



# Denver Public Schools

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

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## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **DPS Food and Nutrition Services Celebrates Colorado Proud School Meal Day**

### ***Schools Stress Importance of School Gardens, cooking classes and nutritious school meals***

**Denver, CO** – Denver Public Schools (DPS) today is celebrating local Colorado farmers by highlighting Colorado products on the school menu as part of Colorado Proud School Meal Day, as proclaimed by Governor Bill Ritter. DPS is promoting Colorado agriculture by purchasing Colorado squash from Millberger Farms in Pueblo, melon from L & M Farms in Rocky Ford, peaches from Palisade, grass-fed beef from Ranch Foods Direct in Colorado Springs, green chili sauce and beans processed at Ready Foods in Denver, tortillas from Mission Foods in Aurora, and milk from Sinton Dairy for the school lunch menu today.

Denver Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services Department is committed to serving Colorado products when they are in season. Last year, DPS Food and Nutrition Services made a commitment to purchasing local produce with help from Andrews, their Pueblo-based produce supplier. To educate students about agriculture, DPS Food and Nutrition Services Department is sending the Colorado Reader newspaper to elementary school students at schools across DPS, featuring school garden and Colorado produce on the school salad bars, and coordinating dairy farmer presentations in the classroom through the Western Dairy Association.

Also at select DPS schools (Barnum, Bradley, Bromwell, Brown, Centennial, Eagleton, Edison, Ellis, Fairmont, Fairview, Hallett, Lincoln, Lowry, McGlone, Munroe, Park Hill, Polaris at Ebert, Slavens, Steele) community partners Slow Food Denver, Denver Urban Gardens, and the Integrated Nutrition Education Program will lead students in school garden tours and preparation of healthy recipes utilizing school garden produce or Colorado grown produce after the

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garden tours. Some of these schools will have cooking demos by local chefs in the cafeteria, while others will feature hands-on cooking demos after the garden tours.

At Centennial K-8 School, John R. Stulp, Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture, will be speaking to students about Colorado products and his farming experiences, Jacob Howes will talk about the Rocky Ford cantaloupe he grew for lunch, and a garden tour by Catia Chavez of the Integrated Nutrition Education Program (INEP) and Centennial parents, will connect them to a bountiful garden in their own backyard. In addition, an innovative program promoting fruits and vegetables in the classroom (INEP), the school cafeteria (SuperFoods), in the school community (Parent Advocates for Nutrition), and via community radio (KGNU Radio) will be highlighted. This collaboration is supported by the Colorado Health Foundation and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Leo Lesh, Director of DPS Food and Nutrition Services, acknowledges the importance of programs such as school gardens, cooking classes and nutritious school meals that expose children to healthy eating habits. "We believe in educating the whole child. It is important to know where your food comes from and how to make healthy choices each day," said Leo Lesh. "Better nutrition equals better students."

This is why DPS partnered with organizations such as Slow Food, Denver Urban Gardens, LiveWell Westwood and the Integrated Nutrition Education Program have developed experiential learning programs for students to experience firsthand how food is grown, and how healthy food fuels healthy bodies for good academic performance. National efforts like School Food FOCUS are bringing attention in this state to Colorado farmers and ranchers that produce food items that provide the nutrients children and adults need to thrive. Agribusinesses contribute nearly \$16 billion to the state economy annually and provide more than 105,000 jobs. With more than 36,000 farms and ranches encompassing 31 million acres, it is easy to understand the value this industry adds to Colorado (from [www.colorado.gov/ag](http://www.colorado.gov/ag)).

Colorado Proud School Meal Day is sponsored by Colorado Proud, a program to promote local foods through the Colorado Department of Agriculture ([www.coloradoproud.org](http://www.coloradoproud.org)).

For more information, please contact Anne Wilson, with DPS's Food and Nutrition Services Department, at 720-423-5608 or Wendy White, with the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Colorado Proud program, at 303-239-4119.