

**HISD “Get Growing Houston” receives USDA grant to expand school garden program**

*June 25, 2018* – The Houston Independent School District has been awarded a $67,395 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for its “Get Growing Houston” program.

Part of the USDA’s Farm to School Program, the grant will enable HISD’s Nutrition Services department to expand their “Get Growing Houston” program to 15 additional schools.

“Get Growing Houston” uses an interdisciplinary approach to teach elementary school students about the importance of healthy foods and good nutrition through the creation and cultivation of school gardens. The program was piloted in four schools during the 2017-2018 school year.

“Once students feel the ownership of the garden, their preferences and willingness to try the produce they grew increases,” HISD Food Literacy Dietitian Julia Jarrell said. “It also opens the discussion to the benefits of a healthy diet, agriculture and cultural preferences, and exposure to other people’s relationship with foods.”

The program uses a nutrition-focused, evidence-based curriculum to educate students about the life-cycle of food. It also aims to help them develop a healthy relationship with food by providing them with opportunities to plant and grow a garden, harvest and prepare produce, and then share their bounty with their families.

HISD is one of only two school districts in Texas and 73 projects across the country to be awarded a grant this year from the USDA’s Farm to School Program, which aims to bring nutritious, local foods into schools.

“From pre-K to high school, farm to school programs benefit everyone from students and teachers to parents and producers,” USDA Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Brandon Lipps said. “Connecting people to their food builds stronger ties to community agriculture and an appreciation for those who care for our land.”