



***Flourish!***

— School Food Society —





Setting the Table for Learning



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[www.flourishschoolfood.ca](http://www.flourishschoolfood.ca)





# ***Flourish!*** School Food Society brings *nourishing change* to the way students eat and learn about food in schools.



Because what and how we eat significantly impacts the wellbeing of our communities and the planet.

We at Flourish are working to help build school meal programs for all students that are supported by curriculum connected, experiential learning opportunities in school gardens, kitchens and composts.

Every school is unique so we aim to provide a tailored service to meet schools where they're at, and to support the slow development of a nourishing school food environment.



**Executive Director**  
Matthew Kemshaw



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## ***Defining the need***

What we do and why we do it



***Flourish!*** exists because it is paramount for all school children to eat healthy, locally sourced, and nourishing food since it directly impacts their health, academic performance, and long-term well-being.

By offering nourishing meals and snacks sourced from local farmers and producers, our meals not only provide essential nutrients crucial for growth and cognitive function but also instill lifelong habits of eating healthy and sustainably.

Prioritizing local sourcing supports our local businesses, reduces environmental impact, and fosters a sense of community connection by celebrating culinary traditions and promoting sustainability.

Overall, integrating locally sourced and nourishing foods into school meals and snacks serves as a holistic approach to promoting health, academic success, and environmental stewardship among students.





## Fun, nourishing meals

Following mother nature's guidance we create diverse, seasonal and youth friendly menus, and prepare and distribute hundreds of home cooked meals and snacks daily.



## Grocery items, delivered

Through partnership we help connect school communities with the foods they need to ensure students are nourished and ready to learn. We provide breakfast staples, snacks and other thoughtfully sourced grocery items.



## Garden Learning

We support school gardens and promote good practice in school food services. We believe there is magic in experientially connecting with seeds, gardens, kitchens, and composts.

1. ***Defining the need***



By planting the seeds of our non-profit organization into your school curriculum we can weed out some of our society's **major problems** right at the root, and, at the same time, help to provide the bare necessities needed for our young so that their hearts and minds can flourish long into the future.



## Major Problem

# Hunger at home

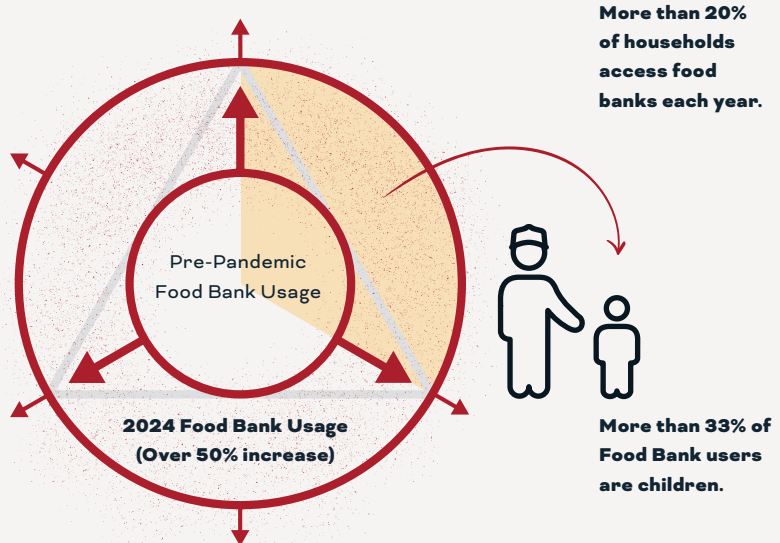
**Food Banks report that it isn't just those at the lowest ends of the economic spectrum who are suffering.**

Many people who never thought they would need to turn to a food bank are walking through their doors for the first time, **including dual income families.**

**For students in Grades 7-12 in our region:**

- ◆ 30% regularly skipped breakfast in 2023, up from 18% in 2018.
- ◆ 11% report going to bed hungry because there wasn't enough money for food at home.

**Food Bank usage across the region:**



Data from the McCreary 2023 Adolescent Health Survey and Food Banks Hunger Counts.

**Major Problem**

## Mental Health

When children attend school hungry or undernourished their energy levels, memory, problem-solving skills, creativity, concentration, and other cognitive functions are all negatively impacted.

School food programs have been linked with positive impacts on children's mental health, including reductions in behavioral and emotional problems, bullying, aggression, anxiety, and depression, as well as fewer visits to the school nurse.

Children who eat a morning meal are sick less often, have fewer problems associated with hunger, such as dizziness, lethargy, headaches, stomachaches and earaches, and do significantly better than their peers in terms of cooperation, discipline, and interpersonal relations.

Students who have ready access to food have demonstrably improved academic outcomes, better in class behaviors and better overall health. They also report a greater sense of belonging and connection to the school community.



A young student clears his Flourish! home cooked meal at lunch.



**Major Problem**

## Physical Health

- ◆ In 2023, 17% of youth in Grades 7-12 reported purging after a meal, up from 12% in 2018.
- ◆ UNICEF ranked Canada 37th out of 41 developed countries when it comes to providing healthy food for kids.
- ◆ Only about one-third of children between the ages of four and 13 years eat five or more servings of vegetables and fruit daily.
- ◆ About one-quarter of children's calorie intakes are from food products not recommended in Canada's Food Guide. Over half of the caloric intake for Canadian children comes from ultra-processed foods.

“

We all appreciate the food that we are now able to provide for the kids. To see them eating a big salad and a hot meal is wonderful, especially because we know that they might not have access to those healthy foods at home. These things make such a difference in their day!

Teacher - Westshore Secondary

**Major Problem**

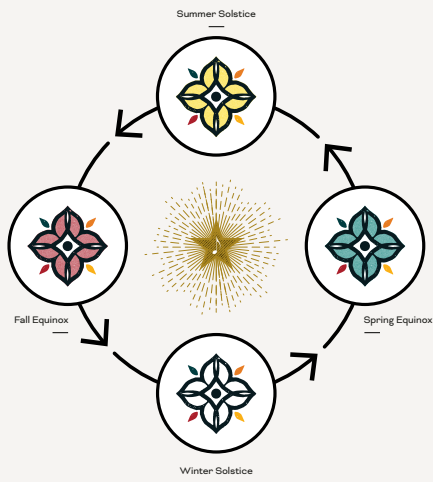
# Environmental impact

Corporate control over agriculture is literally driving the sixth great extinction event on planet Earth.

*Our future depends on eating more food grown close to home.*

Eating locally reduces food miles and their associated greenhouse gas emissions. To solve problems like climate change and ecosystem collapse, we need to become more connected to the seasonal rhythms of our local food systems and to learn to eat sustainably. This is why we seek to grow our relationships with local elders, foragers, farmers and fishers. Our mentors teach us that how we eat can be an active part of taking care of our place on this planet.

We live on an island. Very little of our food currently comes from this place. Two generations ago, over 50% of the food consumed on Vancouver Island was produced here. Now, it's less than 5%.



Just like our brand identity our nutritious school menus follow the musical rhythms of nature. With each passing season we strive to provide only what our land can provide us at that time of year.



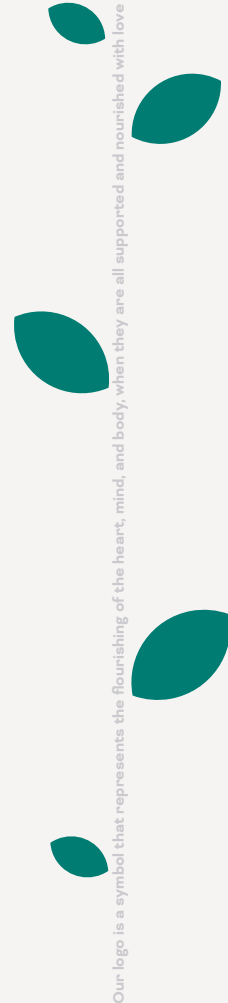
Young students at Pexsisen  
Elementary getting their hands  
dirty in the Flourish! garden.

2.

## ***Our Mission***

What we can do about it

We are on  
a mission  
to enhance  
the lives of  
***10,000*** CRD  
students by  
2030 through  
the provision  
of nourishing  
local food.



Our logo is a symbol that represents the flourishing of the heart, mind, and body, when they are all supported and nourished with love



## Food for all

We know that the only way to provide food without stigma is to offer it to everyone. Providing food for all students ensures those who need it, get it. Targeting only “vulnerable” students leaves many out. Deciding who is vulnerable, and who is hungry, is not something that is easy or possible to adequately assess. Needs change with time and circumstances vary widely.

## It takes a village

While government has made an historic investment in developing school food programs, we need to work together to create school food programs that are stigma free. This will not happen if we are not working together towards this common goal.





Executive Chef Alison Ryan helps  
Project Chef Eric Schmidt load  
trays of freshly cooked food  
in preparation for delivery to  
schools across the region.



DUNSMUIR - COL  
Friday  
50 Big 88: vH

## Food at school matters

Bringing food into schools is an important step towards creating a safe, nourishing learning environment. Students feel cared for and included when they are offered food without judgment.

School communities have a critical role to play in helping their school district to identify gaps, and slowly build food programs that can eventually provide food for all. Working collaboratively, in a spirit of compassion and care, we can build school food programs that feed us all.



“

You've done great work here... For a big school like this, being asked to build a food program was daunting. *You've made it seamless.*

Teacher - Oak Bay Secondary





Project Chef Kat Mui preparing school delivery trays with nutritious vegetables.

This is what Flourish! School Food Society can do to help.







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## Grocery items, delivered

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## Garden Learning

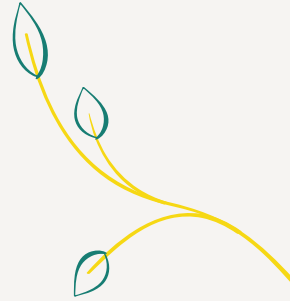
We support school gardens and promote good practice in school food services. We believe there is magic in experientially connecting with seeds, gardens, kitchens, and composts.

### 3.

#### ***Sow the seeds of growth***

How you can help

Cost sharing and working together will be important for the future success of school food program development in our community. Organizations and individuals can support this work in numerous ways, such as:





### ***Partners***

Partnerships with local, values aligned food producers, distributors and retailers enable us to maximize impact and feed more students.



### ***Volunteers***

Community volunteers help us prepare and serve meals, support food literacy programs and tend school gardens.

### ***Donors***

Every dollar donated goes directly to feeding students in our community. Help us ensure there is enough food for all.

## ***Sponsor a school***

A \$5,000 annual sponsorship for your local school significantly helps to provide food without barriers, reducing stigma and increasing joy.




## Take collaborative action

Flourish! School Food Society is growing, the seeds of our not-for-profit organization have been planted in schools across the region, and we're already reaping great results, but nourishing our community's youth takes a village. We sincerely believe in our hearts that all children and youth deserve nourishing food, the opportunity to learn where it comes from, and guidance to rebond their ways of living to the rhythmical and cyclical laws of nature that provide all of us with life regardless of gender, creed, or nationality.

This can only happen in schools where adults work together with compassion to care for all students but we're keenly aware of how difficult this task is when family's are under strain from other forces in our society. That's where we at Flourish! can step-up to support.

Integrating our school food program into the daily culture of schools supports our students' future skills and careers. Practical growing, cooking, and eating skills have important implications for long term health outcomes. Cooking and growing programs at schools also provide career pathways into solutions-oriented livelihoods and green careers, which are fast growing parts of Canada's economy.

We can sow the seeds for growth now with your help so let's come together to help our youth  **Flourish!**

Get Involved

Please contact us  
to get involved.



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# Setting the Table for Learning

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