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# Mountain View to offer Ferndale Fries as pilot farm-to-school program

KIRA M. COX / THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

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FERNDALE - Students at Ferndale's Mountain View Elementary School will soon be treated to freshly baked potatoes from northwest Washington as part of their school lunch.

On Jan. 27, the french fries and tater tots at the school are being exchanged for locally grown potato wedges, as part of a pilot farm-to-school project.

"This is something that's good for the students and it's good for the local farmers," said Alex Singer, Ferndale School District's Food Program director. "We have students who may not have ever had french fries that weren't frozen before."

The potatoes, which likely will be coming from a farm in Whatcom or Skagit County, will be chopped into wedges and baked to create "Ferndale Fries."

The district received a \$5,000 grant from the Whatcom Community Foundation's Sustainable Whatcom Fund in spring 2010 to start working on a program that would incorporate produce from regional farms into school lunches. The farm-to-school movement has been gaining popularity over the last couple years as people are figuring out how to keep costs within the tight school food budget while still making a profit for the farmers.

Eventually, the goal is to expand beyond potatoes to other produce, something which may be possible next year by working with Ferndale-area farmers. Laura Plaut, the district's project coordinator and director of Common Threads Farm, said she's had several farmers express interest in planting items this spring for the school district to use next year.

Singer wanted to start with a one-day pilot program so it's easier to determine problems and correct them. If all goes well, he hopes to continue offering "Ferndale Fries" at Mountain View and bring them to other schools.

"We want the kids to be more connected to the community, want them to eat healthy," Singer said. "We want them to know what they're eating and where it's from."

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**FARMERS SOUGHT**

Farmers interested in learning more about growing food for the Ferndale School District can contact Laura Plaut, founder and director of Common Threads Farm, at 360-927-1590.

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