



Farm to School During COVID Showcase

Video Transcript

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FAITH OAKLAND: I just want to say thank you all for joining us today on our first virtual showcase. This is our first of four showcases we plan to have this year and it's a new experience, and we're just going to enjoy everything that we have available today. So, this showcase is focused on how to continue farm to school during our COVID times. So, we do want to thank the USDA, and the Office of Community Food Systems and the Farm to School Grant for helping us provide the finances for everything that we do farm to school. Today we have four awesome presenters. We also have Aubree Roth, who is our farm to school coordinator, and Sarah Penix who is the farm to school VISTA, both working for team nutrition, presenting today will be Jason Mandala from Garden City Harvest, JB Capdeville from Polson School District, and then we have Fiona Jensen-Hitch from Columbia Falls School District, and then Kristen Rothe from the Missoula County Public Schools. Each of them have created a video for us today and we'll do a small introduction of them when it's their presentation time. So, the agenda today, we're going to obviously start with the welcome and the introductions, which I rushed through. We have the farm to school during COVID presentations and there are four of those. We'll do a small breakout on eating mindfully, and then have the rest of the presentations, we'll have our lunch break, and then we'll come back and talk about how to plan. Any questions that you have during the entirety of the day, if you have a question for any of the presenters or just a general question you can type that into the chat box and Aubree and/or Sarah will get to those as the time presents. I think I have everything; I believe, we're going to turn it over to Aubree's going to tell us how to do our next steps.

AUBREE ROTH: Hi everyone, it's great to see you all. I'm just going to stop my video here for a sec okay so in case you're not familiar with zoom, I know many of you are and we've all been zooming a lot lately but just to give you a quick tutorial so that we can all be on the same page about how to

use zoom, and we can have a really effective and engaging and fun event today. So, first off we are recording this and we will post the recording on our Training and Events page on the Montana Farm to School site so definitely check that out. But just as a warning that we are recording now. So, the first most important thing is mute and unmute as well as your audio settings, so here on the slide you'll see where that button is if you're connected on a computer, on a mobile device it's going to look a little different, but this shows you being muted with a line through there and then if you click that button again it will unmute you, and then you can talk and we encourage you to unmute yourself if you do have a question, but as Faith said, you can also put your questions or comments in the chat box at any time. The next piece is the video - turning on and off, so we'd love for you to turn on your videos especially during the discussion parts, but we know that if you're having internet connectivity issues that it is helpful for you to turn off your video on to help your audio still come through, so if you do have weak internet or having little spotty issues today with that then feel free to turn off your video but especially during the discussion parts, we encourage you to turn on your video. And then of course as we said, we encourage you to use the chat box throughout so if an idea or a question pops into your mind, type it into the chat box and then when it's time for Q&A, we will elevate that and get your question answered. Especially if you're also having any technical issues, then type it in there, you can choose everyone and then everyone can see your comment or you can choose to send it to one of us, if you're having technical difficulties you might want to send it to either myself, Aubree, or Sarah Penix and we'll help you out directly. And then we will be using breakout rooms in zoom today, so when we get to that point you will see an invitation like this one here and you'll click join breakout room. It'll put you into the room that we've designated for you and then when we're done with the breakout rooms, you don't have to do anything. It'll bring you right back so with that I'm just going to jump into giving us a little grounding in what farm to school is. Farm to school is an umbrella term or a movement to connect children to their food to improve their health, support farmers, ranchers, and food businesses and strengthen communities through the three core elements, which are shown here: procurement, education, and school gardens. Farm to school programs generally work best when each of these three core elements are represented and as you'll see throughout this event there are many ways to implement farm to school. Farm to school is not a program you sign up to do, but rather you build it to meet your school and community's interests and resources. Let's just take a few to look at these core elements with examples, so procurement which includes buying and serving local foods in school and after-school meals and snacks - schools are sourcing local foods from all five food groups, from apples to beef and beyond. This includes food purchased from local farmers, ranchers, and processors as well as food grown and raised at schools. Growing and raising food with students is a great way to engage them in the process and get them excited about unfamiliar foods. School gardens vary in size, type, and purpose, and some are even farms with livestock. They can be educational, they could be in-ground gardens, raised beds, greenhouses, or indoor gardens. And your garden could be even unconventional, like Gallatin Valley Farm to School's Bob the Greenhouse Bus that provides mobile school garden education throughout the Gallatin Valley. Definitely the broadest of the three core elements, the education piece spans food nutrition and agriculture-based education. Farm to school education can take place anywhere. Here, Gallatin Valley Farm to School provides in-classroom lessons at a Bozeman elementary school and getting kids engaged in cooking is another important piece of farm to school and obviously this picture was taken outside of COVID times so cooking may look a bit different now. Of course, we're excited to say that farm to school is growing in Montana. In 2018-19, 54.8 percent of schools were implementing farm to school and now that has grown to 57.1 percent, and this is from our annual report that just released from the 2018-19 school year. So, check that out on our website! There are many benefits to farm to school programs as you'll see throughout the

showcase. I encourage you to check out the National Farm to School Network's benefits fact sheet whose link is at the bottom of the slide. For more information about the impacts of these initiatives, the Montana Farm to School leadership team provides partnerships across the state to build farm school initiatives. We welcome your participation in our five working groups, so contact me if you're interested in getting involved in that conversation at the statewide level. So, I know that's a quick overview of what farm to school is but don't worry, we'll provide more resources and information later in this event.

FAITH OAKLAND: So, our first presenter is Jason Mandala. He works for Garden City Harvest out of Missoula. He has been the farm to school director for 13 years and I'm looking forward to hearing what he has to share with us!

JASON MANDALA: Hey everybody my name is Jason Mandala and I'm the farm to school director for Garden City Harvest in Missoula, Montana and I am here today to talk to you about building effective school garden committees. These are an essential part of having an outdoor classroom space that is usable, functional.

VIDEO: Hey everybody uh my name is Jason Mandala, we're going to jump right into the components of an effective school garden committee. Okay so at Garden City Harvest we've created a document to help schools create outdoor learning centers that are the home of their school gardens. I like to say that we don't want to limit the space to a garden space we want it to be inclusive of all the potential learning activities so I prefer to call them outdoor learning centers and a big success of those is having a great school garden committee so there's a big chunk of this guidebook that goes into that so we're going to look at that in detail here today um if folks are interested in getting their hands on this guidebook we are more than willing to send you that for free and I'll give you my contact information at the end of the video. So let's take a look at the members of the great school garden committee, this is a group of people that you're going to assemble before you create your school garden if you already have a school garden and you're the only one running it or you have a few people you can certainly do it afterwards the people are going to change throughout the years obviously kids are going to move on and that means parents will move on and teachers are going to move on as well so it won't be the same people obviously the entire time but these are some of the roles and responsibilities that we want to make sure are covered when creating a school garden committee um no matter when it's set you know at day one or year 10. So the most important is the chair, the president of the school garden committee, we like to have this person not be a teacher to be honest and the reason is teachers are already very very busy people not to say we all aren't but teachers have a lot on their plates at the school already, already on many committees um so if you can get a really motivated parent or you know someone from outside the school, maybe it's a partner organization, to be the chair I think that works out a little bit better certainly not limited to uh non-teachers I just think it's a little bit easier to put it in someone else's hands this is someone who's going to be super enthusiastic about the garden they're going to be a leader they're going to advocate for the garden um they're going to make sure that the meetings happen you're going to make sure those meetings have agendas um they may be writing updates about the gardens happenings in the school newsletter or taking care of a bulletin board inside the school that has all the information about the garden we'll talk about meetings a little bit later so chair super essential um you're also going to need a secretary or whatever you want to call this person a person who takes notes for the garden and for them for the meetings and this is a person who you know is good at taking notes basically and is interested in helping out with the

school garden um you don't want this to be the chair some of these elements can overlap or some of these roles can overlap we don't want the chair taking the notes is the big thing um and as you can see here on this list I have stars next to some of these those are really the essential ones um the others are not 100% essential to having a great committee but are you know good committee so someone to take notes for sure and to get those notes out to people who attended the meeting or maybe miss the meeting you're also going to want a treasurer someone that's going to deal with the money this could be the chair as well this could be the secretary as well this could be an overlapping position but we want someone to know what's going on with the funding for the garden oftentimes from my experience we have put school garden committees they've been nestled under the PTAs or PTOs at a school so there'll be a subcommittee for one of those um which works out well because the PTA has a fair amount of fundraising capabilities already in place usually so it's a good way to get you know your garden committee moving quickly it's also a part of the school that exists already so it's easy to get folks involved through the PTA so I highly recommend doing that you could nestle your garden committee under the existing school committees if your school has let's say a green schools committee um or something like that you could become part of that I think it's better for it to be on its own and i think it's better for it to be a parent-teacher endeavor not just teachers alone it puts again a little bit too much on their plate so beyond chair secretary and treasurer you're definitely going to want to have what we call a garden education liaison this is a person who works as a go-between between teachers and using the garden this means potentially scheduling the garden space for activities for lessons for outside organizations that may not be direct partners in the garden but are going to use the space to educate the students at the school so you're going to want that person again that could be the chair again we don't want to put too much on one person so it's good to spread these roles and responsibilities out but again you know you could combine some of these and that that one could be combined, I would recommend this not being a teacher it's hard for a teacher to be that go between the garden space and other teachers um we don't want them to be in a position to have to you know call out their peers for not showing up for a lesson or something like that it's a lot better I think if a parent takes care of this role or maybe some other internal employee at the school those are the four really main essential ones um we have a couple other down here that are really nice to have again there's fundraiser is kind of goes along with treasury it should be everyone's responsibility but if you do have someone at the school or a parent who is good at this experience at grant writing um is not afraid to ask for money that's a great person to have you may depending on what phase you're in your garden want an event party planner um someone that will make sure there's food for volunteers if you're doing a big build day or something like that maybe extending the use of the garden into the community this could be their role um so that's another good one to have not that's not 100% necessary though um and then just folks who are interested in the garden um as I said earlier people are coming and going on this committee because kids are moving on parents lose interest teachers move on so you want as many people there as you can um that being said I wouldn't try to cap it at maybe 10 or 12 people per meeting because they can't get bogged down if you have too many folks there but um definitely continue recruitment a recruitment process should always be happening with this committee um and then you may want some project leaders when you're going to have a major build project at the beginning of the garden or you're going to add a learning space or a shade structure or a shed that's when you're going to want to assign that kind of stuff to people who have those skills so you might find a parent or a teacher whose has those skills and make them a project leader for that kind of stuff those are the big ones that I that we've identified over the years when you have your garden committee you're going to want to meet at least at least four times a year is what we go for two in the fall two in the spring just to get your plans ready um for the coming growing season and for the following growing season see

where your money's at stuff like that those meetings shouldn't take more than an hour i highly recommend doing those meetings off-site um if it's not nice out if it's nice do them in the garden space i think it's great if it's not do them somewhere fun um not at the school so that you can draw folks in um nobody wants to go back to the school at six o'clock or five o'clock after they've had a full work day there or they've already been there to pick up their child. One other note a lot of my experience in this is from a vantage point of elementary schools if you have a middle school or high school garden or even a college garden I would highly recommend having those students be involved in this too maybe they're not every meeting but there are there you know they have a voice and we want them to be heard and this is their garden too that's a little bit more difficult to do at an elementary school level so that's about all I have um we have a short window to do this in I hope this helps out if you're interested in getting more information and getting this document feel free to contact me at jason@gardencityharvest.org.

FAITH OAKLAND: Okay thank you Jason, that was very informative and just knowing as a teacher in the classroom, it really helps to think about getting people outside of the school to help us I believe my FCS teacher is on here as well and the garden at our school has fallen on the two of us plus, our ag teacher, and that is where we failed and so Jason I'm going to need that document so that we can get our garden back up and running. And I took notes while you were presenting on the video I don't know if anybody else did but having the strong committee, we have a strong committee but we also are in classes so if we had outside people I think we would have been able to keep our garden going during this emergency. So, do we have anybody with any questions for Jason? We're fortunate to have Jason on with us right now and don't be shy to unmute yourself and ask your question or you can type it into the chat box.

ATTENDEE: well Jason can I ask you a question, while they're thinking of theirs sure um so as you were talking I really like the idea of the liaison because it is hard as a peer to tell your other teachers "hey, you missed your garden time," I was thinking our retired farmers would be such a good resource for that um even for the chair to have a retired farmer do that would that work.

JASON: Yeah I mean if you could find someone with that kind of experience I think that would be great um a retired teacher I mean anybody that has either garden experience or teaching experience would be I think the ideal candidate for that kind of position um or as chair um or just to have a committee in any capacity um I think that would be an ideal situation I think very rarely do you have that right most of the time um you're kind of scrambling to find folks at the beginning but once I think you have an established committee and um and you make it fun I think it's really easy to continue to get folks on it I think the challenge the challenge I've seen over the years is if you don't get your committee established early, then you're going to struggle and struggle until you actually get it fully established in it some of the schools I worked at for seven, eight years were still struggling to get a committee to the level it really needs to be to be effective at maintaining the space um and really integrating it into the school at the level that it needs to be useful, I think.

FAITH: and I can attest to that just because we have a strong plan, but we need a better committee so having that document from you will help us personally and I'm excited to get that.

GINGER BUCHANAN: I have a question. My name is Ginger Buchanan and I'm at Huntley Project School, the food service director here, does your FFA get involved with your school garden much?

JASON: It does not um we have a loose partnership with them um we've tried to do some gardening at our we have an agricultural education center here in Missoula that's linked with the FFA through the school system and 4-h as well um so we do partner with them but most of our school gardens here in Missoula are at the elementary school level and our FFA programming is all high school level stuff we would love to do more I think it's we're already both kind of doing a lot from our two ends which is elementary school in high school and we we've never been able to meet in the middle um to the point that we'd like to but we are working on a hopefully a new small mini farm behind our central kitchen that COVID kind of derailed but we're still going to hopefully get it in there in the next couple years. So since garden city harvest is the partner on this um we use our greenhouses to provide starts for all the school gardens um but our FFA site also has a greenhouse and they mainly use that for uh flower starts to raise funds for the FFA um but yeah both sites do have greenhouses thank you and yeah that was a quick 10 minute overview on that I kind of talked it for at least a half hour so if anybody ever wants to talk more about it beyond just getting the garden guide that I can send to you um I would gladly talk about that more if you're having a hard time establishing a committee or just figuring out how it should work I would gladly chat with you via zoom or over the phone

ATTENDEE: Jason, I have a quick question um I was just wondering about your recruitment for those committees if you could speak to some of the strategies that have worked best in terms of getting that out into the committee community um just the position availability or if people are nominating other people um and what that kind of looks like to get people involved?

JASON: That's a great question and a very important one um usually we'll go through the PTA initially to find folks after we you know kind of establish who's going to be the garden champion inside of the school at the beginning um which is usually a teacher sometimes it's a parent but most often a teacher um and then we'll move on from there and see where they see opportunities inside their school community that is usually through the PTA but not always um outside partnerships that already exist that are not necessarily with us are great folks to have in there um and then we'll throw it through the school newsletter if we're looking for new folks we always try to get you know this is something you don't always think about but having a parent who's on the committee who maybe has two or three children that you know maybe they have a first grader and then two kids that aren't in school yet that's somebody that could be on that committee for like eight years nine years that's the kind of person you want um you know we'd love to have a dad or mom of a fifth grader but if they're only there for a year then we gotta replace that person so looking at longevity like that that's a great thing to get and then you know looking outside the school and I always try to rely on the school itself to know you know who should we be identifying that's in their greater school community you know the surrounding neighborhood maybe who might want to help with this space there might be a you know somebody that was a huge um in the garden club for the community and you know is super knowledgeable it's retired that maybe wants to be a part of this so I think asking your school community who they think would be good fits and then when you get to that point when you need to replace folks, we've always gone to the PTA and then through the school newsletters um or just ask teachers like who do you think would be you know a good teacher to get on this committee.

FAITH: Thanks that was that was good that was a good question so thank you Jason, I really appreciate your input it's very helpful. We're moving on to JB Capdeville, she has been with Polson

School District for 19 years and has been heavily involved in FoodCorps in various roles, so I believe we are going to have a school garden tour.

JB CAPDEVILLE: Hello my name is JB Capdeville and I'm at the Polson school district in Montana and I just wanted to talk to you a little bit about our garden and learning center. Last spring, we had an opportunity to um expand our garden. We started with a small little two raised beds two years ago and this year we were able to with some funding put in a couple of more raised beds into our garden area, so we decided for our kids let's not only make a garden let's make it a learning center so what we've done is we've got several different types of plants into our beds and the kids are able to come out and do drawings and learn about plants and learn about soil and learn about water systems and generally, what we do at this time during our pandemic is we have just limited kids in our building at this time so, we generally try to bring out anywhere from four to six kids at a time out with their teacher to look at the garden and draw pictures and get information about how things are growing in Montana another thing that I've had a great experience with is working with FoodCorps, I've been the farm and school coordinator for the school district for about the last 10 years working with FoodCorps and we've had a great experience in having a service member within our school district for the last six years so we've not only been able to have our garden area as an educational center we've also had education in the classrooms and the strong connection and relationship we've had with support has been wonderful. I also work with Western Montana Growers Co-op as of working with local farmers and ranchers and bringing that information into our classrooms and one way that I do that is working with fresh fruit vegetable program through the fresh fruit vegetable program we're able to bring education in with all of the snacks that the kids get and I try to get as much local product into the classrooms in the spring and the fall when the harvests are coming on one thing that is really comes from so what I try to do when I work with local farmers is I bring information in about the local farmers and so, this particular information is about our wonderful melons from Dixon, Montana. Dixon is not very far from here and I'd love for the kids to experience those juicy melons another thing we like to work with is Montana Crunch Time which is in October, and during that time i generally use Campbell's Orchards, which is out at Finley Point Orchard and we get wonderful apples from them and the kids experience the Montana Crunch Time every year so there's many ways that you can start and manage your farm to school programs most of us do live in rural communities so getting to know families in the area I'm sure there's kids in your schools or school districts that their families do any type of ranching or farming and introducing and bringing those families in is very beneficial for the kids to learn about where their food comes from also working with the harvest of the month program it's another opportunity to bring in local products every month a product from Montana is highlighted and there's many ways of promoting that not only in your menu and lunchroom but in your classroom and with education so there's many different ways to initiate and start and maintain your farm to school programs it's a wonderful opportunity for the kids to learn about so thank you so much so yes when did it kind of changed everything for us but we still wanted to be able to utilize and promote the harvest of the month program and so what we did is since we were packaging lunches for kids for remote sites and off campus sites we decided to create smaller packages for the kids to still try out the items and so this particular one was Chex mix that we roasted the chickpeas and then made the Chex mix and mixed it all together we thought it was a fun little snack for the kids to be able to try a different variety and then in may let's see what we did we had beef we didn't, oh we made a homemade jerky and so that was really a fun project um my service member and myself spent a day making jerky in the kitchen and gave them all little slices of it so that was really, really fun to be able to do we also um we didn't do much through into the

summer um but it was fun to be able to offer those snacks for the kids and still be able to promote the program.

FAITH: Some pretty awesome ideas and I'm making notes for our school. Aubree, I think we're running a little short on time should we do question and answer or save that for later?

AUBREE: We could take one question perhaps and then move to the break and then we'll have more time for Q&A later.

FAITH: okay does anybody have a question for JB?

MOLLY: this is Molly Stenberg and I work with Aubree at Team Nutrition. I just wanted to compliment you, Janis, how you not how you have the garden but also garden and learning center because I think that just sets an expectation in any parent or staff's brain that they can learn so much out there and it's you know the garden is awesome but to tie it to the learning center. I think is really a smart strategy to inviting at the very beginning of the video you could see we had two picnic tables set up that have the availability to put umbrellas up and so we have had teachers going out there and coloring and taking different you know vegetable pictures and things out there and working with the kids so far this fall and so it's really nice for them to have not only their own space if they want to sit down but to be able to we have it spaced enough that they can walk around the different beds and even look at the bugs and worms and dirt you know it's just fun for them to be able to be out there so

JB: thank you very much for the compliment, thank you.

FAITH: okay so if you do have a question for JB, go ahead and type it into our chat box but I believe we're going to move forward to the mindful eating activity and I believe Sarah, you're going to take the lead on that.

SARAH PENIX: Yes, so I'm going to be sharing my screen shortly and this is the time that you'll want to get out your small snack and be ready to take part in this mindfulness activity. It's kind of a guided meditation snack break so here we go this is Nick from the Edible Schoolyard.

VIDEO: Welcome back to reflecting on food this episode we're going to do a short mindful eating activity get a strawberry or other small piece of fresh fruit before continuing to listen really press pause and go get a berry or slice of fruit right now. Okay now that you've got your fruit, this activity might feel a little silly or you might get impatient with it and that's perfectly normal just listen and follow the prompts as best you can focus on the food and look at it like you're seeing it for the first time turn it over and look at each side notice the shape of it feel the food texture with your finger is it smooth or bumpy how does it feel? Now move the food close to your nose and smell, try closing your eyes and smelling, what does it smell like? Smell it again breathing deeply this time now take a very small bite and chew it slowly as you chew notice the texture take another small bite and feel the food on your tongue notice the taste is it sour or tart is it sweet what does it taste like. Finish the food however you want to eat it. Now notice how you ate it did you eat it - all in one bite or did you continue eating small bites slowly? There is no right answer just an opportunity to be aware of how you are eating mindful eating like this isn't something for every time you eat but it can be useful if you want to appreciate your food or slow down when you are eating try it again with one of your

favorite foods and see if you enjoy it more or notice something new about it thanks for listening to reflecting on food.

SARAH: All right, I just wanted to pose a couple questions to you all before we let you go for a short break. I would just love to hear anyone's kind of initial reaction to the exercise, you know, if you found it calming or frustrating, or you know what if anything came up for you then I would also just um encourage everyone to reflect on did you notice anything did you learn anything about yourself or the way you eat just in that short practice so um if anyone has anything you'd like to share either in the chat box or beyond please feel free. I definitely feel like I noticed the flavors and like the scent of things more like it's that full sensory experience, and yeah so if there aren't any other comments then we can um take a break until 11. Feel free to mute or stop sharing for a short break until 11.

AUBREE: Okay, and then we so we don't want to leave we just want to go and do our whatever we need to do for a couple of minutes and come right back

FAITH: I am happy to present Fiona Jensen-Hitch from Columbia Falls, she is a member of the FoodCorps service and she has been working in that capacity for two years she is located at Columbia Falls Junior High and Reuter Elementary and she's going to tell about seed packets

VIDEO: Hi everyone my name is Fiona Jensen-Hitch and I am a second year FoodCorps service member in Columbia falls Montana working at Columbia falls junior high and Reuter and today I'm going to be talking to you about some seed starting kits that I made and distributed during COVID at the end of May and beginning of June when schools were closed so here's a picture of the kit and here's a closer look at all the materials so you've got on the left I've got three different varieties of seeds so each kit had three varieties including a leafy green since these went out in June and that was the harvest of the month I've got a paper bag coin bags for the seeds instructions a recipe a quart bag with potting mix four inch pots and harvest of the month stickers so here's a list of all the materials that I used for each seed kit. Here's a closer look at the seed starting pamphlet so I created these tri-fold pamphlets and these were instructions for starting the seeds indoors also with a note that they could be started outdoors as well and each kit also included a harvest of the month recipe and this was a leafy green recipe for June so as I mentioned each kit had three types of seeds including a leafy green for the June harvest of the month and here I've got some radishes and beans and I tried to only give out seeds that would be fairly easy to grow so nothing that would require a lot of maintenance um or would be kind of difficult climate wise so like peppers or tomatoes and what I did is with the help of pear educators is we separated out from the large packets of seeds about five to ten seeds into these coin envelopes so that each student would get at least one or two successful plants from each envelope and yeah so after we had repackaged a lot of the seed varieties and packaged the potting mix into the quart bags I went ahead and assembled the kits so put the potting mix in the paper bag along with the four inch pots and these I mostly had some left over from previous years and I also had a bunch donated by a local garden store so that would be a great resource and there's the seeds going in each one with about you know between five to ten seats the two pamphlets going in the instructions and the recipe and um finally, I just went ahead and closed these up and then just to add a little fun I had some of these stickers left that I wasn't able to use since schools had closed so I added the harvest of the month sticker on to the back and there's the finished seed kit now I wanted to talk a little bit more about what I used to provide these kits so we had the harvest of the month mini grant and I still had some money left over so that was what I was able to use to purchase the other materials for the kits and this was mainly for

the potting mix the all the bags and I believe that was pretty much it we had a lot of seeds left over from previous years as well as I was able to get seeds donated by various seed companies so that was where I sourced all of the materials and was able to use that grant for this now in terms of distribution what I did is that in May and June once since it was still technically school but remote. The lunches were being delivered along the bus route to students every day and so what I did is I spoke with the bus coordinator and I sent to the kits along the bus routes to be handed out alongside lunches to any student that wanted them, I sent out 350 kits and we have about almost 2,000 students in the district so you know it was available for any student that wanted it but I was not able to make one for every single student really just due to time and capacity and funds but that was the main project that I worked on during COVID while schools were closed this past spring.

FAITH: what an excellent idea I'm wondering if anybody has any questions, I see is it Diani, you're about to send out mini grow kits as part of your wedding. Does anybody have questions about the seed kit project idea?

FIONA: I just wanted to add really quickly so the main reason I wanted to do this was since uh we had gone remote obviously I couldn't have the students helping start the garden um so yeah I was just hoping to provide this as a way for students to at least do a little bit of gardening at home um obviously this is something that you're been doing now um I know like at least right now my district is back in person um so it may be a little bit easier distribution wise or you know getting students more involved in that but I think would definitely still be especially if your students are more limited in the days that they're coming to school would be a good opportunity to yeah get gardening home to students

FAITH: I think it's an awesome idea I actually did this with my students as well, not nearly as creatively as Fiona did, but I will be taking a lot of her ideas and incorporating it into our next project with the seed packets

ATTENDEE: I have a question for Fiona, so did you get any photos or anything back from the students hearing about how their um seed adventures went after they got sent out.

FIONA: Yeah so I did not um but I so this was kind of this is obviously when we were fully remote after the schools had closed down and after speaking with a lot of teachers who were just really having a lot of trouble even reaching students I decided that my priority was more just getting the materials to them and hoping that you know it would be an opportunity for them rather than I guess like asking or requiring them to follow up on it if that makes sense um but I did have I did have students talk to me about it afterwards when they came back this fall so yeah um but yeah oh and um wanted to add that I was able to our educators as well when we were doing this because um that was a great resource in order to have just hands putting them together.

FAITH: So, in the chat box Diani has shared um any participants who send feedback for any of their projects gets entered into a raffle to win a prize to encourage active participation that's a really fun idea I like that are there any questions about anything that you've seen or any comments any ideas that you're pondering for your next project I know I wrote down that we need picnic tables at our garden center I hadn't thought about that.

AUBREE: I had a question for Diani um it said that they get entered to win a prize what were some of the prize ideas you all came up with and did you get them donated or were they already school-based?

FAITH: So, she says they have stickers and gift certificates for ice cream. Diani is also in a very noisy office right now so she's not gonna unmute okay, so I am an educator I'm in high school which tends to be oh here we go. Sarah wants to know how you got the gift certificates. Oh wow, Diani is the farm to school coordinator teacher for Ellenville regional hospital in Ellenville central school district in New York and then she says she got the gift certificates by asking for donations that's pretty awesome and I'm all about the donation thing I'm not afraid to ask somebody to give us instead of having to pay for it. I look at it look at farm to school from a high school perspective because I've taught high school for 25 years so when we're looking at the seed packet idea after I passed those out then I got to thinking about how to get the high school kids more credit for it, so I incorporated some more science questions. I thought outside of my comfort zone and just sort of went more science fair style questions so my elementary kids were just given the packets and they got to grow flowers for their mom grandma or whatever but for high school I wanted them to focus in on the actual growth of the plant so I had them so my thought process was to have them give us all the information about their particular plant that they were given go through the different stages of the plant from the seedling to the fruit to the leaves all that kind of thing I wanted them to record the date it was planted you can read down through what I put together for the for the kids um so they could they could record the date that it sprouted when it became a seedling and of course all of these things would have been discussed with them in class so that they would they would recognize what those were and then they could record their watering and I also wanted them to record how much so they put an ounce of water on the plant but a quarter ounce came out the bottom so that they could see the drainage process and how water goes through and it doesn't all stay on the on the plant and then sunlight was it a cloudy day was it a bright day did they get direct sunlight did the plant get direct sunlight that day or indirect those kinds of things just to kind of keep a fairly decent record of what they were what their plant was going through and then any significant issues with the plant I mean um did it did it get spots on the leaves does it did the cat knock it over did you have to replant it or did it wilt one day or the leaves were turning yellow so why what was that issue then we could discuss those issues as they as they came up and how to address them or correct them. As an English teacher I like doing capstone projects with the kids, so this would have been more of the science end if I wanted to go deeper and have across the board I would have had some kind of math involved with it so they could have kept records and you know the total ounces that were given minus the total ounces that drained through I mean we could have had math involved we could also write about the type you know was this a plant that's originally from our area was it transplanted in they could have done a research project and incorporated these pieces into it or they could have taken all this information and done a completed a write-up for it so I mean there's different ways to and all of that could be done online at home if we are in another emergency situation where we're learning from home these kinds of activities just keeping farm to school alive through the classroom is possible, I talked faster than I thought I would. Do you have any questions for me?

AUBREE: Yeah there's a question in the chat box from Gretchen.

GRETCHEN: Just thinking about other collaborators in the school, this could be a great assignment for middle or high school biology class also, so I guess that's not so much a question but if you want to expand on that faith.

FAITH: well I agree with that Gretchen, I've worked in schools for 25 years and i really love collaborative projects, if we could incorporate all of the core subjects into one project at the end of the year I think that's the kind of learning that lasts a lifetime more than just, sorry math teachers, but learning how to add and subtract and put it on a worksheet. That application, anything that's applicable, goes further. I talked in circles any other teachers out there that like yeah see, look at us we're not even science teachers Diani we're reading teachers and taking the lead. That would be good to challenge them to do a recipe and that that they could create their own recipe or find a recipe and prepare it and share that with their family and they could respond in class that could be the seat the fcs classroom. Not even in my own classroom. Samantha says I love project-based learning. Absolutely, I'm all about that PBL which is when kiddos solve a real-world problem and school gardens are excellent PBLs, absolutely. And that's the kind of learning that that lasts a lifetime that project-based learning is it's the only way to go.

GINGER: We have our special needs kids go in our garden and um they weed it and they plant and um we have a big sale once a year and we use the cucumbers and tomatoes out of the garden in the kitchen and so our students go and pick that and bring it into the kitchen for us to serve when there's not covered it's hard to do right now but um without COVID that's kind of our normalcy.

FAITH: yeah are you doing anything different right now, Ginger?

GINGER: Actually no, we're the only thing different we're doing is we're not able to utilize a garden right now so that's been kind of sad, everything's kind of been turned upside down so hopefully we can um get through this rough spell and get back to gardening and get some cucumbers in here and start putting them in little baggies to hand out. It's been tough, we've had a lot of sickness in the school here recently.

FAITH: Well, Samantha said that she worked at a school in Utah and she had the third graders solve the issue of not being able to identify what was growing and then they made signs for the garden and I like that, I'm taking notes because I want to grow my own project or my own garden program more so than it already is so do we have any other questions or comments? Painted rocks make great signs, it looks like Samantha also shared for those of you who might be um struggling with how to garden during this time, the CDC released considerations for outdoor learning gardens so there's a link in the chat box that Samantha provided there and there will be another resource that I'll share in a little bit. Great thank you for sharing that, Samantha, that will be really helpful for a lot of people. Our next presenter is Kristin Rothe and she is the ag teacher and FFA advisor for the Missoula Agriculture Center and School House Meats

VIDEO: Hello and welcome to the Missoula Agriculture Center. I am Kristy Rothe one of the ag teachers here on the farm. The Missoula Agriculture Center and School House Meats is a school-owned and operated 100-acre working farm and state inspected meat processing facility. Here on the farm we raise sheep hogs and cattle we offer our students a comprehensive conception to consumption curriculum students learn hands-on every step of animal agriculture we are a school farm to school lunch program come take a tour with me!

I'm Cindy Arnott one of the teachers at the MCPS ag. Center. Students in our program have the opportunity to participate in the farm to table process from beginning to end students learned

animal husbandry, reproductive science, nutrition, herd and flock management, marketing, sales, record keeping, and of course processing. In addition to our livestock, students learn about forage and land management and harvest approximately 70 tons of hay per year. Many of our students participate in SAEs or supervised agricultural experiences, some of those are traditional raising and selling livestock some of them are job placement or agro-science research and some of our students participate in SAEs in the meat processing lab. They work for an hourly wage or they raise livestock which they bring into butcher and market independently. I'm standing with the newest addition to the school farm, which is a small herd of Belted Galloways. Besides being incredibly cute and looking like a walking oreo, the Galloway is a perfect addition to our operation. Belted Galloways produce a moderate frame, so not too big and not too small, and can finish a carcass with grass feed only. This will allow us to produce a calf on our farm from beginning to end that can go straight into our production plant without needing excessive inputs of grain.

Hi there. I'm Tom Andrews, I'm one of the ag. Teachers from Missoula County Public Schools and this is the meat processing plant, and this is a part of the program that I am in charge of out here and this is where it all starts. We bring livestock into our program, some of the livestock we raise ourselves, and then we also purchase livestock from local farmers. We try to pay a premium to them because we're able to do that and part of our program's emphasis is to not only promote agriculture from within, but also to help the farmers and ranchers as much as we can so we try to pay a better price to uh the producers in our area for the lifestyle that we get. We bring the animals to this program or through this uh um corral system here um secure some money from some of the COVID grants and uh we're gonna improve this area here we're going to make it easier to bring livestock in and out of our program and also, we'll have a certified scale so that when a rancher brings a cow in for us to process uh we can weigh it and pay them for that animal uh as it is unloaded so that's going to really streamline our program we'll go inside and I'll show you some of the facility on the inside okay once the animals are in the building. There's no use of firearms in our program of course because this is a school and uh, so we use a decapitator uh and then we also are purchasing an electric stun for the hogs and once the animals are down is that we're doing work on them. We are state inspected and what that means is that we can process animals here, we have an inspector that makes sure that everything is wholesome, and we follow all the proper procedures and then we're able to sell product retail or wholesale anywhere in the state. So, we're adding selling to hospitals or for the grocery stores, we can sell to uh schools which that's what one of our intentions is we uh a lot of the cows and once the animals hang for well between three days and 15 days for steers and then they're processed. This is our freezer and uh it's small so we have to move product to the schools fast but once we get a shipment for the school usually it's up to as many as a thousand pounds, then we'll load it up and we get it to the school as quick as we can because we can't let the temperature rise above 32 degrees. We need to make sure that the meat gets back to the school frozen which isn't hard because it's not far from here and uh in order to stay state inspected there's a lot of requirements that we need to follow in order to make sure that this means always at the right of temperatures.

I'm with the Meat Inspection Bureau, my job here is to make sure that all the products that are processed at this facility meet the guidelines for safety of the consumer guidelines. It starts with everything from inspecting the facility itself to expecting the slot process.

I am the supervisor of food nutrition services from Missoula County Public Schools and last year we partnered up with the ag center out of Big Sky High School. we started using their beef that they

processed and did all that stuff with and we started using it in our productions to go out to all of our schools in our district which is really cool because you can't get much more local than having beef that was raised and processed by our kids go back into our program and they have been the absolute best people to work with.

I hope you've enjoyed your tour of the Missoula Agriculture Center and Schoolhouse Meats processing facility. Please feel free to contact us if you would like more information or are interested in having your animals processed here to go into your area school. Well, I better get back to work, and have a great day.

FAITH: Okay, so interesting! I think we have some questions. It says how many hours does a student work on average a week? And it looks like Kristy wasn't able to join us so I'm not seeing her in in this list so if anyone from the MCPS team was able to join you can go ahead and unmute but I think that they might have unfortunately not been able to make it.

AUBREE: And I know it's hard to hear a little bit in that video um, meat processing facilities are very loud places they've got fans and all kinds of equipment running but one of the things that Tom did say is they are a state-inspected facility and they were able to utilize some of the COVID grants in Montana that were directed toward meat processing so this is a school-based program and they were able to use that funding to be able to expand their efforts.

FAITH: What an amazing idea. When I was at the summit the FFA Team from Missoula was presenting their idea and I think they were at the beginning stages of their project so it's just lovely to see it to fruition. I do see that Diani said I would love to take my high schoolers on a meat processing field trip as career exploration, which is a really cool idea and there are schools that have actually taken elementary students as well and they think it's very interesting yeah um so that's certainly always an option um maybe not in COVID times due to increased requirements around people being indoors and being around food but it's definitely something to look at in the future. Molly's question is, is the facility within walking distance of the high school or do students have to drive or bus there? And I do not know the answer to that um so it's the Missoula County Public School District's aged program, so their farm and it is not next to the schools. All three high schools in Missoula have the opportunity to have classes there so they are bussed to that facility for their classes but I'm pretty sure none of the high schools are close enough to be able to walk there. I'm also seeing that no field trips this year at all for Diani and same for other locations and that makes sense. I think it's pretty significant because during COVID. we're having a tough time getting our beef processed, everything's backed up at least six months for us to have our steers butchered so it's really significant that the school system in Missoula can utilize their own facility and also sell it and have the kids and I was going to ask Kristen - if the kids are working there I'm assuming they have to be a certain age to actually do the butchering part, but the job market for a butchers is not an area people are going into, so I assume when they leave with that skill set, that covers our CTE program. We have any other questions? Diani, I see that you are working in a school district with a 73 percent eligibility for free and reduced lunch. I completely understand that, I worked 15 years inner city Jacksonville, Florida and it was it was a challenging job but very much worth it. So, as we see questions we can move on to our last section and that would be Aubree's going to share some resources and things like that and then if you still have questions feel free to type them in and we'll come back to them.

AUBREE: I'm going to share a few resources that are available out there knowing that this is the tip of the iceberg, also share about some upcoming events and opportunities to get more involved. So, like I said, there are tons of resources and guides out there so start with the Montana Farm to School website which is shown here and move from there. Slides will advance. Due to the coronavirus pandemic this is of course a stressful time for everyone especially school staff who are working to provide education and nutritious meals despite constant changes, daily changes, in what they can and can't do so please know that there are many resources available and I'm sure are in the process of being created to support your efforts. I've listed just a couple here to get started so the national farm to school network has created and compiled numerous resources that are related to farm to school during COVID on their page so I didn't break out a lot of those resources because they've done a really good job of bringing a lot of those together. I'm hoping that they have the CDC one that was shared in the chat box and they have the school garden support organizations network resources and webinars that are really excellent, lunch assist also has fantastic toolkits, templates, and ideas for school nutrition programs to ensure the safety of school nutrition staff and the families that they serve. I wanted to give you an example of one of those resources. Georgia Organics just released these two resources to support gardening and taste testing during covid-19. Don't worry about jotting down all of this, I should have said this earlier but the slides from this presentation will be posted on our training and event page along with the recording as well as we will send it out to you all um so you'll be able to get all of these links and resources after. One great tool you can use as Montana Harvest of the Month if you're in our state, and this is a program that brings together farm to school core elements in an easy to use framework, the goal of harvest of the month is to support healthy Montana children and adults as well as support Montana's farmers, ranchers, processors, and food businesses. It is open to k-12 schools and after-school programs, early care and education sites, healthcare, grocery stores, and food pantries. It is free to register, and you can do so at any time. Participating sites get access to posters, handouts, guides, and many other resources. As I'll show you here so one of these is, we have developed farm to plate videos for each of the foods and most of them are done now. Unlike the other harvest of the month resources these are publicly available on our harvest of the month YouTube playlist so you don't need to be registered to access the videos, you can use them in classroom lessons for remote learning or promoting harvest of the month and local foods to families and communities, you can even share them on social media to get people excited so let's check out the video that features apples which is this month's harvest of the month.

HOM VIDEO: The old saying "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" certainly holds some truth since apples are a nutritious treat! This month's Montana Harvest of the Month is apples! There are over 7,500 varieties of apples grown worldwide and 2,500 are grown in the US, such as Granny Smith and Braeburn. However, only a handful of varieties are commonly found in grocery stores today. Apple trees are a long-term investment. They can take multiple years to produce fruit after planting. However, they can live up to 100 years old, providing delicious lunchbox treats for generations. The Bitterroot Valley and other areas in the western and south-central part of Montana are the largest apple producing areas in the state. Planting the seed from your favorite apple variety will not grow that same variety and will likely produce apples that are bitter. To get a desired variety of apple, the trees have to be grafted. This means taking a branch from the desired variety and attaching it to a root to form a new tree. Buy apples with firm, shiny, and smooth skins with intact stems. They should smell fresh, not musty. Be sure to remove apples with bruises or rot from the bag or container so they do not spoil the other apples. Apples are in the fruit food group and are packed full of nutrients. Apples are an excellent part of a healthy diet by providing fiber, vitamin C, potassium, and other nutrients. Most of the apple's nutrients are located just below the skin and are removed when

peeled. Potassium is an electrolyte and is needed for many functions in the body, including the electrical activity of the heart. Branch out and try a different way of eating apples! Apples are a fruit with many uses, they can be eaten raw, cooked, dried, or made into many other delicious recipes. Before eating or cooking apples, it is best to scrub them under cold water. Let's make a delicious apple recipe — Baked Cinnamon Apples! Apples are an excellent part of a healthy diet. Bite into a Montana apple today! The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases a different Montana grown food each month in Montana communities. We hope you will join us in tasting Montana this month!

AUBREE: Okay so, moving on to some other resources that might be helpful. Bringing in additional staff or volunteers can be helpful of course for expanding or starting your farm to school initiatives food course service members just shout out to all the awesome food core service members we have on the call woohoo our FoodCorps members are hosted by schools to implement farm to school and they're provided training through the FoodCorps program. You can also consider a VISTA, intern, paid staff, volunteers, or partnerships with other entities like Garden City Harvest. Partnering with local school districts, there are many more opportunities to learn about farm to school so we encourage you to join us for a second farm to school showcase, as I mentioned before on October 27th, which will be a Farm to Tray Tour that will focus mostly on beef to school, and so that'll be a really fun event to see the whole kind of chain through from the farm to the tray at the school we'll also offer two additional showcases this spring but those are to be determined and determined with considerations with COVID information. All of the events, including our archived webinars and training materials, can be found on our training and events page so if you missed our series that we had this spring of Montana Farm to School successes, I encourage you to check that out. Due to COVID we postponed the Montana Farm to School Summit that was supposed to be held this year until August 2021. We hope that you'll join us then. Soon we'll be opening the workshop proposals so, we encourage you to share your farm to school stories by applying to present at the Summit. And of course, happy Farm to School Month! October is National and Montana Farm to School Month and it is a perfect time to celebrate or launch your farm to school program. Montana Crunch Time is part of this and is just around the corner. It's a fun way of celebrating National Farm to School Month by crunching into a locally or regionally grown apple on October 22nd at any time during that day. Register your crunch by October 31st to help Montana win the Mountain Planes Crunch Off. Virtual crunches are encouraged so if you do a zoom crunch or if you have people take selfies, definitely encourage everyone to get involved no matter where they are! And of course, I really encourage you to share your farm to school stories. You can share photos, lessons, stories, and recipes using our share your story form on the Montana Farm to School and Harvest of the Month websites, or you can just email me anytime. It definitely brightens up my inbox. We would love to feature your story in our upcoming trainings or on the web so definitely send the big or small stories that you have, use social media to get the word out, and use our hashtags #MTharvestofthemoth or #MTfarmtoschool so we can find your posts and then re-share them. For those of you who are looking for additional help, we encourage you to get in contact with Faith, who is our host for today's Montana Farm to School Showcase, or Ginger Buchanan, who is our other farm to school coach, and they are happy to help you make goals, make an action plan, and work through some of the challenges that you might have. Give them a holler and they're happy to help. I will turn it back to Faith for more opportunities for Q&A for all of the presenters.

FAITH: Thank you Aubree, anybody have any questions for any of our presenters, or for Aubree or for Sarah or myself? And Ginger's actually on here as well. Are there any questions? So, just kind of a side

note for the crunch time it is on the 22nd. I went to my food service director and asked her to make sure that we have apples for that day, and we get the Montana apples, a lot of what we do for crunch time we have it was a little more challenging this year but we have local people that have apple trees and we'll take one of our little buses out and have the kids pick local apples. We're a little more restricted this year so we were only able to hit one person's tree but last year I mean, we had thousands of apples so don't hesitate to get your students involved that way as well.

AUBREE: That's really awesome, Faith.

FAITH: Again, I'm about that free stuff, if I can get a free apple and not pay for it, I'm going to do so.

AUBREE: It's a great thing to glean the apples too, a lot of people can't eat as many apples as their trees produce or in some cases, they live in bear country and so they really need to get those apples off of their tree and out of their property.

FAITH: That's a good point that somebody from the eastern side of the state wouldn't understand.



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, FoodCorps Montana, and Montana Department of Agriculture. More information and resources are available at: www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemonth.

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