

MASSACHUSETTS FARM TO SCHOOL

FARM TO SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT



This toolkit provides a communications roadmap for school nutrition professionals to connect with their community and share their farm to school successes.

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WHY TELL YOUR STORY?

Communicating the story of your district's connection to the farm to school movement will increase awareness within your community about your dedication to serving fresh, local food to your students, and demonstrate the nutritional, educational, and economic benefits of this movement. Different aspects of your story will appeal to your different audiences.

IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCE

Who are you speaking to? Each audience will require different headlines and stories. Typically in a school nutrition setting your audience will include: students, teachers, school administrators, parents, the broader community members, policy makers, and potentially, the media.



COMMUNICATION METHODS

Newsletters

- Email
- Printed

Social Media

- Photographs
- Videos

News Media

Bulletin Boards

SHARE YOUR SUCCESSES!



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SCHOOL RESOURCES

Consider reaching out to teachers at high schools in your district and suggest marketing and graphic design internships within the school nutrition department.

EXAMPLES:

Springfield Public Schools held a contest to design a new logo for the Springfield School Nutrition Department. They worked with teachers to promote the competition to their students.



Webster Public Schools' School Nutrition Department connected with a marketing teacher at Bartlett High School. Together they developed a project for students to develop a marketing plan for the Harvest of the Month program.



FARM TO SCHOOL MESSAGING CONCEPTS

WHAT IS FARM TO SCHOOL?

“Farm to school efforts link local producers with schools and other organizations participating in child nutrition programs working to purchase and include locally grown fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, dairy, and seafood in program meals, as well as efforts that include hands-on education, school gardens, taste tests, farm field trips, and integrating food-related education into classroom curriculum.” - [USDA](#)

KEY MESSAGING

- Families
 - Purchasing locally grown foods supports the local economy
 - Students who participate in farm to school programs (school gardens, nutrition education, etc) are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables.
 - School gardens provide hands-on learning opportunities for students.
- Students
 - Our school meals feature student-grown fruits and vegetables.
 - Our school meals feature locally grown fruits and vegetables.
- School Staff
 - School gardens provide opportunities for hands-on, experiential learning in all subject areas.
 - Farm to School helps to connect the classroom with the cafeteria.

VISUAL IDEAS

- Students in the school garden.
- Food harvested from the garden.
- Cafeteria signage showing where school lunch ingredients came from.
- School nutrition staff preparing food in the kitchen.
- Lunch tray with local food highlighted.

FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH MESSAGING

As is the case with any themed month, the goal is to educate a wide audience about a specific cause. Farm to School month is no different, and the aim is to reach as many people as possible with educational information about farm to school in order to increase awareness about the movement. With increased awareness comes increased funding, programming, legislative support, community support, and more. This is the time to go above and beyond to reach parents, educators, school administrators, and local legislators. Your role is to be a farm to school ambassador within your community.

INCREASED
AWARENESS

STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT

INCREASED
PARTICIPATION

LEGISLATIVE
SUPPORT

FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH MESSAGING

SOCIAL MEDIA POST IDEAS

- Define Farm to School
- Share Farm to School data highlights (school-wide, state wide, nation-wide)
- Share information about farms & farmers you source from
- Share information about your school garden (if you have one)
- Share information about Harvest of the Month participation (if you participate)

CAFETERIA IDEAS

- Set up a taste test station with a local product
- Create a Farm to School bulletin board in the cafeteria highlighting your farm to school work (farmer connections, menu highlights, etc)
- Invite a classroom to take a field trip through the school kitchen.
- Invite a farmer or producer to eat with students in the cafeteria.
- Invite a local legislator for a tour of the kitchen & cafeteria.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IDEAS

- Get students engaged, share our student advocacy form and send the forms back to us so we can share with your legislator/s.
- Share student Farm to School Month ideas with teachers

COMMUNITY IDEAS

- Reach out to families and ask for home recipes

FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

WEEK 1

- **Activity:** Create Bulletin Board in Cafeteria
- **Social Media:** Announce Farm to School Month: include interesting nutrition highlight from district
- **Advocacy:** Invite your legislator to visit the cafeteria

WEEK 2

- **Activity:** Invite a classroom to the kitchen
- **Social Media:** Share a photo of a lunch tray and highlight the local ingredients.
- **Student Engagement:** Poll students about their favorite local ingredient, share via social media

WEEK 3

- **Social Media:** Share information about a producer or farmer who you source ingredients from
- **Social Media:** Share student quotes and/or data about their favorite local ingredient

WEEK 4

- **Activity:** Set up a taste test in the cafeteria, and include student forms for kids to fill out about farm to school
- **Social Media:** Share pictures of local food taste test and results

CREATING A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Use this worksheet to guide your communications strategy.

GOALS

List two goals you would like to achieve related to your school nutrition program.

1.

2.

RESOURCES

What technology does your school nutrition or district currently have? (ie. social media accounts, digital cameras, etc)

Identify who can help you with your communications efforts.

Adapted from Wisconsin School Meals Rock "Tool: Developing a Communications Plan."

CREATING A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Use this worksheet to guide your communications strategy.

TIME COMMITMENT

How much time can you commit to promoting your program (per day/week/month)?

COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORMS

Is there a social media platform you would like to start with? How often would you like to post?

Can you send newsletters home with families? Printed? Digital? Included with menu?

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Will district administration allow school nutrition to create and maintain their own social accounts?

Do families sign media releases for their students?

If you need additional resources (ie. people/time/technology), will the district provide support?

Adapted from Wisconsin School Meals Rock "Tool: Developing a Communications Plan."

CREATING A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Use this chart to help organize your plan.

Audience	Key Messages	Tool	Timing
<i>Students</i>	<i>School lunch provides the fuel you need to do well in school.</i>	<i>Social Media</i>	<i>Post 3 evenings/week for first quarter of school.</i>

Adapted from Wisconsin School Meals Rock "Tool: Developing a Communications Plan."

FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH

ADVOCATING FOR FARM TO SCHOOL

HOST A LEGISLATOR AT YOUR SCHOOL

- Develop your objectives
- Familiarize yourself with your legislator's priorities
- Contact your legislator's office
- Plan an agenda for the visit
- Follow up

MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

- Make an appointment (either at their district office or on Zoom)
- Familiarize yourself with your legislator's priorities
- Prepare for your meeting

Find links to advocacy guides here:

www.massfarmtoschool.org/guide/advocacy-toolkits/

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

- Scheduling: [Hootsuite](#) & [Buffer](#)
- Graphic Templates: [Canva](#)
- Stock Photography: [Canva](#) & [Unsplash](#) & [Freepik](#)

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO TIPS

- [Tips for Photographing Food](#) (Center for Ecotechnology)
- [FoodCorps Video Production Webinar Series](#)

Find links to all tools here:

[https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/
communications-toolkit/](https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/communications-toolkit/)

RESOURCES

Marketing Tools

- [School Nutrition Outreach Toolkit](#)
(Wisconsin)

Farm to School Month Advocacy Tools

- [Advocating for Farm to School: How to Host Site Visits](#) (National Farm to School)
- [Tips for Meeting with Your Legislator](#) (National Farm to School)
- [Farm to School Advocacy Toolkit](#) (Farm to Institution New York)

Farm to School Month Tools/Ideas

- [Ways to Celebrate Farm to School](#) (MFTS)
- [Farm to School Month Toolkit](#) (National)
- [2024 Farm to School Month Outreach Toolkit](#) (MFTS)

Find links to all tools here:
www.massfarmtoschool.org/communications-toolkit/

