

PRIORITIZING FOOD EDUCATION IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

ONE-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT



NYC
Eric Adams
Mayor

One-Year Reflection

In June 2023, the [Mayor's Office of Food Policy](#) (MOFP), in collaboration with [New York City Public Schools](#) (NYCPS), released New York City's [Food Education Roadmap](#). This guide outlines the administration's vision to expand food education across all New York City public schools, focusing on three core objectives:

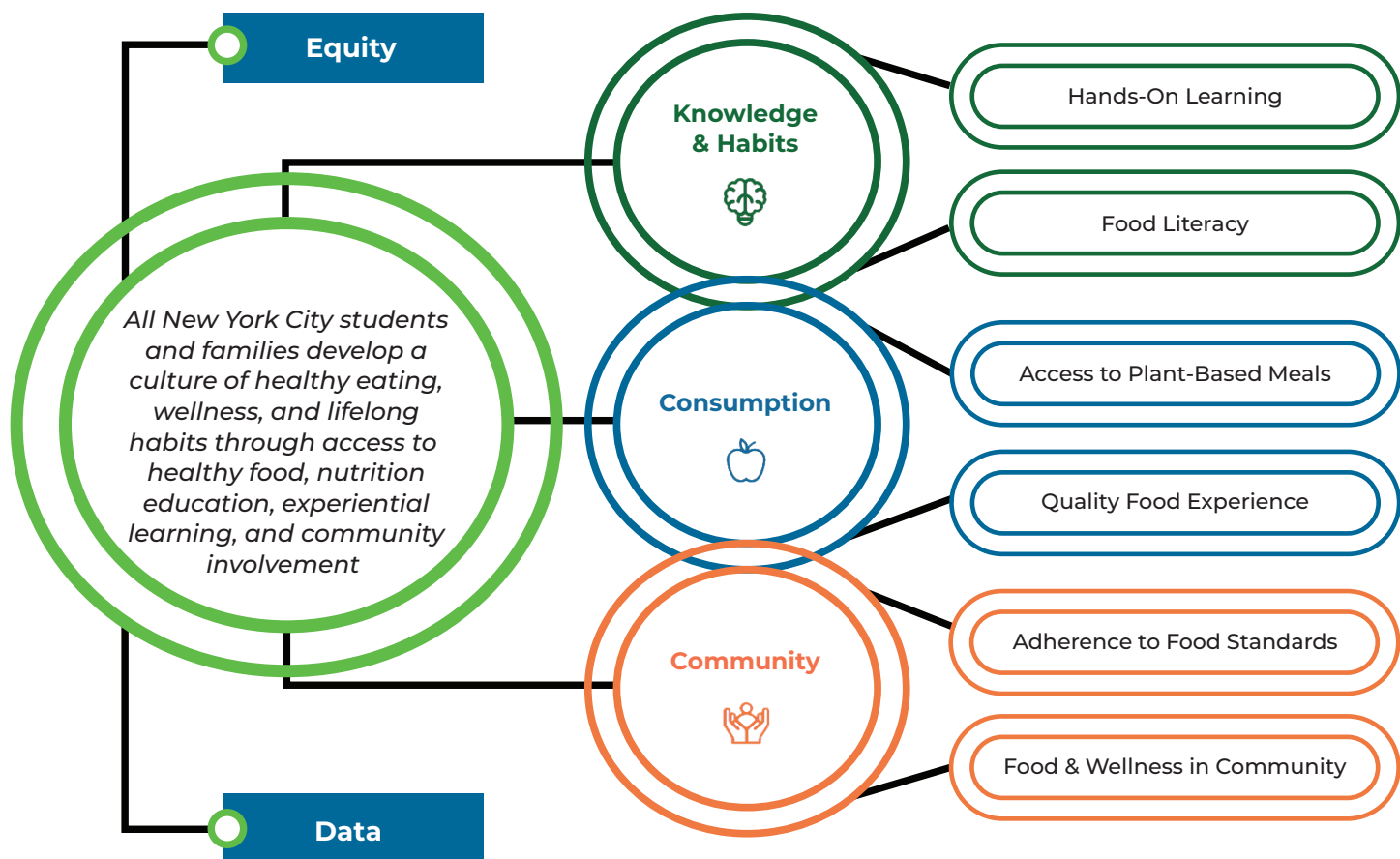
- 1. Students build knowledge and habits about healthy eating and wellness.**
- 2. Students have access to and consume healthy food in schools that meets their needs.**
- 3. The community (food service workers, educators, staff, and families) has the knowledge and resources to be advocates for healthy habits and wellness.**

Over the past year, significant progress has been made towards achieving these goals. In July 2023, NYCPS established its first-ever Food and Climate Education team within the Division of Curriculum and Instruction. This strategic placement aims to foster more coherence across core subject areas, allowing food education to permeate math, science, social studies, civics, English, and the arts. To that end, NYCPS staff are developing instructional resources to help support teachers with infusing food education-related content in their classrooms.

This team works closely with MOFP, the [Office of Food and Nutrition Services](#) (OFNS), and the [Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education and Policy](#) to advance the goals set in the Roadmap. Through these collaborations, NYCPS has expanded food education programming in schools through its Food Education Grant Program, increased plant-forward meal offerings on school menus, provided a wide array of food education-related professional learning opportunities for educators across the school system, and made progress towards developing citywide food educational standards.

These achievements would not be possible without the tireless efforts of our partner nonprofit organizations, advocates, superintendents, school administrators, and educators working on the ground, as well as the curiosity and enthusiasm of our students. Together, we will achieve the culture of healthy eating, wellness, and lifelong habits that we all envision across our school communities.





GOAL 1

Students build knowledge and habits about healthy eating and wellness.



60%¹

Schools that offered food education programming



1000+

Educators that participated in food education professional learning sessions



54

Nonprofit partners on NYCPS's Food Education Service Providers Airtable

NYCPS'S FIRST-EVER FOOD EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM

New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) awarded \$660,000 in grants for 60 elementary and middle schools to partner with more than 25 food education nonprofit organizations. This supported a variety of programming, including food education lessons, cooking, gardening, and family workshops. On June 11th, 2024, the staff and leadership from all 60 grant schools, partner organizations, and community members joined together for the Food Education Grant Showcase and Celebration, where 10 schools and partner organizations showcased their projects and shared best practices. This program will expand to more schools in the 2024-25 school year.

¹ This figure, obtained from a survey completed by 51% of New York City public schools, represents the percentage of schools that offered any food education programming during the 2022-23 school year. In future years, classroom-level data could provide better insights into the number of students reached.

Making the Food-Climate Connection

The food system is a key lever to combat climate change. So, to kick off Climate Month, NYCPS obtained permission from the producers of three powerful climate and environment documentaries to distribute their films to more than 1,100 New York City public school teachers, free of charge. Teachers were encouraged to screen these films—[Eating Our Way to Extinction](#), [Feeding Tomorrow](#), and [The Smell of Money](#)—in their classrooms.

Did You Know?

Food systems are responsible for 1/3 of total GHG emissions?



Organization Spotlight

Through interactive high school lessons, [New Roots Institute](#) demonstrates the breadth and complexity of food systems. Their lessons highlight the connections between industrial animal agriculture and its effects on climate change, animal welfare, social justice, food accessibility, and personal and public health. In the 2023-24 school year, New Roots reached 3,467 students across 32 New York City high schools, inspiring students to view our food system through a new lens. Additionally, New Roots offers an immersive year-long [Leadership Program](#) in which fellows build the knowledge and skills to be advocates for a just food system.

Student Spotlight

As the Student Government President and “Mayor of P.S. Q993,” ninth-grader Kevin Ayala Miranda champions increased access to healthy, fresh food in his school community. Partnering with [Green Bronx Machine](#) (GBM), he developed a year-round indoor gardening program and, within six weeks, Kevin and school staff remodeled the facility to build a garden and café. Kevin and his classmates now run a business, complete with QR codes, serving smoothies, salads, and healthy entrées daily. This café is the epicenter of culture and community for the entire campus, with students rotating through all roles, eating together, and hosting celebrity events.

Kevin’s success inspired GBM to expand this model to other schools serving students with specialized needs within District 75 (D75). Together, P.S. Q993’s Principal Lonshein, the United Federation of Teachers, staff at new sites, and GBM continue to ribbon-cut facilities that provide state-of-the-art and inclusive opportunities for our most vulnerable learners. Known as “The Miracle in the Bronx,” GBM creates cost-efficient, innovative, and replicable opportunities for students across New York City and nationally that place health and wellness at the heart of whole-school, data-driven instruction. Ultimately, Kevin’s efforts earned him recognition from Chancellor Banks and Mayor Adams and sparked a movement across D75, promoting healthy living, learning, and community engagement with support from educators and donors citywide.



GOAL 2

Students have access to and consume healthy food in schools that meets their needs.

 **1700+**

Students who
taste-tested new
recipes

 **15+**

New plant-based
recipes developed
and menued

 **542**

Schools that
completed WITS
culinary training

 **\$150M**

Secured in capital
funding to expand
CEE

 **100%**

Halal kitchen
requests completed

Chefs in the Schools

[Chefs in the Schools](#) is a menu development and chef training initiative in partnership with [Wellness in the Schools](#) (WITS) and OFNS. The program began with New York City's first-ever Chefs Council, developing over 100 scratch-cooked, plant-forward recipes. During the 2023-24 school year, school menus featured eight of the Council's recipes, including Joloff Cauliflower, Kachumber Salad, Pineapple Rice Medley, Roasted Adobo Chickpeas, and Sofrito Rice. Thirteen new recipes will be featured on school menus beginning in fall 2024.

Now, in the second year of the initiative, WITS Chefs are providing extensive training to OFNS cooks in cafeterias across the city, teaching staff how to prepare the new recipes while improving their culinary skills. Simultaneously, elected OFNS "Cook Ambassadors" from each school district will participate in further professional development before mentoring their peers. In the last school year, 542 schools received the WITS training, and the program will reach all New York City public schools by the end of the 2024-25 school year.



CEE Expansion

In the past year, 88 additional school cafeterias have undergone Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE) renovations, transforming them into more welcoming and inviting spaces for students. By implementing a self-service model with healthier options placed at eye level across multiple display counters, these renovations have reduced waiting times and expanded the variety of hot and cold options served daily. \$150 million has been secured in capital funding to expand CEE to additional schools in the next five years.

Organization Spotlight

Brighter Bites is a nonprofit organization that provides produce distributions and nutrition education to Title I elementary schools. In the 2023-24 school year, Brighter Bites partnered with 17 New York City public schools, saw 6,689 families enroll in their program, taught 3,904 nutrition education lessons and distributed 47,739 bags, totaling to 867,327 pounds of produce, that went directly into families' hands. With the Food Education Grant, they were able to partner with an additional four schools to provide 10,683 pounds of produce and multiple parent and teacher workshops.





GOAL 3

The community (food service workers, educators, staff, and families) has the knowledge and resources to be advocates for healthy habits and wellness.



2700+
OFNS staff
impacted by
Chefs in the Schools



25
Staff on the
Food Education
Leadership Team



36%³
Schools that had
a garden



38%⁴
Schools that had
an active School
Wellness Council

³ This figure, obtained from a survey completed by 51% of New York City public schools, represents the percentage of schools that had a garden during the 2022-23 school year.

⁴ This figure, obtained from a survey completed by 51% of New York City public schools, represents the percentage of schools that had an active School Wellness Council during the 2022-23 school year.

Teacher Training and Curriculum Development

In March 2024, NYCPS launched its [Food and Climate Education Professional Learning Catalog](#), which has provided nearly 30 professional learning opportunities from the [Tisch Food Center](#), [Pilot Light](#), [Edible Schoolyard NYC](#), and others to 3K - 12 teachers.

Also launched in March 2024, the Food Education Leader Team (FELT) brings together 25 Pre-K-12 educators and administrators across all five boroughs and from many subjects, including health, math, science, social studies, and physical education. FELT harnesses their expertise and passion to integrate food education into school curricula through five working groups: the Middle Grades Curriculum Integration Team, the Elementary Food Experience Team, the Health Curriculum Team, the High School Curriculum Integration Team, and the Library Specialist Team.

School Spotlight



In addition to being one of four schools in New York City with a fully vegetarian menu, P.S. 971, or the School of Math, Science, and Healthy Living, promotes both human and planetary health in the cafeteria. Each day, custodians Joe Rotolo and Jose Tavares weigh the food waste bins, and Principal Ruth Stanislaus calculates the food waste by subtracting the weight of the trays and utensils. During the morning announcements, Principal Stanislaus shares the previous day's waste by each grade level, fostering healthy competition among students to reduce their food waste.

This healthy competition is also used to boost meal participation. For example, P.S. 971 awards the coveted "Food Champions" title to the grade that takes the most trays each month. The winning grade earns a miniature "Food Champions Belt" for their classrooms and a "celebrity" photograph that is featured on the Champions Display Shelf alongside the real Food Champions Belt. Many community members are involved in this initiative, including Kitchen Cook Mr. Vinnie Farrauto, Parent Coordinator Mr. Yusef Abdullah, and P.S. 971's Food Education Liaisons, Shelly Lekhraj and Albert Shao.

**"As a sustainable school, we pride ourselves on monitoring our food waste and learning about ways to give back to the earth."
- Dr. Ruth Stanislaus**

A photograph of three young children of African descent working in a garden. They are wearing light green t-shirts with the words 'GO GREEN' printed on them. The child in the foreground is wearing a colorful plaid shirt underneath. They are all wearing yellow gardening gloves and are focused on planting or tending to small yellow flowers in a raised garden bed. Bamboo stakes are placed in the soil. In the background, there are hanging planters with orange flowers.

ERIC ADAMS
MAYOR

KATE MACKENZIE, MS, RD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE OF FOOD POLICY

NYC
Food Policy



NYC **Public Schools**
Eric Adams Mayor
David C. Banks Chancellor

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS: New York City Public Schools, Wellness in the Schools, Green Bronx Machine