

In 2021, the Massachusetts Food for Massachusetts Kids Coalition advocated for the establishment of the first state grant program to fund efforts that connect students in early childhood centers and K-12 schools to local agriculture through food education, local sourcing, and community partnerships. With significant support from legislative champions across Massachusetts, \$1,000,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds were allocated to pilot the MA FRESH Grant Program.



Administered by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in partnership with the MA Department of Early Education and Care, this program provides funds for K-12 and early education and care providers to start up or expand their local foods purchasing and education efforts. Funds can be used for infrastructure investments such as kitchen equipment or garden installation as well as professional development for educators and school nutrition staff, and enrichment and educational activities for students.

In 2023, DESE awarded 17 grants to public school districts and early childcare providers, across Massachusetts. This was a highly competitive grants program with over 60 applicants requesting over \$1,600,000 in grant funds.

K-12 Grant Awardees

Boston Public Schools
Bridge Boston Charter School
Fitchburg Public Schools
Gloucester Public Schools
Medway Public Schools
Northampton Public Schools
Provincetown School District
RFK Alliance/Dr. Franklin Perkins School
Shaloh School Oholei Torah
Somerville Public Schools
Springfield Public Schools



Early Education Grant Awardees

Assonet Daycare
Guild of St Agnes of Worcester
MetroNorth YMCA
Southshore YMCA
Rainbow Child Development

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit <https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/mafresh-grant>



ASSONET DAYCARE

Funding received: \$5,250

Project Description: Assonet Daycare is building a new school garden and greenhouse and sponsoring two field trips to an area farm. Students started seeds in their classrooms and are now regularly tending to the plants as part of their day. They are learning about the life cycle, observing how plants grow, and sharing in the excitement of growing strong and healthy plants.

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding received: \$12,300 (\$37,700 FY 24)

Boston Public Schools, in partnership with Green City Growers, a Boston-based company that partners with schools and businesses to transform underutilized spaces into biodiverse food production landscapes, is bringing hydroponic lettuce towers to English and Charlestown High Schools. This pilot project, "Lights, Water, Lettuce!" introduces student grown lettuce to the salad bar and provides professional development for teachers to support integration of the hydroponic system into their curriculum.

BRIDGE BOSTON CHARTER SCHOOL

Funding received: \$45,668 (\$4312 FY24)

Bridge Boston Charter School has used their grant allocation for MA FRESH to fund the transformation of a vacant lot into the Jennifer Daly Outdoor Laboratory and Classroom, a garden named after their founder. The school will now host nine cedar raised beds, plants and soil, galvanized steel trellising, a drip irrigation system, and fixture options for an outdoor classroom. MA FRESH is providing both the infrastructure and professional development services to care for and maintain the garden. Curriculum utilized incorporates MA STEM standards, language arts, math, social studies, art, and social-emotional learning.

FITCHBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding received: \$23,356 (\$500 FY24)

Reingold Elementary School, serving over 660 students in grades 1-5, is piloting a more integrated STEAM curriculum, indoor grow tower, and garden expansion through the MA FRESH grant. In partnership with the community-based organization, Growing Places, Reingold Elementary will provide professional development trainings to teachers and install indoor grow towers and an outdoor community garden on site.

GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding received: \$10,000

Gloucester Public Schools, in partnership with Backyard Growers, a community-based garden organization, piloted a high schooler mentoring program. Mentors became ambassadors for Gloucester's Farm to School program, made age-appropriate promotional signage to engage younger students, assisted with garden lessons, prepared and served samples of local vegetables, and engaged with students as a resource for extra information and support. MA FRESH funding also allowed Food Services to purchase new kitchen tools to use in the Harvest of the Month program.

GUILD OF ST. AGNES (WORCESTER)

Funding received: \$24,663

The Guild of St. Agnes' utilized FRESH grant funds to provide the much needed sinks, refrigerators, freezer, dish washer and work tables at the University Collaborative Early Education and Center. This equipment enables staff to now prepare and serve fresh, nourishing meals on site to the 177 children in 7 preschool and 3 infant/toddler classrooms. Students at this center reflect the general population the Guild of St. Agnes serves, largely children from low income households or those who are in the DCF system.

MEDWAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding received: \$19,840

In partnership with Medway Community Farm, the Medway Public Schools is expanding their farm to school program through creation of an on-site elementary school garden at the Burke-Memorial Elementary School, professional development for the school's cafeteria staff, and food systems education for students including regular visits and project based learning at the community farm.

METRONORTH YMCA

(LYNN/MELROSE/SAUGUS/PEABODY)

Funding received: \$6,200

With MA FRESH funding, the Demakes Family YMCA was able to relocate their raised bed gardens to a higher visibility location where they can reach new youth and their families and integrate the garden with the early care and afterschool curriculum. Working with UMass Nutrition Extension, students and families are receiving lessons around how food choices impact growth and development, cooking lessons, and more.

NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding received: \$9,366 (\$36,164 FY24)

Northampton Public Schools is expanding their Freshampton food service program to include a comprehensive, experiential food system education program called Fresh Kids. FRESH grant funds are being used to hire a Farm to School Classroom Educator from School Sprouts Educational Gardens and work with Grow Food Northampton to provide field trips to their community farm. As part of FRESH Kids, Grow Food Northampton will also launch a new youth mentoring program for middle and high school students focused on organic farming next school year.

PROVINCETOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding received: \$9,740

Provincetown Public Schools has utilized MA FRESH funding to implement "Let's Grow," a project centered around the school garden and Sustainable CAPE's Farmer in the School Program, which is expanding education, awareness and exposure to the Cape's farm and fishing community through field trips, garden lessons, and food production for the cafeteria. The MA FRESH grant will culminate in a fall clambake and celebration in October.

RAINBOW CHILD DEVELOPMENT (WORCESTER)

Funding received: \$8,963 (\$7,962 FY 24)

Rainbow Child Development is utilizing MA FRESH to implement a comprehensive Farm to School program for their preschool students, families and staff. Their program, in partnership with the Regional Environmental Council (REC) and UMass Nutrition Education, is bringing students out to gardens for hands-on lessons to learn how plants grow, cooking lessons, taste tests, and field trips to the REC farm and farmers market. MA FRESH has also provided Rainbow Child Development with the needed funds to provide professional development for preschool teachers, so they can expand much-needed after school programming and increase their familiarity with preschool-age appropriate farm to school education.

RFK ALLIANCE/DR. FRANKLIN PERKINS SCHOOL (LANCASTER)

Funding received: \$38,544 (\$12,150 FY 24)

The Dr. Franklin Perkins School, a year-round day and residential, co-educational special education school, is transforming their outdoor gardens into outdoor classrooms and work spaces and adding indoor grow towers to facilitate winter production. This will support the food service department to continue increasing the use of fresh fruits and vegetables and engaging students in growing the food they will eat while expanding the project-based learning opportunities that support the social and emotional benefits of working outside and working with their hands.

SHALOH SCHOOL OHOLEI TORAH (BOSTON)

Funding received: \$33,337 (\$16,663 FY 24)

Shaloh House is using MA FRESH funds to install an indoor "micro-farm" to provide fresh produce in the winter months and is building cold frames for their existing outdoor garden beds to extend the growing season and provide expanded opportunities for experiential learning. They are also adding kitchen equipment to meet the growing demand for the Kosher and Halal meals they prepare each day, now at 800 daily meals.

SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding received: \$32,000

Somerville Public Schools has been utilizing MA FRESH funds to reach nearly all of the students in the district through increased local food procurement of local strawberries, potatoes, seafood and dairy products, combined with hands on lessons in school gardens and field trips to Groundwork Somerville's South Street Farm. They are focused on solidifying classroom-cafeteria & garden learnings, developing more culturally relevant menu offerings celebrating the diversity of Somerville Public Schools' population, and educating addressing district policies and practices to best support wellness and food access.

SOUTH SHORE YMCA (QUINCY/HANOVER/NORWELL)

Funding received: \$7,803

The South Shore YMCA hosted a professional development training for 87 early education professionals, helping them feel comfortable in the garden and supporting them to bring farm-to-school lessons into their classrooms. On-site learning takes place at all of the South Shore YMCA early education locations and they are doing a remarkable job layering state and federal funding to further support the physical growing spaces and implementation of farm to school programming.

SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding received: \$8,950 (\$12,724 FY 24)

Springfield Public Schools received funds to expand their school garden program and host a professional development training for educators. As the second largest district in Massachusetts, Springfield garden advocates have identified the need to develop more building-level support so that educators can feel empowered to bring students out to any of the more than 35 school gardens in the district. The additional gardens installed will provide greater access to outdoor growing spaces, bringing the number of school gardens to over 40.