



# Community Collaboration Offers Fresh Produce & Kids Eat It Up!



## Summary

In 2023, partners came together for a second year to increase better access to produce and farm-to-school activities for Kingston City School District students as part of the Creating Health Schools and Communities Grant Project.

What veggie is prone to getting dizzy?

**Spin-ach!**

CHILDREN SHOULD EAT 2-3 CUPS VEGETABLES AND 2 CUPS FRUIT A DAY



## The Challenge

Current findings from the USDA suggest most children throughout the U.S. eat only one cup of fruit and one cup of vegetables a day. Additionally, more than half of all students within the Kingston City School District qualify for free school meals, signifying a lack of access to fresh produce.

## The Results

Last school year, the USDA-funded Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program reached about 60 students in one school. This year it reached over 1100 students in three schools, a programmatic growth of nearly 2000%.

Over 100 different fruits and vegetables have been served.

Many teachers and parents anecdotally report that students are eating previously disliked fruits and vegetables.

Rondout Valley Growers Association has agreed to sign on as a vendor for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to provide locally grown produce and farming/nutrition education to the students once a month.

STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN THE FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PROGRAM **eat 1/3 cup more produce daily**

“ She asks for blueberries to be packed for lunch ” when previously she didn’t eat much fruit at all.



- Parent, Kingston City School District



## The Approach

During the 2022-2023 school year, three schools received training, technical assistance, and resources to increase access to healthy food outside the school meal program.

Building on a successful pilot year, the Kingston City School District food service expanded the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to two more schools with advocacy and coordination from building wellness committees.

The Rondout Valley Growers Association, a local farm coalition, provided locally grown spinach for the first annual “spinach fest” after-school event at John F. Kennedy Elementary School that celebrated May’s vegetable of the month with various spinach tastings, gardening, face painting, and more!

1ST ANNUAL  
SPINACH FEST

**65**

ATTENDEES

**10 lbs**

OF SPINACH USED

**100**

SAMPLES TASTED

## What’s Next?

The vegetable of the month will be promoted in other schools through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program with locally grown produce and education provided by the Rondout Valley Growers Association’s farm-to-school coordinator.

Once established, the hope is to utilize RVGA to procure locally-grown food for school meals.

To learn more about our work visit:

[www.kingston-ny.gov/health-and-wellness/chsc](http://www.kingston-ny.gov/health-and-wellness/chsc)

Email Kristin Kessler at: [kkessler@kingston-ny.gov](mailto:kkessler@kingston-ny.gov)



**Creating Healthy Schools  
and Communities**

This work was supported by Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year (2021-2026) New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) funded initiative, helping to build stronger, healthier communities.

Partners included:  
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, Rondout Valley Growers Association, Kingston City School District Foodservice, Land to Learn, school staff, and students.

