

already owned the large walk-in freezer where the produce is being stored.

“The more fruits and vegetables the kids have, the better, and it’s created more hours for me,” said Tomlin.

Perpetua said the processing kitchen will continue to operate into the fall, processing butternut squash and other fall crops after workers are done preparing breakfast and lunch. With new federal school lunch nutrition requirements calling for children to be served a greater variety and quantity of fruits and vegetables, buying and freezing from local farms just makes sense, she said.

“And it helps the local economy,” she said.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Has Lunch with Connecticut Elementary School Students



Last April, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack visited Wolcott Elementary School in West Hartford to talk to students and staff about USDA initiatives designed to improve children’s health. Also in attendance were U.S. Representatives Rosa DeLauro and Joe Courtney, U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, and CT Governor Dannel Malloy. Vilsack has been visiting schools across the country to promote the new school meal regulations, and West Hartford was chosen because all the schools in town have received the bronze award for USDA’s Healthier US School Challenge, recognizing excellence in nutrition and physical activity in the district.

The special guests sat at various tables in the cafeteria and enjoyed a lunch of fresh-made soup, and a hearty salad from the cafeteria’s salad bar. They had a true “school lunch” experience, with cafeteria trays including the five meal components, with lots of colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low fat milk. Secretary Vilsack had an engaged conversation with the 5th grade students that he dined with, and when called by his staff for the press conference, he wouldn’t go until he finished his lunch and conversation!

At the press conference, all officials commended Secretary Vilsack for his dedication and efforts to help resolve the issue of childhood hunger and obesity, and the Secretary complimented Connecticut for being a leader in this effort. Governor Malloy also spoke of efforts to increase school breakfast programs in our state. Overall, it was a great recognition for Connecticut school meal programs. We are proactive and have put many healthy practices in place before they were mandated. Our students did not see major changes with the new standards, because most were already in place. It was nice to see this recognized in Washington, and have Secretary Vilsack speak about the quality of our programs. Connecticut school nutrition professionals should be proud!

