



South Bend Schools

Farm to School Action Plan

2017 Planning Grant Awardee

Farm to School Team

Background

Located in north central Indiana, South Bend Community School Corporation is the largest school system in St. Joseph County, and the fourth largest in the state. Deb Cyrier, Principal of Marquette Montessori Academy (MMA), initiated the organization of a Farm to School (F2S) team in order to initially apply for the USDA 2017 Farm to School Planning Grant. The USDA Planning protocol was followed. Originally the team represented local farmers, university partners, community members, health educators, school and district administrators, teachers, food service personnel, and Marquette Montessori parents. The team changed throughout the project period (July 2017 - December 2018) but the goal has remained the same: explore the continued feasibility of integration of Farm to School practices at both Marquette Montessori Academy & Madison STEAM Academy (MSA) with an eye on future scalability of any identified programming.

Farm to School Team Members

Current Members

- Deb Cyrier, Principal, Marquette Montessori Academy
- Deb Martin, Principal, Madison STEAM Academy
- Hilary Searcy, Farm to School Project Leader & Marquette Montessori Staff Member
- Becky Lies, MPH, Community Wellness Coordinator for St. Joseph County, IN / Purdue Extension Office
- Charlotte Wolfe, Owner, Prairie Winds Nature Farm
- Danielle Wood, Ph.D., Director of Community-Based Research and Impact at the Center for Social Concerns (University of Notre Dame) and the assistant director for Research, Learning, and Impact, Center for Civic Innovation.
- Nicole Vanheste, RDN, Community Wellness Coordinator for St. Joseph County, IN / Purdue Extension Office

Past Team Members

- Maggie Gibney, Community Wellness Coordinator, Purdue Extension Office
- Dr. Monica Tetzlaff, Professor, Professor Indiana University South Bend & Marquette Montessori parent
- Paula Bodner, Former Food Service Supervisor, South Bend Community School Corporation
- Christine Pochert, Former Grant Writer, South Bend Community School Corporation
- Lisa Vukmirovich, Marquette Montessori Academy Early Childhood Teacher

- Krista Bailey, Director, Center for a Sustainable Future
- Jennifer Shabazz, former Montessori Facilitator at Brown Intermediate Center

Key Advisory Members

Outside of our regular participants we have relied on specific individuals for guidance and assistance in our decision making at different times. The following individuals have agreed to advise the team on an as-needed basis.

- Robin Vida, St. Joseph County Health Department
- Victoria Moore, Food Service Director, South Bend Community School Corporation
- Dr. Wendy Folk, Director of Elementary Schools, South Bend Community School Corporation
- Jenna Segal, Regional Lead for USDA Farm to School

School Based Team at Marquette Montessori Academy

As the primary site for the farm to school work, Marquette Montessori Academy also established a school-based teacher team during the 2017-2018 School Year to streamline building level initiatives. Members included:

- Hilary Searcy, Farm to School Project Leader
- Lisa Vukmirovich, Early Childhood Teacher
- Ted Church, Early Childhood Teacher
- Monica Joseph, Instructional Assistant
- Rosie Thomas, Instructional Assistant
- Brittany Groat, Former Instructional Assistant

Needed Members & Advisors

In order to sustain our work and to garner the necessary range of diverse perspectives on the needs of the Farm to School implementation, it would be beneficial to develop the Farm to School Committee to include a wider membership base. Recommendations for new members and/or advisors include:

- Additional local farmers looking to partner with school communities
- Parent representatives from all involved locations
- Teacher representatives from all involved locations
- Cafeteria Supervisors from all involved locations
- Co-op Gardeners
- Master Gardeners looking to work with student populations
- Local Chefs
- SBCSC STEM Coordinator
- SBCSC Wellness Committee Member

Farm to School Team Summary

Upon receipt of the USDA Farm to School Planning Grant in July of 2017 it needs to be noted that there was an immediate change in partnering schools. This was due to a change of leadership at one of the initial partner schools. Madison STEAM Academy joined the project in late August 2017 after seeking approval from the USDA Farm to School office.

During the initial Farm to School planning grant period (July 2017- June 2018), the Farm to School team accomplished the following USDA Farm to School Planning grant objectives/activities:

- Designated a Farm to School Team responsible for completion of the Farm to School Action Plan
 - Held regular meetings to monitor grant progress
 - Attended the USDA Farm to School Grantee Conference including Face to Face Meetings with USDA Farm to School Personnel
- Identified farm to school initiatives already in place at both school sites
- Conducted a wide spread needs assessment
 - Surveyed teaching staff regarding participation / initial knowledge base
 - Surveyed students about food interests / knowledge
 - Identified, purchased, and organized necessary supplies for project implementation at both school sites
 - Sought to define / determine what “local” means for SBCSC
- Identified of potential partners that could help to sustain the program
- Brought a “farming” experience to all students at both school sites
- Supported “tastings” at one of two school sites
- Planted and/or planned for classroom based gardens at both sites
- Developed cross-curricular units of study focused on gardening that are aligned to Indiana State Standards and/or Early Childhood Foundations

The Farm to School team also invited key partners/advisors to participate in a regional training hosted by Purdue Extension Office Sustainable Agriculture & Research Education (SARE). This brought our key supporters together in one space for not only the meeting but the shared travel to and from Indianapolis, IN. During this time we were able to gain understanding of several obstacles affecting our completion of all grant objectives. We were also able to learn from others doing this work across the state.

It needs to be noted that during the initial grant period, the Farm to School Project leader struggled to stay involved in the project due to a change in her main job and there was no one else that was interested in stepping formally into that role. Obligations were largely fulfilled by Deb Cyrier, Principal, Marquette Montessori Academy with support from Project Leader.

A No-Cost Extension was sought in May 2018 after consultation with Jenna Segal, our USDA Farm to School Regional Lead. A final deadline for completion was granted to be December 31, 2018. During the No-Cost Extension Period (July - December 2018) the Farm to School Team fulfilled the following USDA Planning Grant objectives / activities:

- Analyzed needs assessment data
- Completed Farm to School action plan
- Supported “tastings” at both school sites
- Identified objectives that are not possible to complete as written

Details and Logistics

Structure

The Farm to School team is structured around the school communities of Marquette Montessori Academy & Madison STEAM Academy. It also represents local partnerships within the South Bend community.

Responsibilities & Power

The team has been largely overseen by Deb Cyrier, Principal at Marquette Montessori Academy. However, it should be noted that one of the driving partners in our work has been Danielle Wood, Ph.D.. As one of the few members of the committee that remained from vision to grant completion, she helped to sustain focus on grant objectives and evaluation of our effectiveness.

The Farm to School team has the ability to make decisions that do not impact food-service programming at either school site. When decisions would impact food-service, consultation with the food-service director was sought. During the grant period it was the team's charge to ensure that the identified grant objectives were achieved as outlined in the planning grant.

Relationship Building

Several members of the Farm to School Team had worked together on other projects in similar contexts. However, the group as a whole had not ever worked together before. Initial meetings included opportunities for sharing about experiences and interests in this particular project. Overtime the group developed into a trust core group of participants that were moving the work of the USDA Planning Grant forward.

Meetings

Meetings were held at least every other month. There were periods of time where the committee met twice per month. Largely the meetings were held at Marquette Montessori Academy as the primary site of grant implementation.

Team Building Resources

- The USDA Farm to School Planning Toolkit: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/f2s/F2S-Planning-Kit.pdf>
- Getting Started, National Farm to School Network: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/get-started>
- Action for Healthy Kids: <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/>

Vision, Goals, & Context

Background & Current Status

Prior to receiving the USDA Farm to School Planning grant, Marquette Montessori Academy (MMA) staff were occasionally using the gardens that were created for classroom use on the property. Excitement for reestablishing the gardens at MMA into functioning spaces for children to use grew when Eagle Scout, Bryce Varga asked to have his final project as an Eagle Scout to be the renovation of the gardens. Bryce was the son of a MMA staff member

whose family was always supportive our programming. Bryce single handedly organized a team of other scouts, family and friends to do all the weeding, cultivating, soil amending and mulching necessary to get the gardens back to a point where three to twelve year olds could sustain them. He secured donations and built and installed compost bins for each side of the building. He also secured donations of planting (herbs, vegetables, and flowers) for the children to plant just before school let out in the summer of 2017.

Marquette was also awarded a mini-garden grant from Whole Foods that allowed us to purchase an aeroponic Tower Garden to be used in one of our Early Childhood Classrooms.

Prior to receiving the USDA Planning Grant, Madison STEAM Academy was looking for a creative way to construct a school garden. Madison is located in downtown South Bend and has about five feet of grass surrounding all four sides of the school, therefore greenspace for a school garden is an issue.

Since the USDA Farm to School Planning Grant was awarded, the following have been accomplished:

- Stakeholder team established
- Community partnerships identified and developed
- Organized local farm field trips for all MMA & MSA P3 - Grade 4 students
- Organized field trips to the local farmer's market and grocery stores
- Added two more aeroponic Tower Gardens to Marquette
- Harvested MMA garden produce to use in classroom based snack program
- Madison STEAM Academy has added four 4 X 25 foot vegetable gardens

Long Term Vision

The Farm to School planning team vision is to strengthen the farm to school components at both Marquette and Madison while allowing the programs to develop at a pace appropriate to each program. We strive to provide educational opportunities for children that support establishing healthy eating habits, agricultural understanding, and a rich personal connection to growing a sustainable food source.

We define our long term vision as five years and beyond. In that time we would like to see a comprehensive farm to table program thriving in both locations. Success would be defined as:

- Awareness and support of the Farm to School efforts throughout the greater South Bend Community
- Serve 50% of classroom based snacks from gardens grown and maintained by students in our program with the other 50% coming from local farms
- Creation of a comprehensive agriculture and nutrition education program that stresses the benefits of local foods
- Opening classroom gardens for community use during the summer months to involve the families served by our summer feeding sites

Near-Term Goals & Objectives

Short term goals for our Farm to School program are those that can be completed within the next two school years (2019-2020, 2020-2021). They include:

- *Increase the number of Tower Gardens at each location*
In classroom gardening has proven to be most accepted and enjoyed method using this system. Teachers readily embrace a Tower Garden visit to their classroom for a unit of time. Objectives related to supporting this goal include:
 - Searching for and applying for smaller classroom based grants to purchase Tower Gardens
 - Creation of a school based rotation that ensures all classrooms have repetitive experiences with the Tower Garden
 - Professional Development for staff of effective uses of Tower Garden in the classroom
- *Increase the percentage of locally grown products served in our classroom based snack program.*
Objectives associated to this goal include:
 - Establishing partnerships with local growers to source of classroom snacks.
 - Establishing a parent network that is willing to help with securing and transporting the snacks to school as needed.
- *Increase student exposure to classroom based cooking / nutrition projects*
Objectives related to this goal include:
 - Examine existing curriculum for opportunities to create cross-curricular extension work that involves cooking
 - Professional Development on safe food handling for classroom teachers

School Environment & Student Population

Located in north central Indiana, South Bend Community School Corporation (SBCSC) is the largest school system in St. Joseph County, and the fourth largest in the state of Indiana. Established in 1867, SBCSC is home to nearly 18,000 students and employs over 3,000 people. SBCSC's free and reduced lunch rate average is 74.89% and there is rich diversity in the overall student body (American Indian - .4%, Asian - 1%, Black - 35.6%, Hispanic - 21.5%, White - 31.6%, and Multi-Racial -9.6%). At the district level, the SBCSC has a School Health Advisory Committee that looks at the feasibility and effectiveness of initiatives within the district's schools.

In the fall of 2008 SBCSC opened its first Montessori magnet program at Marquette Montessori Academy (MMA) for students age three to grade three. In the fall of 2014 the program expanded to include grades four, five and six housed at Brown Intermediate Center (BIC). The two schools served a total of 875 students age three to grade eight. They are centrally located within the district and are approximately two miles apart. In June of 2018 BIC closed as a part of SBCSC's redistricting plan known as Focus 2018. In August of 2018, MMA opened its doors to students age three to grade six and became classified as a full-district Montessori magnet school. Madison STEAM Academy (MSA) was reclassified under Focus 2018 to serve children from Kindergarten to Grade 5. Madison is first a neighborhood school with a boundary but the magnet program also allows children from

outside the boundary to apply. Many of the students at MMA and MSA come from single parent households and several have one or more family members incarcerated.

Although this is an urban area, each site has access to acreage ripe to be developed into site-managed gardenscapes. These areas can connect students to the land. The majority of our students have had no prior experience with gardening.

Program Context

In a larger context our city is ready for this work. South Bend, Indiana was the third city in the midwest and the first city in Indiana to attain gold medals in all five of the Let's Move! Cities, Towns and Counties goals. The city wide initiatives focusing on health and wellness open up the opportunity for partnerships between the city parks department and the school corporation. These partnerships can establish green spaces that can be managed by students, tied to curriculum, and designed to foster awareness and access to produce. Madison STEAM Academy has the potential of establishing a lasting partnership for this work with the city parks department because it shares a property line with one of the local parks. There are also a number of other sustainable initiatives taking place currently in South Bend: bike lanes, green roofs, green space, etc. As a city we are invested in "Greening the Bend".

Marquette and Madison both participate in the National School Lunch program. As Elementary schools in SBCSC we are a part of the Community Eligible Provision. All students are provided a free breakfast and lunch. Additionally, both Marquette and Madison work with partner organizations to provide additional food to families of the most significant need over the weekend. Marquette's PTO sponsors a food pantry partnership with the Food bank of Northern Indiana and supports 30 Families each week providing not only non-perishables but fresh produce, meats and bread in partnership. Madison has partnered with the Kelly Cares Foundation and sends up to 100 backpacks of food home with students each weekend.

Policy Context

SBCSC has a wellness policy in place and its content supports the work that both sites are doing to improve farm to school initiatives.

Institutionalization -

In order for the F2S initiatives to take hold and last at both sites several things are needed including but not limited to:

- **SUSTAINED PARTNERSHIPS with FARMERS** in the area that can provide the necessary curriculum support until teachers have built their confidence levels in this area
- **INCREASED INVOLVEMENT WITH FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT of SBCSC** to translate the work beyond the classroom to the actual table that students are eating at on a daily basis
- **INCREASED PARENTAL / NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT** in order to maintain the gardens in non-school months.

Both Marquette and Madison have had on again off again successes with program implementation most notably both programs have transitioned to magnet programs over the past 10 years with specific focuses. The community rallied around both of these efforts and continues to support the programs. Integrating our F2S work into current practice will ensure success. ADDING it as another layer may prevent full integration because it is then viewed by staff as something extra they are expected to do in an already challenging climate.

Local Foods Procurement

Background and Current Status

Local Food Procurement was not an original focus of our work but over the course of the planning grant our team attended an SARE meeting in Indianapolis and decided to adopt a definition of local on which to build all future work having to do with F2S initiatives especially as it starts to move beyond classroom integration.

Definition of Local

The Farm to School Planning Group has developed a three-stage definition of local to define where foods are procured from.

- 1) Michiana (local term used to refer to surrounding counties of South Bend, Indiana). The counties included are Elkhart, La Porte, Marshall, St. Joseph, and Starke in Indiana, and Berrien and Cass in Michigan.
- 2) Greater Michiana (extends to 15 counties). The additional counties include: Fulton, Kosciusko, Lake, Noble, Porter, LaGrange in Indiana and St. Joseph and Van Buren in Michigan.
- 3) 500 mile radius from South Bend, Indiana which includes parts of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York

Menu Planning

Not a focus of the USDA Farm to School Planning Grant Project for SBCSC

Food Safety

Background and Current Status

Food Safety was not a major focus of this grant. It is definitely an area where professional development is needed for classroom teachers that are integrating culinary experiences into their daily practices.

As the cafeterias were not a focus of this planning grant we focused more on building the skill sets of the classroom teachers in this area ensuring that proper tools and cleaning supplies were available for them to access.

Promotion & Outreach

Background and Current Status

In our Planning Grant Objective 4 focused on promotion and outreach. It largely relied on Food Service to publish where food originated from on the cafeteria menus and within the cafeteria. It also expected that the schools would be promoting our F2S initiatives throughout the year. The latter part was regularly done through social media, school newsletters, etc. The former never was substantiated largely because support from the food service department was sparse over the time of the project.

Reaching Students

Students were involved in all aspects of our F2S work. They participated in field trips, curriculum studies, gardening and culinary experiences. Marquette also participated in regional events like the Great Apple Crunch.

Reaching Parents, Teacher, and Other School Administrators / Board Members

Parents were informed about the F2S activities during the first year of the grant and into the grant extension. Updates were made to Marquette families over social media, through newsletters and at PTO meetings. Parents were initially partners in the original writing of the grant but once the funds were awarded they ceased attending the F2S committee meetings.

Teachers were involved and given a great deal of autonomy with curriculum development and garden development for their classroom. At both sites the expectation was to plan field trips, garden experiences and culinary experiences to build both knowledge and exposure to healthy foods.

School District Leaders and Board Members were often invited to participate in F2S committee meetings. However after the initial receipt of the grant many of the district leaders ceased attending and the only district level participation was largely done by the finance office in terms of grant reporting. It will be critical for future long-term success to fully engage with the food service department of SBCSC.

School Gardens

Background and Current Status

A new facility for MMA was opened in August 2011. Designed specifically with features that complemented the implementation of an authentic Montessori program, the facility

included 10 small garden plots, complete with individualized drip irrigation systems. Each plot was located immediately outside of an early childhood classroom and the initial intention was that these areas would become natural extensions of the classroom and would be used in a variety of ways on a regular basis. Elementary classrooms would be partnered with the early childhood classrooms to provide a deeper experience in the botany curriculum at MMA. However, since that time the gardens had only been utilized on a limited basis.

One factor contributing to the limited use was the persistent vandalism in the initial years at the new facility. The garden plots were novel in year one and teachers worked with their students to plant a wide variety of items (flowers, tomatoes, greens, pumpkins, carrots, etc.). During that initial year we would regularly encounter vandalism from the neighborhood during off-school hours. Tomatoes and pumpkins were thrown at windows (at times breaking the windows), irrigation pipes were pulled out of the ground and bent to non-functioning status, and produce was regularly smashed throughout the gardens before the children could harvest it. All of these issues served to diminish the curricular impacts of the gardens at MMA.

During the 2016-2017 school year gardening at MMA was jump-started. An Eagle Scout took on revamping the gardens as his cumulative project. The gardens were thoroughly weeded and mulched and the paths around them had fresh gravel added to them. Additionally, he added two functioning compost bins and secured donations for basic bedding plants. That year one teacher also partnered with Unity Garden, a local-cooperative gardening program, and invited one of their leaders to “career day” at Marquette Montessori Academy. During this visit small groups of kindergarten students learned about the workings of a garden and thoroughly planted greens and other vegetables to later harvest. Finally, one early childhood teacher sought funding for an indoor tower garden and successfully received two grants to fund the purchase of two separate tower units.

Getting Buy-in

A Farm to School Committee was established at Marquette Montessori Academy. This group largely focused on three goals: determining the needs of the small cooking kitchens to make them suitable for classroom projects, determining the needs of the school gardens, and aligning curriculum. The committee was lead by the Farm to School project leader but was made up of teachers and instructional assistants.

The committee organized “garden days” throughout the 2017-2018 school year. Families were invited to attend and help with garden maintenance. Additionally, during the 2017-2018 school year, Girls Scouts of Northern Indiana Michiana Troop 0211 adopted the 10th garden plot maintaining it throughout the year as a part of a Take-Action Project. Troop 0211 is co-lead by two MMA parents and comprised of MMA students.

Annually, the principal expects the teachers that are partnered to maintain each garden plot to get together and provide a maintenance schedule / plan for implementation. There are some teachers that are highly engaged in gardening activities and others that are not interested. The expectation to turn in a plan annually at least provides a format for

discussion and opens the door to collaborate and bring new curricular connections to students. It also identifies areas where more professional development is needed to be successful.

Planning and Design

Goals & End Uses

The goal of the gardening program is two-fold: first, to provide a thriving environment where garden-based learning occurs across subject matters, extending beyond just math and science; and second, to be able to integrate garden produce into classroom based snack and other cooking activities in order to increase healthy options in this extra-curricular funded program. It is a hope that through these two goals students will understand where food comes from and depending on amount of produce eventually available extra resources may be able to be sent home with students of greatest need.

The long term goal for this project is that through establishment of a successful program at Marquette Montessori Academy & Madison STEAM Academy, we hope to be able to create a replicable program that could be integrated at other SBCSC elementary schools.

Sizes & Sites

The gardens at MMA are fixed due to the building design. However, it should be noted that in parallel with the outdoor gardening MMA has had much more success with integrating Tower Gardens into the classroom. A number of barriers such as additional adult supervision are removed by using the tower gardens and for our elementary classrooms located on the 2nd floor this may be the best long term option.

Layout, Soil & Garden Beds

At MMA the outdoor gardens are mulched by SBCSC Buildings and Grounds annually. However, they will only be mulched properly if they are maintained properly which is not the responsibility of the maintenance crew. If a garden has not been maintained with identified plantings, the maintenance crew will simply weed-wack it to the ground the day before it is to be mulched. Communication between the garden teams and building maintenance is vital.

Compost bins are expected to be used but kept away from garden doors. The bins are to be kept in good repair and be placed on concrete pavers to prevent tunnelling from rodents.

Soil should be regularly tested and amended as necessary for the identified plantings. Chemicals are not permitted.

Tower Gardens are to be kept on tile floor within a classroom and away from an exit door. They need to be proximate to an electrical outlet as an extension cord may not be used. All cords from the tower garden should be covered and/or against a wall to prevent tripping hazards.

Crops & Livestock

South Bend, Indiana is Zone 5 and can support a wide range of vegetable and fruit crops, especially if seeds are started indoors. One challenge of a school garden is the planting season versus the school calendar. The Farm to School committee recommends establishing partnerships with other groups / parents to maintain the gardens throughout the summer months.

Although MMA and Madison are both within the city limits and would be able to house a limited amount of chickens, there is no secure location at either site to do this so this idea was quickly extinguished by the committee.

Greenhouses, hoop houses, and other structures

At this time there are no plans for specific gardening structures to be built. Both sites are landlocked with limited green space as it is. If MMA and SBCSC are successful in gaining permission from the Historical Preservation Committee to tear down the old Marquette facility that sits on the same lot, there may be discussion about the addition of a small shed / greenhouse.

Supplies

A needs-assessment was conducted to determine what types of gardening supplies are needed to make these spaces successful and child friendly down to age three. With funds from the planning grant tools (shovels, trowels, rakes, cages, etc.) and workgloves were purchased for both sites.

Funding

**Maintenance, Staffing, Training
Using Garden Produce**

Education & Curriculum Integration

Background and Current Status

Marquette and Madison both follow curriculum maps and have developed integrated units of study on food based activities. Using the Action For Healthy Kids framework as a guide both programs are working to increase F2S initiatives in place at their sites that can be easily integrated into daily classroom practice.

Garden Activities

Marquette hosts garden days for families each quarter (except winter) to be able to sustain the upkeep of the gardens. Early Childhood and Elementary classrooms are paired at Marquette and assigned garden plots for the students to plant, maintain, and harvest. Tower Gardens are also in place at Marquette and we have typically added one each year as new staff are educated on their use and function in a classroom.

Culinary Activities

Both sites had project rooms adapted for student cooking projects set up as a part of the Planning grant. An inventory was conducted and cooking utensils and staples were

provided. At Marquette Practical Life Fees that are paid annually by parents support the culinary experiences we can offer.

Additionally at Marquette for th 18-19 school year we have had one teacher partner with Martin’s Supermarket and the Kelly Cares Foundation to provide culinary experiences for her Kindergarten students.

Field Trips

Field trips at both sites were conducted to Prairie Winds Farm for all students to experience life on a farm. Additional trips were taken by Marquette students to the farmer’s market and local grocery store chain to support the farm to table process.

Evaluation

Background and Current Status

- Both Madison and Marquette successfully completed school-wide visits to Prairie Winds Farms, a local operation whose farmers have been involved with this and other farm-to-school projects in the past.
- Bath Madison and Marquette expanded their school ground gardens as part of this grant cycle.
- The theory of change driving this preliminary planning grant assumes that increased knowledge of specific produce items will positively impact a student’s overall attitude and openness towards healthy eating.
- Both Madison and Marquette expanded their school ground gardens as part of this grant cycle. Students and teachers were involved in tending the gardens on both sites, and a strong proportion of Madison students discussed produce they had eaten from these gardens. Marquette also installed two tower gardens in classrooms; these teachers were able to involve their students in the tending and eating of food from these systems. The tower gardens also provided a work-around to Marquette’s challenges with garden vandalism. In 2017, Marquette began a food-pantry program and purchased equipment which helps them to distribute fresh produce to students and their families.

Student Outcomes

To evaluate a student’s knowledge of specific produce items, students were shown pictures of items which were available in their school’s cafeteria at various points throughout the year. They were asked whether or not they liked the food and to name it if possible. The survey was originally done on paper, but it was adjusted to a Google form. This left room for more individualized qualitative data and regarding student’s attitudes towards food or barriers to healthy eating.

Students were assigned a “known” score based on how many items they had seen before an “affinity” score.

| | |
|--|---------------|
| | Score Average |
|--|---------------|

| | |
|----------|-----------------|
| Known | 21.71 out of 26 |
| Affinity | 26.96 out of 52 |
| Name | 9.97 out of 26 |

Teacher & Administrator Outcomes

Teachers at both sites took unique approaches to providing healthy classroom snacks as a potential intervention. There were inconsistencies in these snacks between teachers and schools. Teacher buy-in is an important component. Of the teachers surveyed as part of this project, most reported an openness to incorporating farm-to-school activities in their classrooms. Common barriers to implementation included time, equipment, and a lack of previous gardening experience. Though no post-intervention survey data was collected, our hypothesis is that teachers with more extensive horticulture backgrounds felt more comfortable with USDA-related projects, such as the Marquette tower gardens. Those classrooms were also able to implement more fresh food into their classroom snacks.

If the survey was completed again, it may be helpful to organize it as a round-table discussion instead of a paper survey. In that situation, teacher could share strengths and weaknesses in areas of interest, like gardening, and plans for co-working could be established early in the academic year.

Snack calendars at Marquette were used to track teacher implementation of healthy snack options. Data was inconsistently reported each month by teachers and for a period of time where we lacked a consistent project manager there was little to no data collected. What was evident was that in the initial months of the school year teachers often were resorting to things like crackers and pretzels as snack until food preparation exercises could be introduced.

Food Service Outcomes

This project was driven by school staff instead of district food service. Therefore, building partnership and collaboration around food sourcing was a critical component of this planning grant. At the beginning of this grant cycle, a district food representative attended conferences in both Washington DC and Indianapolis with principals from both schools. This rep has also attended action meeting regarding farm-to-school and is involved in creating a list of produce items purchased locally. These will be highlighted through signage in the cafeterias. This support from food service was not maintained and building administration at both schools feel like the best success of this program would come with shared leadership on the project between building leadership and food service.

Using Evaluation Results

Throughout the 2017-2018 school year, Project Lead Hilary Searcy began an inventory of Action of Healthy Kids/ farm-to- school related activities which are already underway at Marquette. The inventory is incomplete, but includes plenty of potential activities for future implementation. A similar document could be collected at Madison for comparison.

Program Sustainability

Background and Current Status

Gardens at both sites remain under direction of teachers with support from parent groups. Gardening at this time is dependent upon teacher knowledge.

Both sites have continued to support field trips to farming related locations to continue to support building student knowledge about food sources.

Grants

Both sites are willing to pursue other grants to support our programming but have not done so to date.

Partnerships

Marquette is in the process of identifying other groups that could provide regular sustained support for our F2S initiatives. Madison is working with the city of South Bend as it works to recreate the city park that surrounds the school. The proximity to the hospital and the city park make Madison a viable partner for many organizations based simply because of its geography.

Sample Only