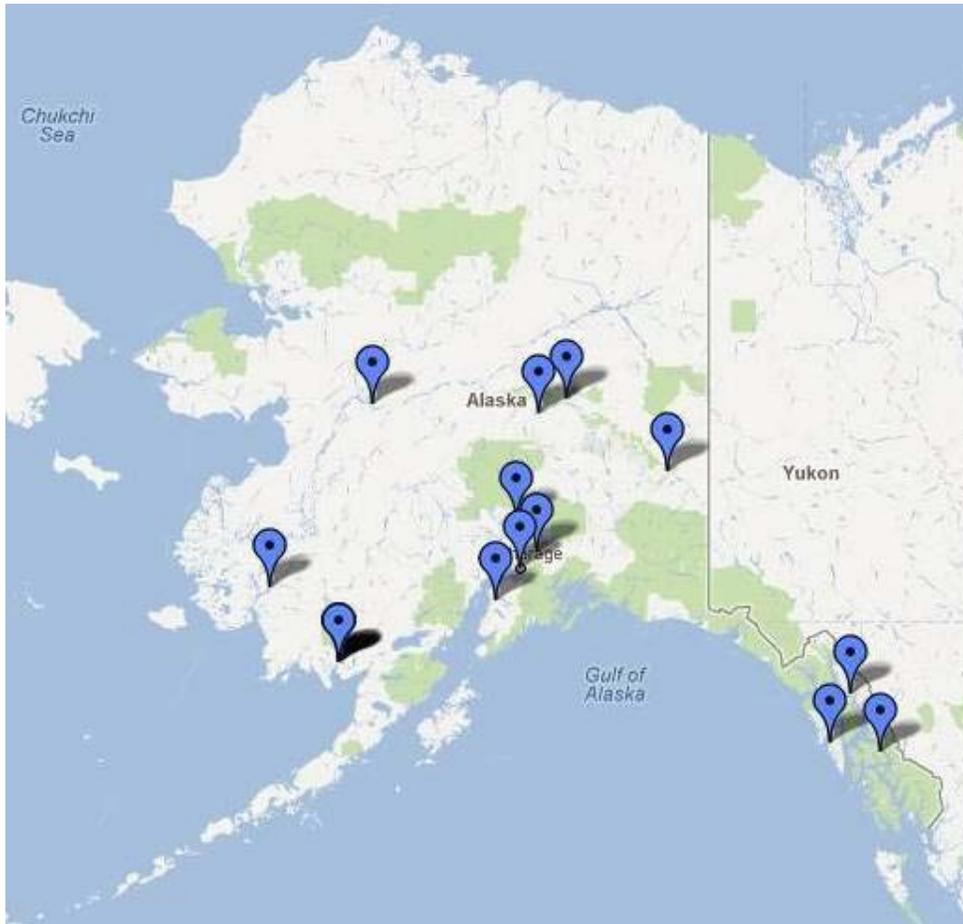


# Funded Alaska Farm to School Projects 2011-2012

The Alaska Farm to School (FTS) program works to educate our youth about where food comes from and how their food choices affect their bodies, the environment and the community. The Division of Agriculture solicited proposals for FTS projects that would promote activities connecting students, teachers, and school food service staff with product grown and produced in Alaska. State funded grants, with a maximum of \$1,000 per project, were awarded to the successful applicants. Applicants were required to have a project coordinator, a representative from the school food service, and a community expert, specialist, or mentor.

Farm to School mini-grants were awarded to 17 schools from 13 different communities. The projects served more than 4,000 students. Funding from the mini-grants came jointly from the Alaska Farm to School Program and the State of Alaska Obesity Prevention and Control Program. The following is a listing of the funded applicants and a description of their work.

## Geographic Location of Communities Funded by the Farm to School Mini-Grants



## Project Overviews

### **Bethel: Farm to School Diabetes Activity Project**

**Project Overview:** In an effort to promote healthy eating, the diabetes program at Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation built upon their garden activities by implementing a “Farm to School” Activity Project in the Lower Kuskokwim school district. Ninth-grade students in the Bethel Regional High School science classes learned about the benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables, nutrition and agriculture, and got to taste fresh fruits and vegetables. The project also introduced the food service staff and school principal to the idea of implementing the “Farm to School” initiatives in the school menu.

**Project Report:** The students had the opportunity to taste turnips, cabbage, and local eggs. They also made a breakfast burrito and received recipes to try it at home (a project to show them that you can eat vegetables at breakfast too). The students tasted potatoes, rutabaga, celery, carrots, and onion and made stew for lunch. Students even told the coordinator that she wasn’t fair because they wanted more stew! They had celery, carrots, and cooked turnips for a snack. The post survey showed that 80% of the kids said they liked the breakfast burrito and would try it again and 100% of the students liked the stew.

### **Hope: School and AmeriCorps Project**

**Project Overview:** Hope School and AmeriCorps, in partnership, worked to develop a hot lunch program for the Hope school. Hope School is a small K-12 rural school without a USDA lunch program. With funds from a variety of sources and the Farm to School funding, the school plans to provide a hot lunch program with local foods for the students one day a week. The primary goal is twofold: to have a healthy hot lunch program that includes foods and produce grown locally; and to effect a change in student behavior so that they begin to choose healthy, natural foods rather than processed foods. The Hope School already has a school-based community garden in place; and in the 2010-2011 school year, the students grew vegetables and edible flowers in the classroom and planted one garden box allotted to the school. The Hope School plans to expand Hope Community Gardens and school curriculum to support this lunch program.

**Project Report:** Hope school students held the first “harvest potluck” with the bounty from the community garden. An indoor garden box was built in the school science room for students to start and harvest produce during the winter months. Educational lessons taught students skills for growing, storing, and preparing food. A number of snacks were prepared and served to the entire school. Recipe cards were also created and distributed widely, including to the Farm to School Program. While the number of students reached was small (17), the percentage was enormous (100%) and will stay with the kids for years to come.

### **Chugiak: Color Me Healthy Project**

**Project Overview:** The Chugiak High School Family Consumer Science program used the mini-grant to increase awareness of the importance of healthy foods. According to the project leader, students at the high school had poor eating habits and low interest in pursuing diets that would prevent future serious health issues. The goals of the project were: (1) to introduce students to the variety of local produce options available in Alaska, (2) to give students an opportunity to meet a local farmer in the classroom, (3) to teach students about the influence

of local agriculture on food choices, (4) to introduce teens to nutritional information associated with local produce through the support of a dietician or nutritionist, (5) to develop new food preparation options utilizing local produce, and (6) to provide a school-wide opportunity for teens to sample local produce items.

**Project Report:**

The project exceeded expectations. The project leader reported; “I want to thank you for this tremendous opportunity for my students and our community. My limited food budget has not allowed



Students from Chugiak High School ‘Color Me Healthy’ project

me the opportunity to fully support these types of activities. This grant has truly made an impact on teens, parents, and staff members. I hope you will continue to offer this opportunity to schools in the future.”

The project goals were met and often exceeded. In addition to students preparing fresh green salads and carrot sticks for the 300+ students in the school, the class distributed 60 bags of carrot sticks to the after school snack program at the Eagle River Boys & Girls club. The relationship with the school food service was positive and the on-site staff were supportive of the class projects.

According to the pre/post survey results, there was a strong increase in teens liking the vegetables that were introduced and used in preparation. These vegetables included broccoli, salad greens, squash, potatoes, zucchini, and pumpkin. Basic knowledge increased and the students reported an increased awareness of varieties, availability, and methods for preparation. Most importantly the students developed a higher interest in the nutritional and health value of fresh produce.

### Nenana: Kitchen Garden Project

**Project Overview:** The Nenana Kitchen Garden Project planted a plot with potatoes, cabbage, broccoli, carrots and winter squash. It also established a compost pile using local materials. After harvesting the produce in September, it sponsored a fall workshop on how to make sauerkraut from cabbage. In addition, it developed a sustainable garden for the Nenana City Public Schools that supplements the foods used by the Nenana Schools’ food service program. The project also worked to increase youth and community understanding of the food system and encourage better food choices and a preference for locally grown food.

**Project Report:** The Nenana Kitchen Garden project harvested over 650 pounds of produce from their garden. Residents of the student living center participated in the harvest and sauerkraut workshop. The potatoes and carrots were harvested and stored for use in the school meal program throughout the school year. The students were excited about the potatoes and carrots they grew but did not like the sauerkraut. Some future changes will include; 1) planting crops that ripen closer to the beginning of the school year (broccoli went to seed too early to enjoy in the lunches) 2) trying different crops like summer squash, beets, kohlrabi, turnips, green onions and sugar snap peas, 3) and improving the sauerkraut recipe (possibly making Kim Chee instead). More than 200 students were reached with this project.

## Petersburg: City School District Project

*This project was one of two that were led by a school food service director.*

**Project Overview:** The Petersburg City School District project goal was to teach students to plant, grow, harvest, and cook vegetables and fresh fruit. The district taught students how food gets to the table, as well as providing knowledge of healthy habits and better food choices. The district encouraged students to prefer food grown in Petersburg.

**Project Report:** While it faced a few challenges along the way, the project was ultimately successful and plans have been laid to continue it. This project hosted a ‘Stone Soup Day’ that reached more than 300 students using product that the children grew at the elementary school. They were able to plant two apple trees and plan for a number of garden crops for the upcoming season. Students were surveyed on a variety of topics, including favorite dish and food system knowledge. The students did not have a solid understanding of ‘organic’ or ‘sustainable’ growing and learned a great deal during this project. This season the project produced 25 gallons of potatoes, two gallons of carrots, and two gallons of leaf lettuce. Green peas, tomatoes, onions, a variety of lettuce, green onions, potatoes, and many more varieties are growing now for the season ahead.

## Mat-Su/Copper River: “Is This Your Final Answer?” Alaska Grown Products Judging Activities for Youth Project

**Project Overview:** Decision-making, critical thinking and making healthy lifestyle choices have been identified as positive youth development life skills. In Alaska, following the national trend, childhood obesity is rising significantly. The brief growing season and retail produce availability and prices may limit the exposure Alaskans have to a variety of fresh local produce— and this lack of familiarity may limit the use of fresh produce. The 4-H and Youth Development at the Mat-Su/Copper River Cooperative Extension Service supported several opportunities for youth to gain valuable life skills while tasting and experiencing a variety of fresh produce and products. Alaska Grown products were included in a judging activity called “Is This Your Final Answer?” to promote awareness of the variety of fresh local produce available. The results of these activities will be shared with school district’s food service personnel for use in future meal planning or other applications.

**Project Report:** Three events were held and over 40 students participated in the projects. Product form was taste tested and results showed a preference for local product, crinkle cut zucchini slices (over sticks, cubes, or random cuts), and local carrot coins were the top pick (over sticks, curls, and baby cuts). Information on student preference should be very useful for school food service professionals. Alaska Grown was preferred in all product selections and familiar/uniform product form was preferred when given the choice.

In Talkeetna students visit a local farm and buy product to use in a 'Healthy Taste of Alaska Potluck'. The potluck raised enough funds to continue the project all school year long!



Students from Talkeetna Elementary visit Right of Way Farm.

## Talkeetna: A Healthy Taste of Alaska Project

**Project Overview:** The Talkeetna Elementary School PTA's Healthy Lifestyles Committee implemented a project with goals to: (1) support local farmers and food producers, (2) improve student nutrition and knowledge of nutrition, and (3) facilitate communication between food services, the school administrators, and the Talkeetna Elementary School PTA.

### Project Report:

This group pulled together a weekly salad bar that nearly half the students took advantage of. One young boy invited his mom the second week because, as he put it, "we don't have any of this at home." The project also took a class to see a local farm and taught lessons in the classroom using vegetables, farming and/or nutrition. The classes then prepared a dish to serve for the 'Healthy Taste of Alaska' potluck. The potluck brought 150 community members (15 percent of the community) together and raised enough money to continue the salad bar throughout the school year. Project leaders and project participants alike learned from the project. Students were introduced to new foods and concepts and a new tradition has begun for the community to pull together a 'Healthy Taste of Alaska' potluck and continue offering a weekly salad bar.

## UAA: Smart Start Food for Thought Project

**Project Overview:** The Smart Start Food for Thought Project was designed to engage new, unprepared University of Alaska Anchorage students by immersing them first-hand in a dramatic farm-to-table experience and creating a public education campaign on behalf of the Alaska Farmland Trust. Key campus and community partners in the Smart Start Food for Thought Project include UAA's Culinary Arts, Hospitality & Restaurant Management, Dietetics & Nutrition

Division, Rempel Family Farm, and Alaska Farmland Trust.

**Project Report:** Students began the project two days after class began. They visited the Alaska Botanical Garden, the Williams Street Farmhouse, and the Rempel Family Farm, where they participated in a service learning project. In October the students participated in an economics of farming workshop with the executive director of Alaska Farmland Trust and learned about cooking, nutrition, and the business of food. Finally, in November the students collaborated with faculty and student chefs from UAA's Culinary Arts program to host a local luncheon on the UAA campus. Reading the students' pre and post writing samples is an amazing testament to the power of this project; one sample is picked for illustration:

8/29/11 – "How do I feel about organic farming and foods? I think of fresh and healthy. Because farming is the starting point for all foods. Someday I would like to try organic foods right from the soil. I also think about the animals on the farm, how they are big help to foods. I have images running through my head about farming, but I don't really think about farming before I eat. I never really think about where my food on a plate comes from. I just eat."

11/28/11 – "I did taste organic vegetables fresh from the soil at Rempel's farm, and they were delicious. The best you ever had. Alaska should do more to feed itself as we once did back in the day, but Alaska's farmland is disappearing and people are changing their way of life. Now I always think about where my



Students from Tok school visit a bison farm and purchase meat for a special 'bison stew' lunch at school.

food came from before I eat it. Most times I honestly have no idea. I wish we would eat more healthy fresh food.”

## Tok: Where the Bison Roam, “Making the Connection” Project

*This project was one of two that were led by a school food service director.*

**Project Overview:** The goals of this project were to have students see an actual bison herd that is being used to supplement meat for Stevens Village; and to visit a working farm/garden that provides produce to the Dry Creek community.

**Project Report:** More than 40 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students traveled to see their “local” Bison herd, 100 miles from Tok. Randy Mayo, the chief for Stevens Village, told the students

about the project to bring bison to Delta and the history behind the project. The students witnessed the purchase of 70 pounds of bison meat from the herd caretakers. The meat was then used in the lunch programs at three of the schools. Tok made a bison stew with the meat and the kids were stopping by the kitchen all morning to ask what smelled so good. Mentasta and Northway served the meat roasted with mashed potatoes and gravy. Students were interested in the similarity between bison and moose meat. Approximately 150 students among the three schools were served bison meat.

## Anchorage: Explore, Engage, Enrich, and Educate Through Eggs Project

**Project Overview:** Jane Yokoyama, a teacher at Begich Middle School organized and led this project. The goal of this project was for students to learn how to raise laying hens. It is also hoped that students would learn how food travels from the farm to the table, the costs and factors involved in local food production and the variety of careers within the agriculture and nutrition industries. Students also learned about food safety issues surrounding egg production and consumption. Additionally, students used their school’s food recycling program to supplement the chickens’ diet and prepare the chicken manure for composting to be used in the school’s greenhouse.

**Project Report:** Over 200 students were reached with this project either through direct instruction or indirectly by attending a Global Youth Service Day Fair. The fair theme was “Think Globally, Act Locally” and 28 display boards were created for the event. Twelve students volunteered to present their display boards at a public event that had over 10,000 people in attendance. More than 20 students assisted with caring and feeding of the chickens, supplementing their diet with cafeteria leftovers. Eggs were donated to Alaska Worker’s Association and the Food Bank of Alaska. Students learned about food safety, raising chickens, benefits and challenges of growing food locally, and careers in nutrition. From the pre/post surveys the students showed gains in all knowledge areas, with the largest gains seen with food safety and carbon footprint knowledge. Students both in and out of the class were positively impacted by this project, one student that got the chance to hold a chicken said, “This is the best day of my life!” Food service and teacher feedback indicated an overall positive enthusiasm for this project with continued support and involvement by all parties.

## Sitka: Local Fish to Schools Project

**Project Overview:** The “Local Fish to Sitka Schools” project was coordinated by the Sitka Conservation Society. The Fish to School project goals were to increase and broaden youth understanding of local seafood resources by integrating locally-caught seafood into the school lunch program, introducing stream-to-plate curricula, and fostering a connection to the local fishing culture. Prior to this project local fish were absent from school lunches, even though Sitka is the ninth largest seafood port in the United States. Through the “Local Fish to Sitka Schools” project, the Sitka school lunch program serves locally harvested fish twice a week.

**Project Report:** Fish to School lunches are available to 700 students in two schools and two additional schools have been added on during the 2011-2012 school year. ‘Local Fish Lunch’ participation has nearly doubled since its inception and averages between 30 and 40 percent participation from students. The program submitted their project to the Alaska Farm to School Challenge and won first place. Alaska’s First Lady, Sandy Parnell and Director of the Alaska Division of Agriculture, Franci Havemeister, both showed their support by attending a ‘Local Fish Lunch’ on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Of the school’s 700 students, 200 participated in an in-depth fish to school curriculum learning about local fish from stream to plate.

Results are impressive:

Grade Level	% students	Activity
7 <sup>th</sup>	81%	Increased knowledge of food systems
7 <sup>th</sup>	57%	Increased understanding of the environmental regulations and benefits of eating locally-harvested fish
3 <sup>rd</sup>	74%	Increased knowledge of the health benefits of eating fish
3 <sup>rd</sup>	88%	Consume fish weekly
7 <sup>th</sup>	51%	Consume fish weekly

## Fairbanks: J.P. Jones Community Development Center Project

**Project Overview:** The Fairbanks J.P. Jones Community Development Center established small garden plots for children and used Farm to School grant funding to expand the agricultural experience by purchasing soil amendments, a composting bin (to utilize kitchen waste from the food service provided), a wheelbarrow, and other small garden tools. In addition, the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with the J.P. Jones Community Development Center to offer agricultural lessons and farmer visits, and a registered dietitian would visit the center to present a nutrition lesson. The culmination of the summer agricultural experience was a meal of all-Alaskan food for the children and the local urban community utilizing products grown at the Community Center and local farms, and other Alaskan products.

**Project Report:**

The Fairbanks J.P. Jones project served youth aged 3 to 17 during the after school and summer program offering a variety of agricultural experiences. Daily participation ranged from five to 35 students taking part in lessons, hands-on activities, games, and visits to the farmers market. Produce was grown on-site in window box gardens and raised beds. Youth engaged in pre/post activities about what they learned in the lessons and activities; results showed there was an increase in learning depending on the activity. One highlight activity was making kale chips from locally grown kale and hosting a community dinner and activity day with locally sourced foods.

## Galena: Potato and Carrot Production Project

**Project Overview:** The goals of the Galena Potato and Carrot production project were (1) for students at Galena Interior Learning Academy (GILA) to produce potatoes and carrots to be used in the residential dining facility, and (2) to determine if producing and storing potatoes and carrots is a plausible and economically viable activity for the GILA dining facility and campus. Unfortunately, the grant cycle and the production cycle did not coincide; therefore, during the grant period all of the project's preparatory work was completed and seeds were purchased. Actual planting was done in spring of 2012 and harvesting will take place in the fall.

### **Project Report:**

The project began with forty juniors and seniors from the GILA campus participating in an environmental science portion of the project. This section began with lessons about potato biology, plant physiology, and soil science then ended with soil sample collection from eight different quadrants of the production plot. Next there were three 'fundamental math concepts' classes with forty freshman and sophomore students that learned about potato biology emphasizing spacing and planting. The students in this section divided into groups; one estimated plot size using the standard pace/step method and the other estimated plot size using tapes and tools. They then calculated square footage of the production plot. There were fifteen culinary arts students who prepared the potatoes for planting, cutting seed potatoes for maximum yield and counting the number of potato seeds for the different varieties. On the last day of school six classes; (65 students) showed up to the potato plot to plant the seed potatoes. Carrot planting will resume when the ground is dry enough to till and harvest will occur in the fall when everything will be weighed and prepared for the students to eat. A cost benefit analysis will be submitted in October following the harvest of the plot.

## Mat-Su: Rooting for the Roots Project

**Project Overview:** Sherrod Elementary School's third graders, who study the Matanuska-Susitna Valley as part of their social studies curriculum, learned about the root vegetables that grow in the area. The district's nutrition services department would prepare recipes utilizing fresh, locally grown produce and partner with teachers to help present these recipes to the students. Each child would be able to participate in a tasting or demonstration. Students also participated in putting together a cookbook that contains the "Rooting for the Roots" recipes.

### **Project Report:**

This project focused on third grade curriculum and standards, it included five third grade classes and reached 123 students total. Several questions about the local area were identified by the social studies section and then a number of lessons and units were covered to address the questions. There was a unit on farming, nutrition, math, and science. An exciting 'hands-on' section was done in collaboration with the lead chef at the Mat-Su Student Nutrition Services. Student Nutrition Services hosted a presentation and taste test using local foods and the teachers noticed a paradigm shift in regards to foods the students thought they would like. To finish the project off the classes gathered recipes from the students and turned them into classroom cookbooks for students to take home and will be turned into a professionally bound cookbook for the school titled 'Yummy For Your Tummy'. In the spring students participated in planting vegetables in a garden that has been on the school playground for years, with the knowledge from this project the teachers noticed a much better sense of engagement and understanding from the students. As a result of this grant project the third grade classes will be integrating this program every year with the new activities and curricula that was developed.

## Dillingham: Elementary Schoolyard Garden Project

**Project Overview:** Dillingham Elementary School received grant funding for a schoolyard garden that would provide an educational learning opportunity for its students. Having a schoolyard garden will introduce the students to important concepts of food production, gardening, nutrition, and soils management.

### **Project Report:**

The goal of this project was exposing students to vegetables; how they are grown, what they taste like when fresh, and how they are harvested. The project reached approximately 150 students; they ate healthy snacks such as raw broccoli, baby carrots, and snap peas during an after school science club. The students also participated in mixing up the soil and seeds, and several students got to take home plants to nurture over summer break. There were a few ideas for a more successful project in the future, including having a more accessible garden, planting things that take minimal care, and having more support throughout the community. This project provided a base outline for how to go about generating a school garden in Dillingham and the necessary changes to create a more successful program the next time around.

## Anchorage: “Is There Food in the (Green) House?” Project

**Project Overview:** The Garden Club began at Chugach High School three years ago. There was a great deal of enthusiasm for a weekly activity and more students wanted to participate than could be accommodated. Chugach is an urban school and most of the school grounds are covered by cement or pavement. Very few places are available for cultivation. In addition, there is very little space inside the building to store the gardening tools, containers, grow lights, soil, seeds, and other materials needed for a school garden. The proposed solution to this problem was to build a structure to serve as a greenhouse and shed. This building would provide a place to store supplies and a place (on the pavement) where edible plants can be grown and potentially harvested in the early spring and late fall, thus extending our brief Alaskan growing season.

### **Project Report:**

There were unforeseen hurdles to overcome in getting a greenhouse on school property but after that was figured out things came together. Chugach Optional now has a beautiful, functioning greenhouse. The kids in the garden club are very excited and feel that they are making a difference, they are valued, and they belong to a caring community. The students of the garden club learn how to plant and look after vegetables in a garden. Some lessons include; which vegetables are best to grow, how to tell the difference between plants and weeds, nature and the environment, how to use tools, which parts of the plants are edible, how to work together to reach a goal, and lessons of trial and error. While the goal of bringing fresh produce into the school was not met, the process of providing the opportunity is now there, and hopefully it will happen in the next school year.

## Juneau: Grown Delectable Edibles Project

**Project Overview:** The goals of the Juneau Grown Delectable Edibles project were for students to (1) understand the importance of growing and consuming locally grown food, (2) learn the nutritional benefits of including locally grown and indigenous produce in local diets, (3) learn the importance of crop rotation, species diversity, soil composition, and planting practices for healthy and sustainable produce harvests through a local partnership with mentor Master Gardeners, (4) learn food and ingredient components of nutritionally sound meals, (5) understand the process of converting food

produce to food product, and (5) plan, build, prepare and plant on-site planters for more readily accessible observation.

**Project Report:**

This project supported a spring course for the students of the school which culminated in a formal dinner and tour of an organic garden. This project also included multiple culturally-themed group lunches which allowed for food lessons focusing on healthy eating choices. The group also held harvest parties and continued to donate products to community programs like the local food shelter and food bank. The grant program invigorated a community garden, by means of having the essential tools to work with in the garden as well as in the kitchen. The students involved also plan to create a cookbook featuring locally grown and harvested products as well as indigenous wild edibles from the region.

For more info, updates, news, grant opportunities, and announcements join our listserv at:

<http://list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm>

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