Horizon Elementary Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program

September 2015 – June 2016

**Background**

During 2015-2016 school year, the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP) at Horizon Elementary offered over 700 students a fresh fruit or vegetable snack twice a week for 31 weeks. In order to encourage student interest and willingness to try the new snacks, educational materials for each fruit or vegetable were also offered to teachers, and Food $ense nutrition educators were prompted to discuss the snacks during nutrition lessons in grades 2, 3, 4 and 5.

At program initiation, snacks were handed to each student as they came back to class from afternoon recess. This process was time-consuming, required at least two people, and several teachers commented that snacks earlier in the day would better benefit their students. So in mid-October we started distributing bags of snacks to each classroom mid-morning, for teachers to distribute. This process has shortened delivery time by more than half, requires only one person, and is well received by teachers.

Bags of snacks were distributed to each classroom mid-morning, for teachers to distribute. To determine whether students enjoyed the snack, classroom teachers asked students if they liked it, thought it was ‘okay’ or did not like it. These opinions were recorded on tally sheets and a monthly tally sheet of student preference for each fruit and vegetable was provided to Food $ense staff. Between 4 and 15 classrooms returned tallies for each fruit or vegetable.

**Results**

**November/December 2015**

**Summary of Findings**

* 14 different types of fresh fruits and 11 different types of fresh vegetables were offered during the year.
* Over 50% of students “liked” the following fruits: Kiwi, Plum, Papaya, Raspberries, Strawberries, Blueberries, Bananas, Grapes, Pears, Apples, Cantaloupe, Watermelon, Oranges.
* Over 50% of students “liked” the following vegetables, which are also the top 4 favorite vegetables: Cucumbers, Golden Beets, Baby Carrots, Jicama
* Top 4 favorite fruits (more than 90% of kids “liked”) were: grapes, watermelon, strawberries, apples
* The Student Nutrition Action Council (SNAC) made up of 4th & 5th grade students from each classroom, helped to look at the student preference results every 2 months, and choose 2-3 “student picks” to be served on the offer bar during lunch. They made signs for each item, which kitchen staff posted when those items were served.
* Vegetables were less popular than fruits, but feedback from teachers, kitchen staff and Student Nutrition Action Council report that when leftovers or “student picks” from FFVP snacks were served on the offer bar during lunch, students were excited to see them, and they were all eaten!
* After serving whole apples from a nearby farm, one teacher said that she had a student who had never eaten an apple before. “He said his mom buys apples all the time, but he never eats them. I told him he should try it.” He tried the apple and replied, “Mmmm, not bad!” Because of FFVP this student, and many others, tried new fruits & vegetables and are more likely to eat them at home.
* Least successful fruits & vegetables were:
  + Chioggia beets: One teacher had an allergic reaction to the raw candy cane beets. We will not serve raw beets with red pigment again, due to potential for allergic reaction.
  + Yukon gold potato: slices that were re-packaged into smaller bags for classes turned brown before consumption, and may have looked unappetizing, despite the catchy name given “raw French fries”!
  + Bell peppers

**Quote from Mukilteo School District Director of Nutrition Services:**

“Food $sense was an integral part of successfully running our FFVP program for the first year at Horizon Elementary. It was great to be able to partner with the knowledge of Acacia and her team to introduce new produce to the students and see their reaction to the various items. We appreciate your support”!