

Title: Growing Healthy

Principal Investigator: Virginia Chomitz, Ph.D.

Award: In December 2002, ICH was awarded the Growing Healthy grant. The purpose of the grant is to increase student consumption of fruits and vegetables by improving access to, attitudes towards, acceptance of, and knowledge about fruits and vegetables.

Background: Growing Healthy is a collaborative effort between the ICH, the Cambridge and Somerville public elementary schools, Cambridge and Somerville food service departments, City Sprouts and Groundwork Somerville. The intervention will take place over the next two years in a total of 8 elementary schools throughout Cambridge and Somerville. The food service changes and enhancements will occur at all eight schools and will impact all children who choose to participate in the school lunch program. School gardens will be developed and maintained at all 8 schools and students will be invited to participate in the following garden related activities on a first-come first-serve basis:

- After school garden programs
- Lunch time garden clubs
- Menu advisory boards
- Middle school gardening electives
- Summer gardening camps

In addition, Growing Healthy will host a series of interactive events at the intervention schools. All students will be invited to attend events such as:

- Visiting chef events
- Taste-test festivals
- Family breakfasts
- Harvest Festivals

The time line is as follows:

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| Spring 2003 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baseline data collection• Food service staff training |
| Summer 2003 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gardening at 3 Cambridge & 2 Somerville schools• Gardening at 3 Cambridge & 2 Somerville schools• Planning/Development of additional 2 Cambridge & 1 Somerville garden |
| Fall/Winter 2003-2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food service changes/enhancement• Gardening at all 8 intervention schools• Interactive events sporadically throughout the school year |
| Spring 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow-up data collection• Continuation of food service and gardening components |
| Summer/Fall 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on sustainability of Growing Healthy in intervention schools• Efforts to expand Growing Healthy to additional Cambridge and Somerville schools |

Goals: Research clearly demonstrates the benefits of consuming a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. Currently, fewer than 15% of children consume the recommended 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

Growing Healthy will utilize existing evidence-based models in order to develop a successful fruit and vegetable intervention. Around the country, many communities are bringing school gardens and menu changes into their school systems in order to increase the fruit and vegetable consumption of their children. Results from programs similar to Growing Healthy are extremely promising. For example, evidence shows that when a child picks a tomato, slices a carrot or participates in cooking a meal rich in fruits and vegetables, that child is much more likely to eat these foods than a child who has had nothing to do with their preparation.

Intervention Schools:

Cambridge

- Harrington
- Haggerty
- Fitzgerald
- Additional 2 schools to be recruited

Somerville

- Lincoln Park
- Powder House
- East Somerville

Methods: Student consumption of, acceptance of, knowledge about and attitudes towards fruits and vegetables will be measured at baseline during the spring of 2003 and again at follow up during the spring of 2004. This pre and posttest will involve all 4th through 8th graders at intervention schools, and 4th through 8th graders at two control schools. The pre and posttest should take between 20 and 30 minutes each.