

City of Edinburgh Council Food for Thought 2015

Growing Global Food Citizens

Project summary

City of Edinburgh Council's 'Growing Global Food Citizens' project offered practitioners from 12 city schools the opportunity to attend 5 full days of continuous professional development delivered by Whitmuir Organics. It provided the opportunity to work together to share good practice, gain knowledge and increase teacher confidence to teach about sustainable food systems. Teachers learned from each other and experts to develop engaging ways of exploring food education with pupils. During the 5 days, participants learned:

- About my country's food culture and history
- How food affects me
- How food affects the environment
- How to cook for myself, my friends and my family
- How to grow some of my own food

Grants were awarded to participating schools to develop their own practical food education projects with pupils, and to take what they had learned on the course back to the classroom.

The schools involved were: Bonaly Primary, Nether Currie Primary, Ratho Primary, Panmure St Anns, Leith Walk Primary, Juniper Green Primary, Leith Academy, Liberton High, St Crispin's School, Roseburn Primary, St Thomas of Aquins RC High, St John's RC Primary.

Numbers involved

- 16 teachers (special, primary and secondary)
- 1 support staff
- 1 senior management

Business links

Whitmuir Organics, Edinburgh Larder, Hilton Hotel, Jamie's Kitchen, Quality Meat Scotland, others through Scottish Business in the Community.

Our Journey

The CPD sessions at Whitmuir started in September 2015. The framework used in previous Growing Global Food Citizen courses was followed, as it was agreed that it could be applied to any learner at any level, including ourselves:

- I know about my country's food culture and food history
- I know how food affects me
- I know how food affects the environment
- I know how to cook for myself, my friends and my family
- I know how to grow some of my own food

We aimed to build a sustainable partnership between the Parks and greenspace team, schools and the farm to enhance food education by increasing knowledge, skills and confidence around food education. Participants heard from experts in the fields of food history, soil, animal welfare, ecology, nutrition and food sustainability. Each school was at different stages of their food education journey, but at the end of the session, teachers fed back that they had gained knowledge that they were keen to take back to school. They were confident to lead discussion with pupils on a range of topics, introduce food into lesson planning and try different food based activities. Some of the key learning points that teachers fed back at the end of the session were:

- It has changed my view of the food system through helping me to understand it and how it has changed. Because I understand it better, I feel more able to make more choices and develop my values and thinking to share and teach.
- I found the week on animal welfare very informative
- It teaches you to use food as vehicle for learning
- It changes the way you look at our food culture in school

Teachers tried out their ideas from the farm in the classroom and adapted them to their own needs. Activities included 'selling' soil, how diet affected soldiers at Bannockburn, comparing food labels and sharing seasonal recipes.

Throughout the project, they were supported with regular email bulletins and advice from CEC, the farm and Scottish Business in the Community. A dropbox was created to share documents, lesson plans, photos etc. The dropbox is accessible to all participants who have been involved in the project since 2013. It will remain a resource that can be used and added to.

Resources developed include:

- Lesson activity outlines and classwork examples
- Presentations on sustainable food systems, animal welfare and soils
- Course folder for participants
- Sample project plans for practical activities

The project was completed in December 2015. Schools are committed to Food for Thought and have plans to continue to apply what they have set up this year into academic year 2015/16. Participating schools were awarded a grant to enable them to take forward their plans and develop practical resources that pupils can use (eg raised beds, cookery equipment etc).

Tales of the unexpected

- Development of partnerships within local authority, with Whitmuir, and with local businesses
- Increased awareness of plans to further 'Food for Life' in Edinburgh
- Increased staff confidence to deliver food education in depth
- Creativity and engagement with tasks
- Teachers became more aware of their decisions as citizens and consumers. 'It's been very interesting and informative. Gave me lots to think about and has made me evaluate my role in the consumer/customer/user debate.'

- Impact on individual food choices. 'Informative, jam packed, enjoyable and will change my consumer habits for a lifetime'.

Next Steps

- Development of Edinburgh food education network with colleagues from children and families, catering services and Soil Association.
- Schools are working on a range of food education projects as a result of the Food for Thought Fund:
 - o Installing fencing to secure garden to prevent vandalism and replacement of tools for all ages to use (Liberton High)
 - o Purchase of kitchen equipment and inviting local elderly residents to share knowledge of growing and cooking with pupils (Roseburn Primary)
 - o Purchase of a portable kitchen to provide the opportunity to build respect around food education into the ethos of the school, not just as one off events (Bonaly PS)
 - o Creation of raised beds to use produce in cookery sessions with pupils and their families (Leith Academy)
 - o Improving the quality of the dining experience in school, both at lunch times and Breakfast Club, involving the children in preparing healthy snacks and meals (Leith Walk Primary)
 - o Creating a 'Cooking Classroom' (Juniper Green Primary)
 - o Developing a 'Planting the Seeds of Success' programme for ALS pupils (St Thomas of Aquins RC High)
 - o Growing food with pupils to eat year round (St Crispin's Special School)
 - o Growing produce and running a Farmer's Market (Ratho Primary)
 - o Delivery of specialised cookery class for pupils (Panmure St Anns)
 - o Creating a cookery club and 'Setting the Table' initiative (St John's RC Primary)
 - o Development of outdoor space to meet the 5 outcomes of GGFC (Nether Currie Primary)

We hope to be able to continue the project with Food for Thought Phase 4.