



When kids eat better, they learn better, act better and feel better

WE GROW GOOD EATERS!

PROJECT IMPACT: COMMON THREADS PROGRAM EVALUATION

During the winter/spring of 2019, Common Threads evaluated our school-based gardening and cooking programs. We wanted to know: What kind and quality of impact are we having on students? What aspects of our program are causing this impact? Visit our website for the whole report.

KEY FEATURES OF OUR PROGRAMS



METHODOLOGY OF OUR EVALUATION

Quantitative: 97 teachers (out of a total of 297) responded to an online survey



Qualitative: 18 2nd and 5th grade teachers from a sampling of four representative elementary schools were interviewed



INTENDED IMPACT OF OUR PROGRAMS

- Kids can grow, prepare and recognize healthy food. Kids can plant and care for vegetables in the garden, use common kitchen tools, and follow simple recipes.
- Kids have a joyful, positive, and nourishing relationship with food. Kids have positive exposures to and excitement about new healthy foods.
- Kids develop nutritional literacy. Kids recognize healthy food (in particular vegetables), know what makes something healthy or not healthy, and understand how different food choices make their bodies feel
- Kids feel capable to make healthy choices. Kids believe they have agency in making healthy food choices. Hands-on food education increases their sense of joy and competence as learners.

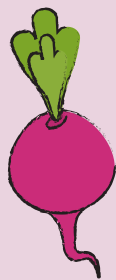
LIMITATIONS OF OUR EVALUATION

- Teachers perspectives are limited to what they observe in their classroom (vs. at home or in the cafeteria)
- We interviewed a sample of teachers: not every grade and not every school

FINDINGS OF OUR EVALUATION

1 KIDS ARE BECOMING MORE OPEN TO TRYING NEW AND HEALTHY FOODS

99% of teachers noticed an increase in students' sense of excitement and adventure when trying new healthy foods



2 KIDS AND TEACHERS FIND COOKING AND GARDENING LESSONS TO BE JOYFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

"You might expect me to say, 'I wish this matched my curriculum better' - but honestly, I just want them to get outside. I want them to try something new and feel brave about that. I want them to get their toes wet and have fun doing it with someone who really cares."

3 STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLE IN TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS "SHOW UP" IN NEW AND POSITIVE WAYS WHILE GARDENING AND COOKING



4 KIDS PRACTICE AND DEVELOP COOPERATION AND TEAMWORK IN COOKING AND GARDENING LESSONS



5 STUDENTS LEARN VALUABLE, CONCRETE LIFE SKILLS - PARTICULARLY WHILE COOKING

Over 97% of teachers reported that kids improved their cooking and gardening know-how



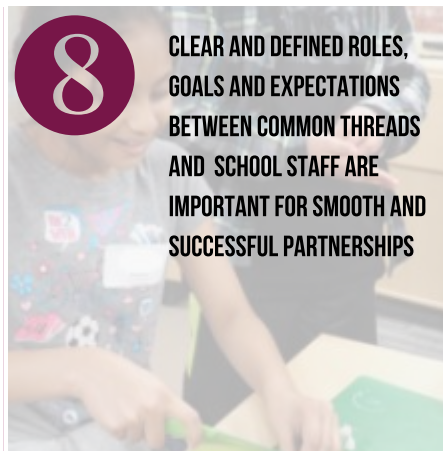
6 OUR SUCCESS DEPENDS ON AMERICORPS FOOD EDUCATORS, WHO BRING PASSION, ENTHUSIASM, AND DEDICATION

"You could give these kids the greatest lesson in the world, and they would not engage in it if they didn't have a connection to their Food Educator first. That has made all the difference."

7 STUDENTS BRING NEW-FOUND KNOWLEDGE AND ENTHUSIASM FOR HEALTHY FOOD HOME, AND INSPIRE THEIR FAMILIES

"I have a student who has huge issues and the mom is hard to engage with. But the big thing she wanted to talk about during conferences was, her daughter wants to write a letter to be sure the garden is saved when the new school is built"

8 CLEAR AND DEFINED ROLES, GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS BETWEEN COMMON THREADS AND SCHOOL STAFF ARE IMPORTANT FOR SMOOTH AND SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS



9 OUR PROGRAMS ARE MOST HIGHLY VALUED AT SCHOOLS WITH A HIGHER POVERTY STUDENT POPULATION



72.9% of teachers at Title 1 schools reported that they saw students who struggle academically shine in the garden "quite a bit" or "very much" compared with only 37.8% at more affluent schools.

NOW WHAT? NEXT STEPS

- Analyze services and fee structures through an equity lens
- Continuously seek opportunities to improve communications...
- Support Food Educators and volunteers with excellent training
- Explicitly highlight the multi-pronged impact of our programs (food education, socio-emotional learning, academic support, community building)

10 PRIMING THE PUMP

We open kids' hearts and minds to healthy food through experiences. Our partners and Families still need to tackle financial and geographic barriers to healthy food access.

