

[Oakwood School, ON is a Farm to School Month Canada 2016 Winner!](#)



Our journey to THINKING and EATING local at Oakwood Public School began rather unexpectedly in the fall of 2015. We had registered with OPHEA Healthy Schools Certification as a tool to increase the general health and well-being of all the kids at school. During a brain storming session with Grade 3/4/5 students about what we could do to help make our school healthier and happier, there was an overwhelming interest in planting and growing vegetables, much to our surprise!

As a start-up to this project, we held a film screening of *What's on your plate?*, a journey about how a plant starts its journey from the soil and ends up in our plates!! This garnered more interest in growing a garden. We partnered with some local agencies to help us plant seeds indoors and eventually prepare an outdoor garden bed. The whole community got involved! From the preschool play and parenting group that met weekly on the playground and helped us water and watch our garden grow, to the dedicated team of parent volunteers who faithfully watered the plants during such a hot and dry summer. Our plants – tomato, broccoli, cucumbers, and peppers all flourished and grew big slowly and steadily.

Meanwhile, conversations and opportunities spiraled bigger and bigger, and before we knew it, we had had firm plans to implement a Farm-To-School Salad bar!

This October, we wanted to kick-off the school year by putting fresh local foods on the minds and (literally) on the plates of families in our school community. School staff and parent council worked together to turn Meet-the-Teacher Night into a whole-community event – with media, community partner tables, a police-led bike rodeo, a bicycle blender, school alumni, and even a school time capsule from the 1980s! With such a vast audience, it was the perfect opportunity to get people THINKING and EATING local! We offered a salad bar for families to try at no-cost, which featured locally grown foods, including the first-ever harvest of tomatoes and cucumbers from our very own school garden! Students were very involved in food preparation, and they were so excited for their parents to taste-test the “fruits” of their labour! It’s amazing how many people (adults included) are more willing to try beets when they look like purple spaghetti!

In mid-October we followed-up with the Great Big Crunch event, which was organized by Halton Food for Thought. Our whole school gathered together in the gym to watch a short (locally produced) [video](#) about where apples come from, and why eating local foods is so much tastier and better for the environment! Then we all CRUNCHED into delicious, locally grown apples together, along with nearly 36,000 other students and staff across our region. Even our Medical Officer of Health visited our school in order to CRUNCH along with us!

We’re looking forward to guest farmers, guest chefs, and lots more munching and crunching as our school gets THINKING and EATING local in preparation for the launch of our salad bar in 2017!