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Primrose Elementary ? a Gold Eco School!

Primrose Elementary in the Upper Grand District School Board, is without a doubt, a local food champion. They are a Gold Eco School in a rural and agricultural area, so the links between food and the environment are embedded in their thinking, locally produced food all the more so. Primrose also boasts an incredible School Council Secretary, Jennifer Payne, who has coordinated the farm to school efforts (Jennifer jokes that her interest is cross-pollination as she is also Co-Chair of the Education, Literacy and Access working group of the Headwaters Food & Farming Alliance). However, Jennifer doesn't take all of the credit for the success, affirming, ?We have a very engaged parent community and lots of eco/foodie/activist moms and dads, so when you issue this bunch a challenge, we respond!?

To start the day off right, Primrose has a breakfast program. They are able to have local foods on the menu every day, thanks in part to donations from local suppliers. In October, the breakfast menu included local ingredients from Martin's Family Fruit Farms and Norfolk Fruit Growers' Association, Breedon's Maple Syrup, eggs from the Wallace Family Farm, Alliston Creamery's Golden Dawn butter, Mulmur Hills honey, and Greek yogurt and milk from Sheldon Creek Dairy. Speaking of milk, as of September 2013 Primrose said goodbye to their milk machine and is now serving local Sheldon Creek Dairy every day all year round.

In October, Primrose also started ?Fresh Food Friday? morning announcements with the goal to raise awareness about local food. A wonderful example of this was posted on the Ontario Farm to School Facebook page:

?Hey Primrose Elementary School, today we have a special treat for you, in recognition of Eat In Ontario ... (don't eat out... eat in!).

The carrot you are about to receive was one of about 400 generously donated by Carron Farms, a family farm located in Bradford. Did you know that many families at Primrose live or work on farms? If your family grows food, raise your hand... everyone look around, and thank those people for growing your food. Local food from the ground is better than food from the factory, fast food restaurant or from half way around the world, so look for Products of Ontario when you shop and check out dufferinfarmfresh.com for local food producers. This nutrition break treat is brought to you by the Ontario Farm to School Challenge (and some moms, and Mrs. McGarry's Grade 5 class, and of course Carron Farms).

Enjoy, and Eat Local Primrose! And please take home any remaining carrot that you don't finish, so you can snack on it later and help reduce our waste.?

Primrose shared many more inspiring food projects during the Ontario Farm to School Challenge. The list included: serving the ?localest? food possible at their fall BBQ by having a mom/chef prepare their school garden harvest; winning ?most entries? at the 2013 Shelburne Fall Fair with veggies from their school garden; a local food video that the grade 8's created; and a Grade 1?4 Nutrition Detective workshop and sensory exploration with local seasonal veggies.

Primrose Elementary has taken farm to school to a new level and is an inspiration for schools across the province. We look forward to seeing what schools are up for competing against Primrose in the spring round of the Ontario Farm to School Challenge.

Credit: Farm to School Challenge