

# Massachusetts Department of Public Health Success Stories



MASS IN MOTION MARTHA'S VINEYARD



## From Farms to Lunch Trays: Island Schools enjoy healthier foods all day long

### SUMMARY

Martha's Vineyard public school students who are snacking on roasted potatoes with rosemary, winter squash, and black bean salad may not know it, but they're a part of a larger plan Martha's Vineyard has to transform school food. Mass in Motion Martha's Vineyard (MV) worked with the island schools to connect with other initiatives that focused on working healthy foods into school curriculums and onto school lunch trays. This led to the **Harvest of the Month Program**, which is now bringing healthy foods from nearby farms directly into schools.

### CHALLENGE

Math and science aren't the only challenges facing our kids and teens today. Approximately 1 in 4 Massachusetts students are either overweight or obese, and almost 90% of students are not getting the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables each day. Children spend most of their awake hours at school, which means schools have a unique opportunity to create an environment that encourages students to eat healthy foods and be active. In March of 2012, Mass in Motion Martha's Vineyard decided to take advantage of this opportunity and set out to bring healthier foods into schools as a way to supplement the recently implemented Massachusetts School Nutrition Regulations.

### SOLUTION

Mass in Motion MV worked with the Steering Committee for all island schools to connect with initiatives that were also focused on bringing healthy foods into schools. This led to the Harvest of the Month Program, a partnership between a cooperative called **Island Grown Food** and MV public schools. **Island Grown Schools** is the Vineyard's farm-to-school program, which connects students to local farms, empowers them to make healthy eating choices, and engages them in growing and trying foods. Produce from local farms are now delivered weekly to school cafeterias and for special events. In addition, Martha's Vineyard Wellness policy outlines criteria not only for food sold in cafeterias, but also food in classrooms and snacks brought from home.



“One year ago some of the schools weren't participating due to budget constraints and staffing, but now all seven of our schools are fully on board and working jointly to provide excellent food in the cafeterias.”

**PEG REGAN**  
MASS IN MOTION  
COORDINATOR

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## PARTNERS

*Island Grown Initiative, Island Grown Schools, Island Grown Gleaners, and Vineyard Nutrition, Martha's Vineyard Public Schools, Slow Foods, five local farms*

## CONTACT

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## RESULTS

As a result, students have taken on an important role in the changes they're seeing at lunch. As part of the Harvest of the Month program, students are now "testing" healthy, local foods. These taste tests ensure that new recipes are student-friendly before adding them to the menu. They're also a great way to introduce students to new flavors, since it can take several attempts before a student tries and likes a new food. The Island Grown staff then work the "tested" food into monthly curriculum standards in K through 12 public schools, and school cafeterias incorporate them into a daily meal. Since the start of the program, the school menus have shifted dramatically from a carbohydrate and meat-based menu to one that highlights salad, produce, grain, and fish in the last year. Due to these efforts, *more than 2,000 students* in the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools are now benefiting from and enjoying healthier foods.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The next steps for the partnership are to continue working with school cafeterias on a campaign to educate parents who are shopping and cooking for their families at home.



For more information, visit [www.mass.gov/massinmotion](http://www.mass.gov/massinmotion)