 2012, the drop-in centre, which served 61,376 meals, farmers' market and good food market, the greenhouse and the urban agriculture program which includes an 8,000 sq. foot garden and a number of community gardens, including partnerships with over 41 backyards not only increase community access to fresh and healthy food, but also support sustainable farming practices. Overall, The Stop has a very hands-on approach to education; generally all the activities are interactive with both outdoor and classroom-based components.

"It's very inspiring and motivating. You don't know where these moments might take these kids; they are very contagious and infectious."

The Stop Community Food Centre

Toronto, Ontario

Successes

A major success of The Stop is its capacity to inspire other people and organizations to create change. Teachers have found inspiration in The Stop's materials and have continued to explore food issues beyond The Stop. As Xuan-Yen states, "One class made videos, one a blog. They are continuing discussions around poverty and food – the impacts of not having access to healthy food – after participating in our workshops. The relationship-building piece is so key to our successes." Another main success of The Stop is the pride that community members have in their work, "Seeing the kids having pride over baking or making their own salad with greens they harvested. Having that moment of using all your senses to engage. It's very inspiring and motivating. You don't know where these moments might take these kids; they are very contagious and infectious." says Xuan-Yen.

Challenges

Some of the challenges for The Stop include not having enough time and staff resources to meet the increasing demand for programs. The Stop receives many requests from teachers and school principals to coordinate and offer programs in their schools. Communicating and collaborating with similarly-focused organizations has helped overcome these challenges, "It's energizing to work with other people to improve on activities. Not just reading material, but brainstorming." says Xuan-Yen.

Hopes for the future

The Stop wants to continue helping children, youth and families develop their own agency around food choices while making connections to different food issues. As they continue to grow, they may be looking for off-site partnerships once their capacity is reached. Gardening on school grounds and working with community kitchens off-site are some considerations. Essentially, The Stop wants to continue using food as a tool for creating hope and dignity and empowering members of the community.

"Seeing the impact our programs have on the kids and the stories shared back with me from them, their family, or peers – that fills me with joy."



Think&EatGreen@School

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia

Vision

Think&EatGreen@School's mandate is to work towards sustainable and healthy food systems at schools. Their focus is community-based action research based on collaborations between academic and community-based researchers. They hope to increase food education in schools as well as improve access to healthy food inside schools. Think&EatGreen@School believes the consequences of the broken global food system have trickled down to local schools and classrooms.

Key activities

Think&EatGreen@School focuses on schools because children are among the most vulnerable to the negative impacts of the globalized food system. They believe that schools are important hubs to the community. They help schools in several ways including providing technical, organizational and financial support for sustainable food projects and helping create school food gardens. The most engaged schools are fortunate to have regular (some even weekly) visits from the Think&EatGreen@School's team who ensure that programs are running successfully. Key actors in the project are community-based, education and health organization partners as well as undergraduate and graduate students from University of British Columbia. They work on a variety of projects that increase food education in schools as well as help assess health and environmental impacts of schools' food systems. Think&EatGreen@School also provides an annual Summer Institute and a wide array of professional development workshops for teachers. They have also created numerous resources for teachers, policy makers and chefs.

Successes

Despite being only 2.5 years old, Think&EatGreen@School has had substantial success. Over 1,200 graduate students have worked in thirty schools to help initiate and implement community-based projects.

“Food connects everything. Children are affected by malnutrition. There are unprecedented health problems and this represents the current issues with the global food system.”

Elena Orrego

Think&EatGreen@School

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia

One project involved evaluating eating habits of over 1,000 secondary school students and creating a database of their eating patterns. This database can help better understand the reasons for food choices and help develop better strategies to introduce healthier and sustainable food into the school system. Under Think&EatGreen@School, 1,194 students gained access to local food via salad bars at schools. Over \$20,000 was awarded in grants to help schools reconnect with food. Think&EatGreen@School has involved over 100 teachers in 36 schools in the Vancouver area. In one school, the participation level increased from one teacher to 17 teachers now implementing Think&EatGreen@School projects.

Challenges

The success of Think&EatGreen@School has also created a challenge for them. Think&EatGreen@School has grown much faster than expected and now they do not have the capacity to respond to the community's enthusiasm. There is a need to increase staff but not enough resources to do so. Reaching a comfortable and successful means of communication between the university and community was a difficult process. Making their program self-sustaining and not dependent on one funding agency will be essential to the future success of Think&EatGreen@School and important plants of institutional capacity building both at UBC and school level are currently taking place.

Hopes for the future

Think&EatGreen@School plans to work towards incorporating local and sustainable food into school cafeterias as well as the curriculum. They hope that food will be produced and then consumed in the schools. They want people to recognize that schools are the centre of life and this type of programming can get students in touch with the natural world. They hope to inspire others with their success in the educational field and hope that in the future, everyone will be involved in building spaces of hope.

“Schools are centers of life and this can get students in touch with the natural world.”

Elena Orrego

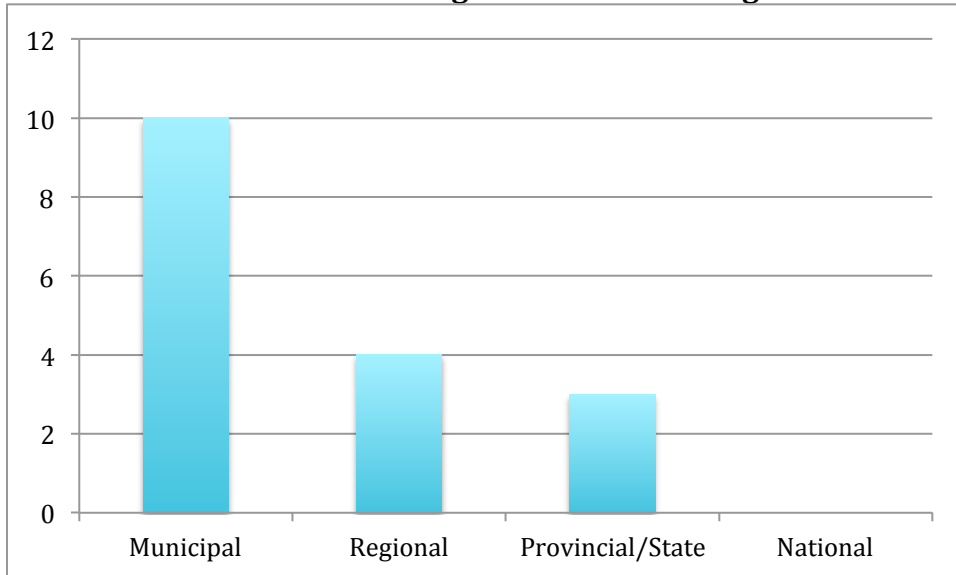
Different Ways to do Good Food Education Work

It is clear from the different case study stories that there are many different ways to do good food education work. While the organizations profiled in this report all share a basic desire to connect children and youth to good food, they put that vision into practice from a variety of perspectives and using a range of activities at various scales. This section outlines some of the general categories that the work tends to fall into.

Scale

Most of the organizations profiled are focusing their food education efforts at the municipal level, though a small number are working more broadly, at either the regional or provincial/state scale. None of the organizations are working directly at the national level; however, some organizations have expanded some specific programs across the country. For example, Toronto’s FoodShare runs an annual *Great Big Crunch* campaign that gets people from across Canada to take a synchronized bite into a healthy fruit or vegetable as a way of promoting healthy eating.

Table 1: At What Scale Are Organizations Focusing Their Work?



The Rural-Urban Spectrum

In addition to working at different scales, the organizations profiled had different geographic focuses. Seven of them operate in some combination of urban, rural and suburban settings, offering programming that crosses boundaries between farms, gardens, classrooms, and other locations. Seven organizations work exclusively in urban environments, while two work primarily in suburban communities, and just one focuses its efforts primarily on rural areas.

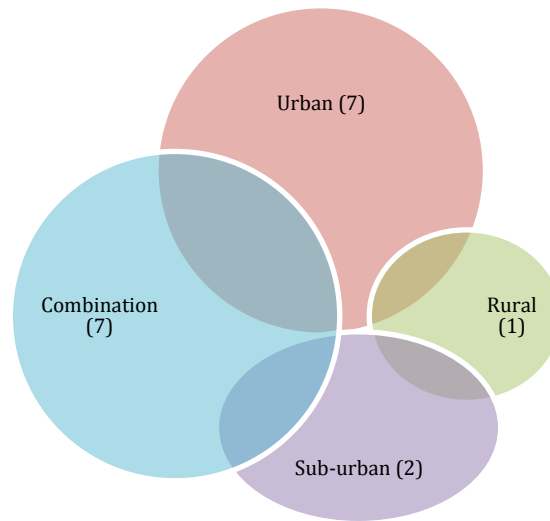
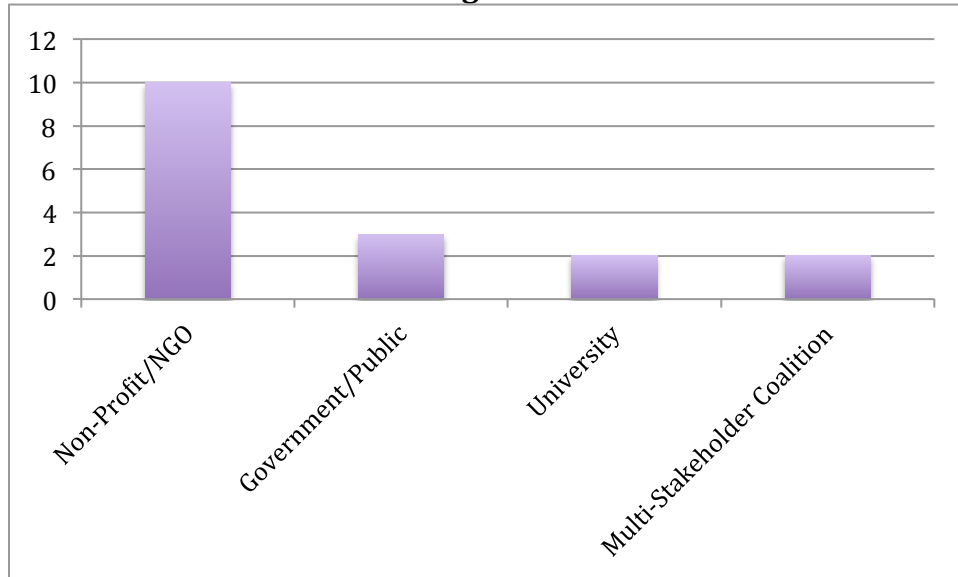


Figure 1: In What Settings Are Organizations Working?

Organizational Structure

Table 2: How Are Organizations Structured?



Based on the organizations profiled for this report, the most common form of structure is the non-profit/NGO. Other types of organizations profiled here include government/public actors (e.g. Robert Bateman High School Culinary Program) and multi-stakeholder collaborations (e.g. the Ontario Edible Education Network). There are also two profiles of university-based programs (e.g. the University of British Columbia’s Intergenerational Landed Learning on the Farm for the Environment).

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Although organizations can be categorized to some extent according to how they are structured, the cross-sectoral collaborations they cultivate and engage in – that include business, government, and non-profit actors from a variety of spheres – are an essential key to success.

Types of Activities

Most of the good food education organizations profiled in this report engage in a wide range of activities. The following chart highlights some of the most common types of activities based on our interviews, and provides a brief example of each. For more detailed information on how these types of activities are put into practice, see the case study stories above, visit the websites of the different organizations, or check out the recommended resources listed below.

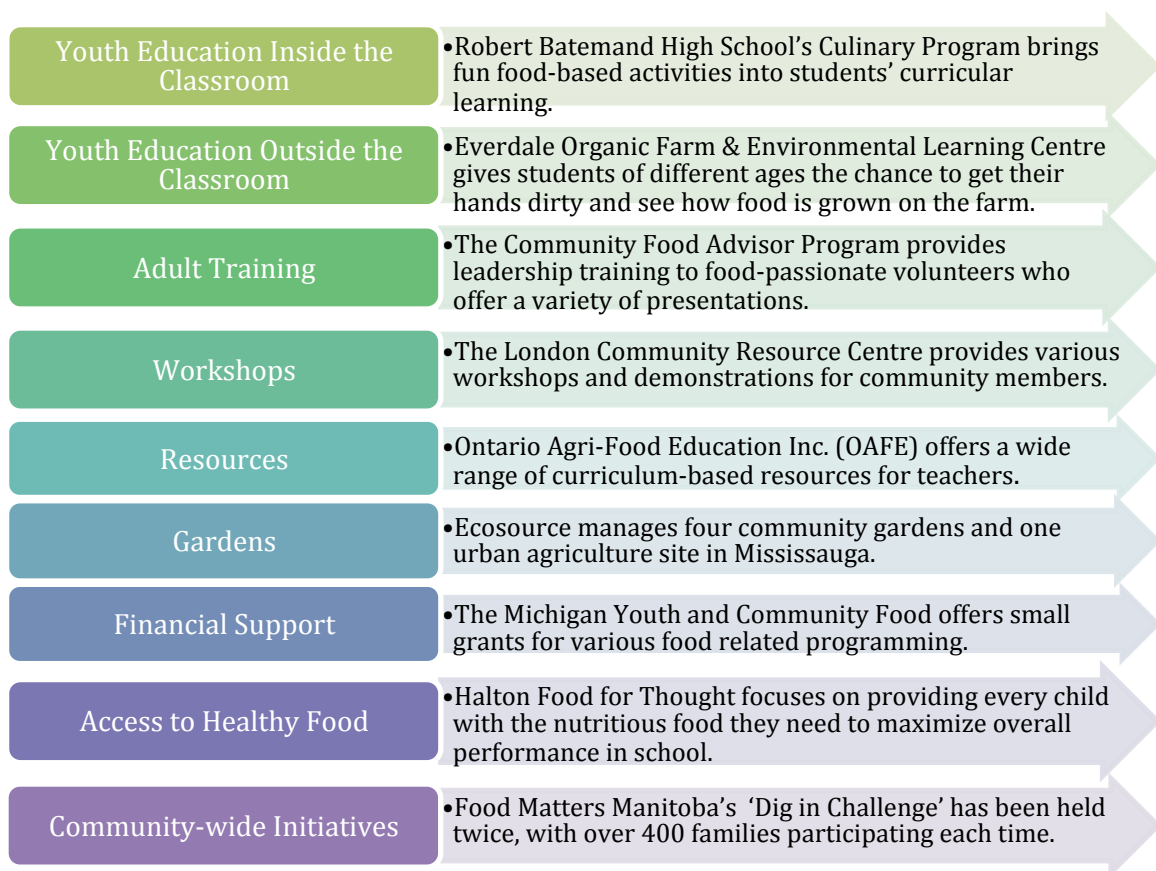


Figure 2: What Kinds of Activities Are Common Elements of Food Education?

Recommended Resources

This final section of the resource guide presents some favourite resources used by the good food education leaders who participated in this project. The list is partly based on interviews, and also includes recommendations from participants in the Say “Yes!” to Good Food Education Design Charrette, which was held at the University of Guelph in April, 2013. It is not by any means an exhaustive list of good food education resources. At the time of publication, the Ontario Edible Education Network was in the process of developing a more extensive list of recommended resources, including toolkits, websites, books, curriculum modules, and more. Hopefully some of the recommendations on this list – along with the ones collected by the OEEN – will be helpful to your good food education efforts!

Web-Based Toolkits & Curriculum Resources

- ❖ Canadian Virtual Farm Tour:
<http://www.farmissues.com/virtualTour/index.html>
- ❖ Columbia University Teachers College Centre for Food & Environment, Linking Food and the Environment Curriculum Series:
<http://blogs.tc.columbia.edu/cfe/education/nutrition-curriculum/>
- ❖ Community Food Centres Canada, Learning Modules:
<http://thepod.cfccanada.ca/learning-modules>
- ❖ The Edible Schoolyard Project: <http://edibleschoolyard.org/resources-tools>
- ❖ Evergreen, “Patterns Through the Seasons: A Year of School Garden Activities”: <http://www.evergreen.ca/en/resources/schools/curriculum.sn>
- ❖ Farm and Food Care Ontario, Resources for Teachers:
<http://www.farmfoodcare.org/farm-a-food-resources/information-for-teachers>
- ❖ FoodShare, Educator Resources: <http://www.foodshare.net/educator-resources>
- ❖ Kitchen Garden Foundation, Tools for Teachers Curriculum Resources for download: <http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/>
- ❖ Lifecycles, Resources for Teachers:
<http://lifecyclesproject.ca/resources/index.php#teachers>
- ❖ Michigan Youth Farm Stands Toolkit:
<http://miyouthandfood.msu.edu/pdfs/YFS%20Project%20Tool%20Kit%202009.pdf>

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- ❖ Nourish Teacher Resource Binder (*For Sale*):
<http://www.nourishlife.org/nourish-teacher-resource-binder/>
- ❖ Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc., Teacher Resources:
<http://www.oafe.org/Default.aspx?tabid=116>
- ❖ Seeds for Change, Educator’s Corner (*registration free, but required*):
<http://seedsforchange.org/index.php/educators-corner>
- ❖ Shelburne Farms, “Project Seasons: Hands on Activities for Discovering the Wonders of the World”:
http://store.shelburnefarms.org/product/179/education_resources

Books

- ❖ *Digging Deeper: Integrating Youth Gardens into Schools and Communities* by Joseph Kiefer, Martin Kemple, with illustrations by Robin Wim biscus
- ❖ *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* by Peter Menzel and Faith D’Aluisio
- ❖ *The Jumbo Book of Gardening* by Karen Morris, with illustrations by Jane Kurisu
- ❖ *The Jumbo Cookbook* by Judi Gillies and Jennifer Glossop, with illustrations by Louise Phillips
- ❖ *Kitchen Garden Cooking with Kids* by Stephanie Alexander. Available for purchase at <http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au>
- ❖ *Project Seasons* by Deborah Parrella
- ❖ *Worms Eat our Garbage: Classroom Activities for a Better Environment* by Mary Appelhof

Other Websites of Interest

- ❖ EatTracker: <http://www.eatracker.ca>
- ❖ Growing Power: <http://www.growingpower.org>
- ❖ Nourishing Ontario: <http://nourishingontario.ca/>
- ❖ Nutrition Resource Centre: <http://www.nutritionrc.ca>

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- ❖ OMAF & MRA – University of Guelph Partnership Knowledge Transfer and Translation: http://www.uoguelph.ca/omafra_partnership/ktt/en/index.asp
- ❖ Ontario Farmland Trust: <http://www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/>