

Cultivating Connections with Farm to School Activities During School Closures

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Abstract

Experiential activities are the hallmark of farm to school programs. School-based activities such as classroom lessons, taste tests, cafeteria promotions, school gardens and farm field trips increase children's access to and knowledge of fresh and local foods. During the pandemic Extension faculty responded to school closures by developing alternative activities to engage home-bound youth and their families.

(Competencies 7.3, 8.1, 8.6)



Methods

Extension faculty in two counties combined resources to develop and deliver stay-at-home, virtual and hybrid garden and cooking clubs for youth using:

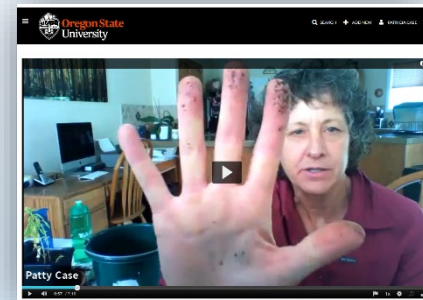
- web-based lessons,
- zoom meetings,
- virtual demonstrations,
- activity kits for cooking and gardening,
- outdoor farm tours and farmers market vouchers



Results

190 youth, grades 2-6th, and their families participated in virtual and/or hybrid clubs delivered by Extension faculty from March 2020 to October 2020.

Participants completed a survey at the end of each 6-8-week club session to evaluate their level of engagement. Responses from the survey (n=46) indicated 83% of families expanded or started a garden. On average, participants spent 47 minutes each week engaged in program activities including online learning.



Conclusion

It appears virtual programming can engage youth and their families in farm to school education. In the future, these strategies may be used to supplement traditional resource-intensive, hands-on strategies. Further research is needed to determine which components are best suited to web-based delivery versus in-person delivery.

Objective

Engage youth and families in web-based farm to school activities during school closures as an alternative to school-based activities.



Examples of strategies used included kits, online content, instructor avatars and outdoor events



For more information visit:

<https://workspace.oregonstate.edu/klamath-farm-to-school-nutrition-education>;

<https://workspace.oregonstate.edu/josephine>

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