

+ Montana Farm to School Success



Creating adventurous eaters at Polson School District

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Since 2013, Polson School District has made huge strides in developing a school environment that promotes learning about local food and farmers while increasing inclusion of these products in their school meals. It all started when the school district created a new position, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Coordinator, which was gladly accepted by JB Capdeville. In the new position JB discovered there was a lack of local ingredients incorporated into the school district's menus. She decided to reach out to more local growers and farmers, which helped develop her relationships with them. From there she was able to start featuring these local farmers and growers' products in her scratch baking and also within the school's menu.

To highlight local growers and farmers, JB started supplying educational materials such as handouts to the students within the school district that provided information about the local product being served, the farmer or producer, and where it came from. She saw that students enjoyed learning about where their food was coming from, especially when it was locally sourced. JB's ability to use the local foods in her scratch baking recipes showed the students, as well as the staff, how versatile the local food products could be.

JB loves the openness and creativity the new position gave her and felt that it was developing a whole new educational and food system. The FoodCorps service members in Polson have played an important role in spurring this change. "FoodCorps has provided the educational piece and given the students the knowledge about where their food is coming from." FoodCorps has helped her with both procurement issues and the introduction of these new local products into the school district.

Montana Harvest of the Month (HOM) fell hand-in-hand with the lessons JB had already developed and also provided more structure. Mary Auld, the FoodCorps member that has been helping Polson School District, has elevated the educational



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Building Community

Montana Farm to School Story

opportunities of locally sourced food. This includes the incorporation of cooking and gardening classes, and also providing lessons each month on HOM products for the kindergarten through second grade students. Through these programs, Mary is able to give kids the opportunity to connect with their food and build a culture around new and healthy foods.

Mary also helps run the taste tests at the two elementary schools and middle school. These taste tests always include local products and have been supported by HOM mini-grants they have received. The Polson Middle School's Family and Consumer Science class are in charge of the taste tests. They craft the table tents and serve the taste test products with a pamphlet that includes information about the local product and farmer, which is also created by the students. Mary has seen the taste tests create the biggest change within the school. She says everyone in the cafeteria joins in the celebration and it brings the whole school together. The students are excited to participate and try the new foods.

Mary started a new HOM art project with the kindergarten students focused around. They are creating a mural of a man who is made of local foods that is currently displayed in the cafeteria. Each month a kindergarten class adds to the mural after they have learned about the HOM product and they include the new information they learned about the product in their art creation.

Through this process of highlighting local farmers and gardeners, JB and Mary have witnessed the students become active participants in their food system. Both the farm to school and Montana Harvest of the Month have increased support for healthier eating habits



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within Polson School District. The students are able to eat more high-quality foods and gain a connection to their food that they didn't have before. The food service director, Jim Steiner, has seen the impact these changes have made. He stated, "I can't believe how much more fruits and veggies these kids are taking and not throwing away now that they have learned about them."



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