



Encouraging a Sustainable Food Culture at Mount Vernon Elementary School

By Anasua Ghosh



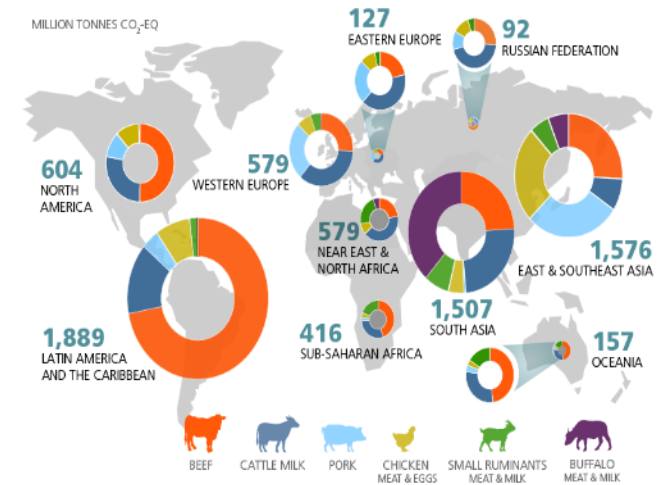
Content

- Introduction
- Objective
- Mount Vernon Elementary school overview
- Current practices in Mount Vernon Elementary School
- Recommendations
 - Green Fridays
 - Mustang Farm
 - Biodegradable and Reusable Foodservice products
 - Waste management and recycling
- Public Health Benefit



Introduction

- The food system is responsible for 25–30% of global greenhouse gas emissions.
- Livestock production contributes 14.5% of GHG emissions and uses 75% of the earth's agricultural land.
- Eating less meat and more plant-based foods reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and obesity.
- School meals hold considerable potential to adopt healthy and sustainable dietary patterns.



Objective

- Provide healthy, sustainable food for students and staff and develop a sustainable food culture in the school.
- Change a meat-based meal option to a plant-based one once a week.
- Make students more engaged in a plant-based diet by celebrating 'GREEN FRIDAYS' every week and helping students grow a portion of the food they eat at school.
- Promote the use of biodegradable and compostable food wares and reusable kitchenware.
- Reduce cafeteria waste, including a decrease in food waste and an increase in recycling.

Overview - Mount Vernon Elementary school

- The setting for this project is Mount Vernon Elementary School, located at 310 Mt. Vernon Drive in Yorktown, Virginia.
- The school is under the York country school division (YCSD).
- It has 595 students in grades PK, K-5, with a student-teacher ratio of 16 to 1.
- The school includes a large gymnasium, the school mascot is a mustang, and the cafeteria is named mustang cafe.
- YCSD participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).
- About 12.5% of Mount Vernon Elementary students qualify for free or reduced meals.



Current practices in Mount Vernon Elementary School

- The school cafeteria serves processed, prepared, and packaged fast foods with few fresh fruit or vegetables.
- The beverage serves low-fat milk.
- A significant portion of the lunch menu includes white bread or pasta, processed red meat, or poultry.
- Some served fruits and vegetables are canned or frozen, or packaged fruits and vegetables, and few with lots of added sugar.
- The school cafeteria sells packaged snacks, ice cream, and soda during lunchtime.
- A local food supplier manages the food service program in the school.



Current practices in Mount Vernon Elementary School

- No water dispenser in the cafeteria.
- Students toss fruits and vegetables into the trash right after exiting the lunch line or finishing the main course.
- The school cafeteria uses disposable plates, cups, and tableware.
- No recycling or composite bin.
- Poor Waste Management.



Recommendations

GREEN FRIDAYS

- Every Friday, mustang café will serve a plant-based meal instead of a meat-based meal.
- Menu will include either Black bean Enchiladas, Teriyaki Tofu, or bean and cheese burritos that provide similar calories and protein as the previous meat-based option.
- Students and staff will be encouraged to wear green every Friday.
- Green day activity includes plant-based recipe cooking contests, plant-based eating quizzes, and vegetable or fruit puzzles.

MUSTANG FARM

- A school fruit and vegetable garden can be built in the free space beside the cafeteria by the hands of kindergarten through fifth graders
- Every child at the school helps prepare the soil, sow seeds, tend the plants and pick the fruits and vegetables
- The compost generated by cafeteria food waste can be converted into soil and used to grow food.



Recommendations

Biodegradable and Reusable Foodservice products

- 'Eco Products' food wares that meet ASTM composability standards can be used in mustang café.
- The school cafeteria will gradually convert to more reusable kitchen wares.

Waste management and Recycling

- Students will engage in a zero-waste challenge at lunchtime in which students weigh their lunches before and after eating.
- The class with the lowest weight of waste won a prize at the end of the week.
- Recycling bin, compost bin, and Trash bin in the cafeteria.



Public Health Impact

For the Environment

- Reduce Greenhouse Gases.
- Reduce individual carbon footprint.
- Reduce land degradation.
- Minimize Water Usage.
- Reduce deforestation.
- Combat Climate change.

For Health

- Improve Nutritional Quality of Students.
- Reduce Obesity.
- Limit Cancer Risk.
- Reduce Heart Disease and Stroke Risk.
- Reduce diabetes risk.



“The single greatest lesson the garden teaches is that our relationship to the planet need not be zero-sum, and that as long as the sun still shines and people still can plan and plant, think and do, we can, if we bother to try, find ways to provide for ourselves without diminishing the world. ”
— Michael Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals





Thank You.