



ROOTED IN EXCELLENCE

Valley School District

Valley School District receives recognition for excellence in marketing and promoting its school meal program. The district sends nutrition-related activities home for families and students to complete together, actively engages students in marketing efforts, and regularly shares updates through its Valley Voice newsletter.

Valley School District also hosts multiple Farm to School events and highlights local foods on its menus. More recently, staff added a menu suggestion box to the service line, and students have enthusiastically shared their ideas.

"My staff and I are always wanting to engage students and love to hear their opinions on the food we serve."

Leah Harp
Food & Nutrition Director

Valley Voice

June 2025 | 8



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PLANTS Grant Supports School Meals Using Healthy Whole Foods

VSD Food & Nutrition Director Leah Harp is continuing her training to develop healthy bulk scratch cooking recipes, utilizing and promoting locally grown food sources.

This work is part of the three-year USDA PLANTS Sub-Grant (Partnerships for Local Agriculture and Nutrition Transformation in Schools) program serviced by the Chef Ann Foundation, and funded by the USDA's Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative. Valley School District is one of eight entities in the U.S. awarded this unique improvement opportunity.

The grant project pairs farmers and food producers with school nutrition teams to reduce

dependence on expensive prepackaged, processed foods in school meals.

Guided by ESD 101 project coordinators, Leah's training includes a series of Chef Ann Foundation culinary courses focused on developing local program mission and values, food finance, strategic menu planning and nutrition education.

A new salad bar option for students is one recent benefit of the PLANTS Sub-Grant, which has opened other funding opportunities.

Next school year, the kitchen will be using an economical bulk milk dispenser to reduce waste. Purchase of the machine is made

possible by a grant received from the Washington State Dairy Council. ♦



Students Dig 'Meet Your Farmer Day'

A highlight of Meet Your Farmer Day at Valley School in April was the debut of school food services' newly developed lunch entrée, the Big Mac Wrap, combining fresh vegetables, locally made tortillas from De Leon Foods in Spokane, and pasture-raised beef from Ramstead Ranch in Lone.

The event, part of the ESD 101 Farm to School initiative, featured Ramstead Ranch farmer Eileen demonstrating the importance



of soil regeneration for producing nutrient-packed food.

Additionally, students got to vote on the flavor of the Big Mac Wrap and overwhelmingly approved it as delicious, so it will likely be served again.

Students selected activity sheets and stickers with agricultural and nutrition information to encourage their healthy living and eating habits in a fun way. ♦

Valley Voice Newsletter

Rooted in Excellence is funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds.
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