



Learnings from the Field



Au Gres-Sims Schools

Au Gres, MI

District Enrollment:

458

Production Model: Self-
Operated

District F/R: 62%

School Year Implemented:
2018-2019

District ADP: 61%

No. of Grants Awarded: 3

Au Gres-Sims Elementary

Age Group: K-5

School Size: Small (Under 300)

School Environment: Rural

School F/R: 72%

School ADP: 72%

Au Gres-Sims Middle School

Age Group: 6-8

School Size: Small (Under 300)

School Environment: Rural

School F/R: 64%

School ADP: 64%

Au Gres-Sims High School

Age Group: 9-12

School Size: Small (Under 300)

School Environment: Rural

School F/R: 50%

School ADP:

48%

Project Description

Food Service Director Amanda Marthaler found the best way to get students involved in trying new produce in her district was through taste tests. Au Gres-Sims scheduled 6 different taste tests between September and November of 2018. The first taste test offered apples and blueberries with a yogurt fruit dip. The district procured the apples and blueberries from their local market. The elementary students at Au Gres-Sims colored pictures of apples and blueberries in class in anticipation of the taste test. The pictures were hung on the walls of the hallway leading to the cafeteria to showcase the student artwork. The district also had a poster board with nutritional information, health benefits, and pictures of fruits and veggies explaining how they grow.



The next Au Gres-Sims taste test happened in October and featured brussel sprouts, kale and eggplant. The event offered kale salads, kale on the salad bar, roasted brussel sprouts and baked eggplant. For each of the taste tests, Au Gres-Sims had a poster displaying nutritional information. It showcased each fruit or vegetable whole or half, how it grew, whether it be on the ground or in a tree or bush. It had nutritional information on it, such as calories, serving size, and vitamins. There were also recipe information cards for students to take home.

Director Marthaler recalls being surprised by how much the students enjoyed each of these new veggies, much more than she expected them to. The students even requested for brussels sprouts to be served as a monthly veggie in the district, and FSD Marthaler was happy to oblige.

More taste-test success was inevitable. The next test in October featured butternut, acorn, and spaghetti squash. Again, all three offerings were much enjoyed by the students. After that came the cranberry, pineapple and grape taste tests. According to Director Marthaler “It has been an amazing opportunity for these kids, many who have never even tried this food before. We will be offering more on the salad bar now since the grant, due to the high interest in these mentioned items. We will also be serving butternut squash monthly as well.”

Successes

- Opportunity for these students to try new foods that they may have never seen before, and having students request it be added to the menu
- Increased interest in the nutritional components of these foods and how they affect their bodies
- Students learned how the fruit and vegetables were grown and where they came from

Challenges

● Seasonal challenges of finding local produce

For resources related to Project Produce, visit www.thelunchbox.org.

