Greenhouses are becoming a popular trend in schools, as they are one of the ways schools can implement a type of garden that can be grown year round. This is exactly what you can find at Breed Middle school, where a greenhouse is currently ran by a group of 7th graders in Andrea Ogles’ science class for over two years now. In Andrea’s eyes, this experience provides a great way to teach scientific topics, such as decomposers in ecosystems, as well as giving students the skills they can use in everyday life to try the healthy foods that they are growing. Currently students are growing a variety of beans, tomatoes, broccoli, and spider plants. Starting later in February students will then plan to grow and sell tomatoes, zucchini and Sweet William flowers to have them ready to sell in May — what a great idea to keep in mind for all those mothers out there for Mother’s Day!

The 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans was released this past month, which are guidelines created to provide meaningful advice for the public on ways to lead a healthy lifestyle and reduce the risk of chronic disease. Recommendations come from a variety of health professionals ranging from nutrition and medical experts, researchers and practitioners. These guidelines help set the foundation for major government food organizations, including …schools! Below are some take-aways from the new guidelines that you and your family can apply:

1. Limit added sugar—particularly to less than 10% of daily calories. What does 10% look like? Based off a 2000 calorie diet, this means 200 calories can come from added sugar. This is equivalent to a 12oz can of soda!
2. More leverage on total fat amounts—not all fat is bad, and is actually an important part of our diet. Although we should still limit saturated fats, unsaturated fats are known to help extend our life span, manage weight loss and keep you full longer. Shoot for incorporating a serving of unsaturated fats into every meal. One serving is equivalent to 1/4 of an avocado, 1 teaspoon of olive oil or 6 almonds.
3. Make half of the grains you consume on a daily basis be whole grain sources—Add a creative twist by incorporating different whole grain sources such as quinoa, bulgur, oats, brown rice or amaranth. Keep in mind one serving is equivalent to a 1/2 cup, so 1-2 servings per meal is a healthy guideline to shoot for.
4. Consume at least 9 servings of fruits and vegetables daily—1 serving is equivalent to the size of your fist, or a 1/2 cup.

Release of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

February Food Focus:
Herbs & Spices
Herbs and spices add flavor, aroma, color, texture, as well as some beneficial nutrients and medicinal properties. There are over 1,000 different types of herbs and spices around the world, so the opportunities are endless! Choose from mint, sage, ginger, turmeric, garlic, cinnamon, chili powder and more.

GROCERY STORE TIP:
Herbs and spices can be found in both fresh and dried forms. Dried spices are a great way to save money, as most dried spices have a shelf life of 1-3 years. A variety of herbs can be found in the produce aisle either fresh, dehydrated or in paste forms. If you are purchasing fresh herbs, keep in mind that most fresh herbs can be frozen too!

COOKING WITH HERBS & SPICES
Herbs and spices are a great ingredient to incorporate into dishes this time of year when fresh produce options aren’t in season. Make a rub from scratch for meats from herbs and spices, which is a great alternative to eliminate added salt or sugar (see the next page for a great rub recipe!).

HEALTH BENEFITS:
Herbs and spices have been used for centuries as a natural remedy to keep us healthy, as a lot of them have medicinal properties. For instance, turmeric is known to have anti-inflammatory properties, garlic may help fight off cold or flu symptoms, and ginger is helpful in soothing an upset stomach.
February Food Focus

Get creative at home or in the classroom! Make art work painted out of dried herbs and spices, capturing various cultural cuisines and the herbs and spices those cuisines incorporate! What a creative way for a classroom to share all of their favorite food dishes from around the world.

What Makes a Complete School Meal?

What makes a complete, reimbursable school meal and what does that look like on a tray? A common question we receive from parents and students. To give you an idea, when students walk through the serving line, a complete, reimbursable meal includes a certain number of offered foods, which always must include at least some fruits and/or vegetables. For instance, at breakfast a student needs to take three items, including a fruit and/or vegetable, and at lunch a student needs to take at least three different food groups, including a fruit and/or vegetable. The purpose of these requirements is to help ensure students receive important nutrients from a variety of foods offered during meals, versus a student picking only one option of what they want, causing them to miss out on other important nutrients. Below is what our schools in Lynn do to help provide healthy and balanced meals to our students:

- Breakfast and lunch are offered to all students at all of our schools
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are offered at every meal
- All grains served are whole-grain rich
- Appropriate portion sizes are provided for students, which fits their specific grade levels
- Trans fats are not permitted in foods, and menu items do not exceed certain levels of saturated fat and sodium
- Menus offer different vegetable subgroups that rotates weekly to help ensure students receive a variety of important vitamins and minerals. Subgroups offered includes: red/orange, leafy green, beans/legumes and starchy vegetables

Cajun Rub

Serving Size: 6

Ingredients:
1/8 tsp ground oregano
1-3/4 tsp ground pepper
3/4 tsp white pepper
1/8 tsp dried, crushed thyme
1-1/8 tsp granulated garlic
3/4 tsp cayenne pepper
1/2 tsp ground paprika
3/4 tsp dehydrated onion flakes
1/8 tsp ground basil

Instructions:
1. Thoroughly mix all ingredients
2. Store in an air-tight container, covered and labeled until use

Serving suggestions: Add to a vegetable side dish before roasting, or season meat at least 3 hours before roasting.