

Get Cooking in the Classroom with Project Chef

Experienced chefs teach kids about healthy food and eating

Project CHEF is back in the classroom kitchens for the 2012 – 2013 school year. Project CHEF: Cook Healthy Edible Food is a curriculum-based, hands-on school program aimed at children from Kindergarten to Grade 7. This Vancouver program teaches children about healthy food: where it comes from, what it tastes like, how to prepare it, and how to enjoy sharing it around a table.

Project CHEF visits schools for at least a one week period, teaching a series of five lessons to two classes per day. Under the guidance of a chef-teacher, children, parents and teachers are immersed in the cooking process from start to finish: preparing and cooking culturally diverse recipes using fresh, seasonal, non-processed foods; cleaning up; setting the table; and dining together. Equipment for seven “kitchens”, including cook tops and washing bins, is brought into schools and set up in a regular classroom.

Food is sourced from local farmers, including those selling weekly at the Vancouver farmers’ markets. Additionally, at an increasing number of schools, children are able to harvest some of the ingredients from the school garden.

Project CHEF was developed and is run by the Project CHEF Education Society, a non-profit organization that raises the funds to run the program from charities, corporations and individuals. The program began implementation in Vancouver elementary schools (VSB) in January 2008 and, since that time, the program has reached 5400 children and directly involved over 1800 parents and community volunteers.

Since the beginning of Project CHEF, evaluative data has been collected from all program participants, including children, teachers, administrators and parents. The evaluative data has been overwhelmingly positive with 100% of teachers and principals rating the program as excellent. Anecdotal data and post program feedback from parents and teachers show that the Project CHEF program has made a strong and lasting impact on children, noting positive changes in children’s knowledge about food, their skills for creating food for themselves and their families, and attitudes toward food. A school principal succinctly summarized the program, “Project CHEF is the best kind of educational experience – it changes lives.”

What do the children think about Project CHEF? As stated by one of the young cooks, “I love Project CHEF! Food feels more important now. Usually we think food is just anything we put in our mouths but Project CHEF tells us no – food is something healthy, tasty and edible and feels good in your mouth. It definitely changed my view of food. It was just plain AWESOME!”

The program has over a one year waiting list for Vancouver schools wishing to participate, with requests coming in from school districts and independent schools.

More information on the program can be found at www.projectchef.ca, on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or by emailing info@projectchef.ca.