



News Release

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Thirty-two Michigan Districts Receive Grants to Bring More Local Produce to School Cafeterias

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LANSING – Thirty-two school districts statewide will receive additional 10 cents per meal in 2017 to purchase locally-grown produce, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) announced today.

The grant awards in the effective program – 10 Cents a Meal for School Kids & Farms – are spread throughout three regions and 29 counties of Michigan Prosperity Regions 2, 4 and 9 in northwest, west and southeast Michigan.

“I’m very pleased that the state Legislature expanded program funding and reach,” State Superintendent Brian Whiston said. “This program is a true win-win because it provides fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables to schoolchildren, while investing in state agriculture.”

Legislators expanded the pilot program, now in its second year, from \$250,000 in state seed funding to \$375,000 for the upcoming school year and added a third region to last year’s two regions.

“Based on the successful outcomes of this local partnership initiative in last year’s budget, I decided to expand this program offering to Prosperity Region 9 as well,” said state Sen. Geoff Hansen, R-Hart, who chairs the Appropriations Committee’s K-12, School Aid, Education Subcommittee. “The 10 Cents a Meal program is helping expose children to locally-grown produce options in the school setting and is creating partnerships between school districts and their local agricultural producers.

“It is my expectation that we will eclipse the successful results of the past year and strengthen student knowledge, preference, selection, and consumption of healthy, locally-grown food,” Hansen added.

In its first year, the farm-to-school program generated sales of about 50 products from 86 farms in 28 counties and 16 additional businesses such as processors and distributors, according to MDE.

This year's 32 grant-receiving districts have served 95,000 students, compared to 48,000 students served last year by the 16 grant recipients. Food service directors named 30 new foods that they tried in meals last year.

Matt McCauley, chief operating officer of Networks Northwest, the Prosperity Region 2 office, was involved in assisting MDE in the program's first year. His 10-county region also is where 10 Cents a Meal started three years earlier as a local pilot project inspired by the Michigan Good Food Charter and coordinated by the Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities.

"This program has the potential to touch a lot of people's lives in many ways," McCauley said. "It addresses a variety of different issues, including education, agriculture, nutrition, and logistics – pieces that are important to every community, urban and rural, in Michigan. There aren't many policy areas out there with that kind of potential."

Steven Duke, executive director of the Region 2 Planning Commission in Jackson, which is the office for the newly participating six-county Prosperity Region 9, said the program "ties together two critical economic assets in Region 9: our existing agricultural assets and workforce, and the workforce of tomorrow -- our school children."

He added, "We've watched as this program was successfully implemented in other Michigan regions, and we are excited about the opportunity to bring fresh, nutritious, Michigan-grown fruits and vegetables to our school kids. Exposing kids to the variety of fruits and vegetables grown here will help build a foundation for a healthier lifestyle."

State Rep. Adam Zemke, D-Ann Arbor, who represents communities with school districts in Region 9, also praised the expansion.

"The economic impact of local agriculture production is critical to a prosperous Michigan, and the best way to sustainably ensure this is to reach our future where they are learning," Zemke said. "This is the essence behind the 10 Cents a Meal program: it helps schools and local farms to partner together to not only put locally-produced items in the mouths of young Michiganders, but in their minds too."

Here are this year's 10 Cents a Meal grants by Prosperity Region:

Prosperity Region 2:

- 14 grant-winning districts in seven counties in a 10-county region
- 22,567 students
- Districts are: Alanson Public Schools, Bear Lake Schools, Benzie County Central Schools, Boyne Falls Public School District, East Jordan Public Schools, Frankfort-Elberta Area Schools, Glen Lake Community Schools, Harbor Springs School District, Kaleva Norman Dickson School District, Manton Consolidated Schools, Onkama Consolidated Schools, Pellston Public Schools, Public Schools of Petoskey, Traverse City Area Public Schools
- Counties are: Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Manistee, Wexford

Prosperity Region 4:

- 11 grant-winning school districts in seven counties in a 13-county region
- 28,956 students
- Districts are: Belding Area School District, Coopersville Area Public School District, Grand Haven Area Public Schools, Hart Public School District, Holland City School District, Lowell Area Schools, Montague Area Public Schools, Saugatuck Public Schools, Shelby Public Schools, Thornapple Kellogg School District, Whitehall District Schools
- Counties are: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Muskegon, Oceana, Ottawa

Prosperity Region 9:

- Seven grant-winning school districts in four counties of a six-county region
- 43,370 students
- Districts are: Ann Arbor Public Schools, Bedford Public Schools, Dexter Community School District, Hillsdale Community Schools, Jackson Public Schools, Monroe Public Schools, Ypsilanti Community Schools
- Counties are: Hillsdale, Jackson, Monroe, Washtenaw

A total of 78 school districts applied, with funding enough for 32.

The MDE's 10 Cents a Meal report, which includes quotes, stories, and resources that can help schools successfully apply for and use grant funding, is available at <http://www.tencentsmichigan.org/>.

A map of Michigan's Prosperity Regions can be found here: http://www.michiganworks.org/files/resources/Prosperity_Map1_430346_7.pdf

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