

*January 20th, 2010, by Margie Doyle*

## Yes, Virginia...Kids Really Can Like Beets



**Ethan Myles-Era and Gabe Thompson have thirds of Chef Zach Holley's beets.**

*By Mandy Randolph*

For those of you who believe there is no Santa Clause as much as you believe kids won't eat beets, I'm offering evidence that you may be wrong...at least for the latter. Our new cafeteria chef, Zach Holley, told me he was going to serve beets for lunch in the cafeteria, and he was concerned students would not eat them. He suggested I do something with beets in my Farm to Classroom students, grades Kindergarten through Fourth, which I did. I surveyed each class to find out who liked beets and who was willing to try them. The overwhelming majority wanted nothing to do with them. In spite of their reluctance to consider the possibility, we cooked the beets, learned about the nutritional value and many uses, painted with the juice, and ate them. It was a tough sell, but at the end of the day there were only 2 students that refused to taste.

Not a bad rate of return – 2 out of 130. In each class there were even many students lining up for seconds and thirds. As promised, Zach made 12 pounds of beets from Black Dog farm for lunch in the school cafeteria the next day. He roasted them with rosemary and put them on the line as one of the vegetable choices. Wonder of all wonders, he was completely out of beets before the entire fourth grade class was served! I am totally convinced that students chose

the beets because of the previous experience they had with them in the F2C class. It works. If the children have a connection to the food, they will eat it! Of course it helps that Chef Zach prepared them so deliciously. It was more labor intensive than opening a can of beets; but at the end of the day, he is grateful to have the opportunity to serve fresh ingredients to the students. Thank you, Chef Zach, the Farm to Cafeteria Program and all those who support it, for making this possible.