



# Farm to School Advocacy Series

Insights & Lessons from Implementation  
and Feedback







# About the Advocacy Series

The Farm to School Advocacy Series is a flexible, two-week virtual program designed for students in grades 6th–12th to participate in Farm to School activities while learning from home. The series was broken into several topics including, "What is Farm to School?", "Perceptions of School Food", "Local Procurement", "Nutrition Education", and "School Gardens".

Each topic included a brief overview lesson, an educational video, a reflective question pertaining to the video, two activities, and follow-up questions to choose from. Participating students were asked to complete a pre- and post-survey to evaluate progress and success, knowledge gained, and shifts in perception of school food farm to School, as well as what aspects of the program they are most interested in and found the most beneficial.







# COVID and its Effect on the Series



The original intent of organizing Farm to School Student Groups was to provide students an opportunity to participate and influence the school meal planning process through focus group sessions where their voice, input, and perspectives on school meals and their Farm to School programs would be heard.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the Student Groups to pivot this in-person activity into a fully virtual Google Classroom educational opportunity, where students could access a hub of School Food and Farm to School lessons and activities. These lessons and activities were previously created from the Farm to School Collective's Farm to School Student Curriculum and Farm to School @ Home Activities.



# Recruiting Participants

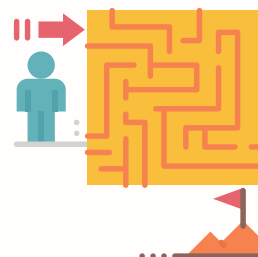
We learned several lessons to more successfully implement programs such as these. The shifting information and timelines related to the COVID-19 pandemic added challenges that we would not normally realize.

## Strategies to Recruit Students



- Using Bitmojis and colorful, exciting images on the flyers
- Sending flyers out to school districts administration, garden clubs, and community networks
- Offered a flexible program that does not interfere with class time for students
- Promoted the incentive of a Farm to School Advocate certificate

## Recruiting Challenges



- School email domains are very secure leaving us unable to reach students who signed up with their school email address
- Finding a date and time range that does not conflict with school and other events

## Lessons Learned



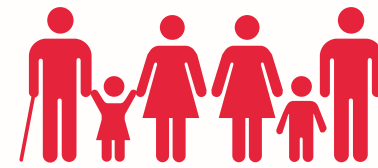
- Ensure appropriate lead time in advance of the program
- Request and secure personal emails rather than school emails
- Offer this opportunity as a part of an afterschool program for more structure and facilitation
- Identify and contact the appropriate school admin personnel to relay opportunities to principals and individual school sites



# Instilling Passion for Farm to School

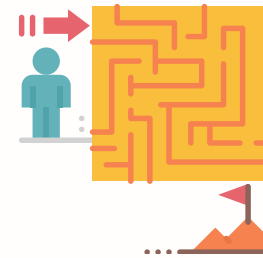
Personal connection, particularly undertaken in-person, was a key driver of instilling a passion for Farm to School. Additionally, offering a certificate of completion to add to college and personal resumes was an effective incentive.

## Strategies to Instill Passion



- Offering activities on a variety of topics to interest all students and introduce them to all aspects of Farm to School
- Providing certificates and valuable titles to put on resumes or college applications
- Asking thought-provoking questions with each video and activity in order to push students to think outside of the box

## Passion Challenges



- Difficult to foster excitement and momentum for the program due to it being held completely virtually

## Lessons Learned



- Feature more in-person or face-to-face Zoom activities in order to better engage students and learn more about their passion for local food





# Incentives: Award Certificates

Offering certificates of completion to students participating in the series was an effective incentive. Students could include the award on college applications and personal resumes.





# Engaging Students

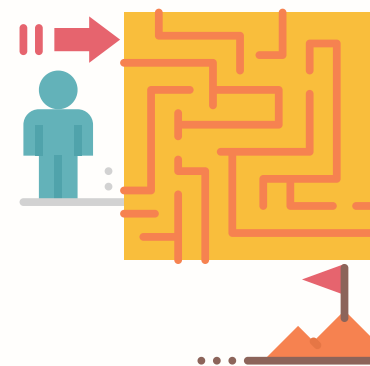
Engaging students in the series provided many valuable lessons. As in other areas, identifying the most effective channels of communication was key. Also important was setting boundaries on time; too many options / too much flexibility likely contributed to unfinished modules.

## Strategies to Engage Students



- Frequent communication and posting announcements in the classroom every day of the series
- Offering office hours and giving contact information in case of questions
- Giving multiple options of activities for students to complete
- Offering videos, readings, and supplementary materials to engage students
- Grading consistently and providing positive feedback on assignment submissions so that students can see their progress immediately

## Engagement Challenges



- Some students who registered for the series never ended up accepting or receiving the invitation to the classroom
- Engagement was high on the first day but dwindled due to various reasons, including lack of checking email, and students being busy with school and extracurriculars
- Too much work and too long a program during the school year
- Flexibility proved difficult for some students to follow along
- Since the series served as a hub of activities and lessons, it was overwhelming for some students to see all the classwork at once and looked daunting

## Lessons Learned



- Utilize a text app to send regular text updates to students
- Setting a time and structure for students to work on the program rather than having it be completely flexible

# Contact

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To learn more about the Farm to School Collective, the Farm to Institution Center, and Community Health Improvement Partners please visit:

- [www.farmtoschoolcollective.org](http://www.farmtoschoolcollective.org)
- [www.f2icenter.org](http://www.f2icenter.org)
- [www.sdchip.org](http://www.sdchip.org)

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