In 2012, Amy Ellings, MPH, a public health nutritionist with the Washington State Department of Health, brought together key partners to promote safe salad bars in schools. The project partners were the state Department of Agriculture, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Health’s Food Safety Program, Washington State University School of Food Science and the youth-led Seattle Food Empowerment Education and Sustainability Team (FEEST). The project aimed to increase understanding and to communicate clearly with three key audiences — school food service directors, county health inspectors, and students — to address barriers to salad bar use and expansion. The team developed communication resources for these target audiences.

The Washington salad bar team was prolific! The SAFE Salad Bar project developed a comprehensive guide for school nutrition directors for implementing salad bars programs in schools. The project team posted the guide on each partner agency’s website and emailed it along with additional resources to school nutrition directors and local health agencies that conduct food safety inspections in schools. In addition, the Washington team produced:

- **Salad Warz**, an educational video designed by FEEST students to promote salad bars. The video includes a tutorial on salad bar etiquette for students.
- **Antidote**, a companion activity to the video.
- Students’ salad bar recommendations.
- Posters made by students.
- A process brief, a narrative of inter-agency work to develop the guide and create the educational materials.

The Washington team worked directly with students in FEEST to promote safe salad bar use. The students designed and developed Salad Warz and Antidote, the companion activity to the video. In addition, students developed a list of recommendations for salad bars and created posters that schools around the state put up in their cafeterias:

- **Salad Bar Safety**, a reminder of salad bar etiquette.
- **Keep It Clean**, a reminder for keeping salad bars clean.

**About Amy**

Amy is the Healthy Eating Active Living Program Manager with the Washington State Department of Health. Before becoming Program Manager, Amy was the state Nutrition Coordinator. She also served as the State Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition Coordinator. Amy blogs for the Department of Health at [Adventures in Health](#). Amy is a busy mom of two (ages 1 and 4). She is active in a community garden in her neighborhood, and she is very excited because they are starting a little pumpkin patch at the garden! When she’s not in the garden, Amy enjoys hiking and skiing.
• Last Chance for Fruit, a reminder for students to take fruit from the salad bars.

**Successes and Major Outcomes**

The SAFE Salad Bar team members showed the students’ video to middle and high school students in Seattle and posted it on YouTube. The YouTube video was viewed 1,254 times by the end of 2012. The team also posted the SAFE Salad Bars Guide on each of their agency’s websites. Project partners disseminated the guide by email to key stakeholders, including school nutrition directors in 280 school districts, reaching 2,000 schools, as well as to 35 local health jurisdictions responsible for food safety inspections. The email included links to the video and other educational resources. The guide also went to local food system advocates, community garden groups and other partners. The team announced the guide in the Washington State Department of Agriculture’s 650-person Farm to School Connections listserv and shared it with other partners through the National Farm to School Network and the USDA Farm to School conference calls.

In addition, the partner agencies shared their resources and information at seven Farm to School workshops throughout the state in 2013 and 2014. School nutrition directors, local health jurisdiction representatives and others working on school food purchasing attended the workshops, reaching 126 people, including representatives from 69 school districts and nine local health jurisdictions. Other participants included community advocates, extension agencies, farms and food vendors.

The team also presented the SAFE Salad Bars in Schools resources at four Washington School Nutrition Association Conferences in 2013, reaching 350 people. Leaders from the partner agencies also presented at the Washington State Environmental Health Association’s annual Environmental Health Conference in 2013 and at a number of other workshops and conferences throughout the state. Including the Farm to School workshops, together these presentations reached at least 600 people.

**Findings and Lessons Learned**

The Washington team concluded that the SAFE Salad Bars guide addressed very real barriers that schools encountered. In addition, feedback on the guide showed that the team’s multi-agency approach was successful in ensuring that the language is clear and common to school district nutrition services staff while also articulating messages agreed upon by food science researchers, state health and food safety officials and agriculture and farm to school educators.
Involving students in creating messages that resonate with their peers was a key component of the project’s success. The Salad Warz video was a great way to engage secondary school students in salad bar education. The team received great feedback! Students loved the Star Wars reference. Engaging students to help craft materials and develop recommendations was key. Students have a wealth of knowledge about how they and their peers react to information and how to present it in ways that will get the most attention and response. **Students should be involved more often!**

Bringing together experts from multiple state agencies — food safety, farm to school and school food — provided a breadth and depth of knowledge that contributed to the project’s success. The diversity of agency experience with target stakeholders made the products user-friendly and credible with school food service staff, local health officials and students.

The Washington SAFE Salad Bar team plans to continue to work together to keep the guide current and to respond to questions and challenges. The project partners concluded that their joint effort laid the foundation for collaboration on future projects large and small. The partners have greater knowledge and awareness of the work and priorities of each agency, and they will have ready contacts and working relationships as questions arise in the future.

**Challenges**

Amazingly, challenges were very few, because of the wonderful partners in this project. The team found many opportunities to share their resources.