

**Daniel S. Sullivan**  
*Commissioner*  
550 W. 7th Ave., Ste 1400  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
907-269-8431



**Public Information Center**  
550 W. 7th Ave., Ste. 1260  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
[www.dnr.alaska.gov](http://www.dnr.alaska.gov)  
907-269-8400

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**CONTACT:**

**Division of Agriculture**

**Johanna Herron, Farm to School Program Coordinator, 907-799-0186,**  
[\*\*johanna.herron@alaska.gov\*\*](mailto:johanna.herron@alaska.gov)

**Polaris K-12 students give winning grade to Alaska Grown turnips**

(Anchorage, AK) – Polaris K-12 School students gave roasted turnips the highest rating after sampling an Alaska Grown roasted vegetable dish during a Jan. 29<sup>th</sup> taste test organized by the Division of Agriculture’s Farm to School Program.

Culinary class students from East High School created a recipe of roasted beets, parsnips, turnips, and squash, and then cooked and served it to more than 100 students at Polaris K-12 School. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “delicious,” 80 percent of the students gave the vegetable dish an overall rating of 3 or better. The winning vegetable was the parsnip, which received a rating of 5 from more than half of the students. The Polaris K-12 students also voted to name the dish “Sweet Veggie Medley.”

“Engaging and empowering youth in the local food system is a great way to get them interested and willing to try new vegetables,” says Farm to School program coordinator Johanna Herron.

Sam Erickson, the student government president at Polaris K-12, has been working with the Farm to School Program to bring more local foods into the school cafeteria. Erickson conducted a pre and post survey of the students to see if the taste test had any impact on their preferences and knowledge of local vegetables. Results of that survey will be announced soon.

LaDonna Dean, the registered dietician for Anchorage Student Nutrition Services, attended the taste test to help inform the menu plans for Anchorage School District. “The Anchorage School District is very excited to team up with the Alaska Farm to School Program. We hope to use results of the student surveys to expand our vegetable selections on the menu and provide more Alaska Grown produce to our students,” she said.

Polaris K-12 teachers, staff, and administration told Division of Agriculture staff they were surprised at how well the students liked the Alaska Grown vegetables.

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