

## ILLINOIS FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK MIGHTY MINI VIDEO SERIES:

### MARKETING FOR FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS

#### Slide One: Welcome!

Hello and welcome to our Mighty Mini Video on Marketing Farm to School, presented by the Illinois Farm to School Network.

My name is Diane Chapeta. I am a former Wisconsin school nutrition director, and the current network coordinator for the Illinois Farm to School Network. I

will be your host today as we discover the benefits of marketing your Farm to School program.

All of our Mighty Videos are available on our website in a PDF format, as well a presentation format.



#### Slide Two: Who Are You? Branding 101.

What makes your farm to school program special? Are you sourcing from local growers? Or, perhaps you source local foods regionally? Does your program include school gardens and education? Annual local food events? Who participates, and why?

Listing the primary pieces that make up your program is the first step in giving it an identity. A well thought out brand makes it easy for you to successfully project your program to your customers, funders and to your

administrators. Once you've gone through the process of identifying what makes your program special, you can give your program a face- or a brand.

#### How do you brand a Farm to School program?

What does your program look like? If you could describe your program in pictures what would those pictures depict? These are the questions you should ask yourself when considering a brand for your farm to school program. Developing a clear picture of your program including all the activities and moving pieces which fill the school year, and all the participants including parents, staff and community members that your program connects to is all part of the branding process.

Branding will give your farm to school program a face, or an identity. Choosing a primary message for your work, and then designing a "brand" which will carry that message everywhere it is seen, *will advertise your program every time it is seen!* This process doesn't have to be expensive, or time consuming. A simple pencil sketch by a local artist or your district's art teacher, a 5th grade art competition to draw a basic image of farm to school in your district, or a rendered drawing of a favored farm to school photo will fit the bill. If you don't have the needed artistic skills, partner with your school's art department and develop a plan to get the students involved in the process. What could be better than a logo drawn by your students?

#### Need a tag line?

That short, descriptive phrase next to, or under a logo builds a picture in your head of that product or program, and is a very powerful tool!

Make a list; choosing words that are important when describing your program's mission and the desired impact of that mission. Can't quite think of that perfect word that describes your program? Look for synonyms online, using a thesaurus.

Randomly choose five or six words that really speak to you from your list, and rearrange them, over and over, to build your programs tag line.

Tag line examples are: "Supporting local farmers since 2014." or, "Creating veggie eaters, one student at a time!". Or, perhaps "Educating students by growing green thumbs." The combinations may be endless, but you will know the best tagline for your program when you see it.

### Slide Three: Organize and Develop a Strategy

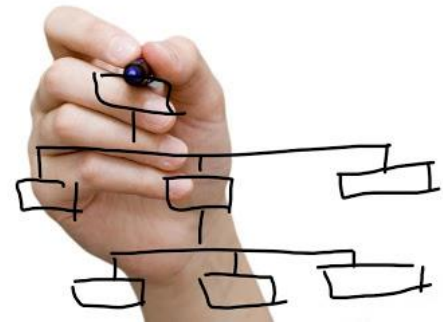
So, you have a brand, or a logo, and you have a tag line. What's next?

Organize your marketing work, and develop a strategy!

A great marketing strategy allows you to organize your plan.

Deciding where and when to get your message out, and to whom your message is directed, will help you to realize and target opportunities, and discover how to reach important audience members.

Organize the steps you will take to achieve recognition and increase participation in your program with a simple chart, or spreadsheet. List the key steps to get the word out and all the actions needed. Then, consider who will complete the steps and the timeline needed. Here is an example of a promotional planning sheet.



## Sample Farm2School Promotional Plan

\*Courtesy of Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy Farm to School Promotional Package

Some ideas for F2S activities are illustrated below. Most of the materials referenced below are provided in the IATP F2S Promotional Package. Use this template to develop a F2S promotional plan that suits your school/district.

Key action steps	Target Audience	Who will do the key action steps	When will the key action steps be completed
Post F2S poster and use food-specific placards to highlight the F2S Foods you will be menuing.	Students, staff, and mealtime visitors	Cook Manager	August and throughout the year
Include one or more short F2S messages on the monthly menu.	Students and parents	School Nutrition Director	Monthly throughout the year
Use the F2S Power Point presentation to train nutrition staff. Discuss plans to use and promote local foods this year.	Cook staff	School Nutrition Director	August
Develop a bulletin board for each school using F2S messages, placards, and state map indicating the source of F2S Foods you will be featuring during the school year.	Students, staff, and mealtime visitors	Wellness Coordinator	August and September
Update the district's website with one or more short F2S messages that describe the F2S program in general.	Students, parents, and community members	Wellness Coordinator or District Communications Specialist	August
Print and distribute F2S brochure to schools for their offices, Open Houses, Curriculum Nights, and other Back to School activities.	Parents, teachers, and administrators	Teacher, Wellness Coordinator or District Communications Specialist	August and September

Include one short F2S message in school newsletters or other district-printed material.	Parents	District Communications Specialist or Principal	Monthly / Quarterly
Ask principal or teachers to read F2S Messages during morning announcements on the day that a F2S Food is menued.	Students and staff	School Nutrition Director or Cook Manager	A few days prior to serving an F2S featured food
<b>Key action steps DURING FARM2SCHOOL MONTH</b>	<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>Who will do the key action steps</b>	<b>When will the key action steps be completed</b>
Customize the F2S Month press release template and distribute to local news media (e.g., newspaper, TV, radio, web).	Media and all members of community	District Communications Specialist or Wellness Coordinator	Mid-September
Customize the F2S Month lunch invitation to invite media, parents, farmers, teachers, elected officials, school administrators and others to join students for lunch.	Members of school community, farmers, media, policymakers,	School Nutrition Director	August through mid-September
Use the F2S Power Point presentation to inform teachers, parents, and others in the community about the program and featured foods.	Public, teachers, staff, parents, administrators	School Nutrition Director, Wellness Coordinator, Teacher, Principal	September and throughout the year
Choose one featured F2S food and promote it with a food tasting, Junior Iron Chef contest, book reading, farmer visit, or other kid-friendly activity. Consider other ways to get your students, farmers and community involved.	Students	Teacher or Wellness Coordinator	September and throughout the school year

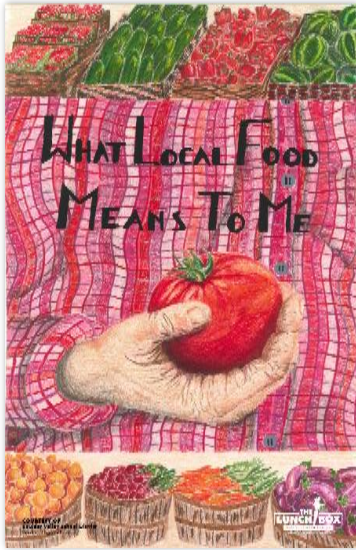
**Useful Farm to School marketing websites:**

<http://www.thelunchbox.org/marketing/marketing-your-program/?tab=overview15>

<http://lunchprogram.iatp.org/textpptfiles>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources#Promoting Your Program>

<http://lunchprogram.iatp.org/textpptfiles>



#### **Slide Four: Put the pieces together.**

Once you've developed each piece of your strategy, fit them together into a cohesive marketing program.

**District Website:** An attractive and informational website is a useful tool to promote and disseminate all of the important bits of information for your program. An actively updated and interesting food service page will provide a "go to" source for parents and staff.

**Newsletters:** Newsletters are a great way to expand your reach and educate your readers. Whether it's monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly, parents and staff alike will be informed and aware of all your activities. Take some time to create feature articles on staff, special events, new farmers you are sourcing from and other important stories you wish to tell.

(Photo Credit: Boulder Valley School District)

**Menus:** Be sure to have a well-designed and concise menu grid to capture your customer's attention. Remember, students, staff and parents are all potential customers! Creating a local food icon and verbiage describing a local farm or producer will fill your sidebar with interesting information. Add a Harvest of the Month feature to promote that local veggie! Bright and colorful grids will attract interest. Boring and drab will not do!

**Posters and Signs:** Combining information of upcoming events or new featured menus with vibrant pictures on your cafeteria walls is a no-brainer. Can you share your information in the halls? Walk around your school environment to discover new places to share posters and signage. Check out the link for The Lunchbox "Posters and Signs" tab below. There are great examples to explore, including the poster on this slide.  
<http://www.thelunchbox.org/marketing/posters-and-signs/>

**Recipes:** Recipe tastings are an important step to creating new and tasty sides and entrees. Promoting a tasting day on your menu grid and on your website will gain the interest of your students and their families. Do you participate in Harvest of the Month? Can you send a recipe home, designed for home cooks, which ties in your featured vegetable that month? Come full circle and involve your students at home!

**Promotional Materials:** Your logo and tagline speak volumes, so why not include it on everything to do with school food? A tee-shirt or cap worn by your cooks, a giveaway wrist band or water bottle during a special health event, or coloring sheets with the featured monthly vegetable for younger students puts your logo out front!

**Local Media Coverage:** School lunch can be big news, especially when paired with local foods! Be sure to contact your local television news, local cable station, and local radio shows. Look for programming with a focus on foods, local business, schools and area news. Create a news release that is interesting and factual. By adding real numbers (percentage of students using the salad bars, participation in local food taste tests, number of farmers on your buyer list, etc.) you will attract interest from local media. Planning an event? Be sure to promote it to those news sources!

**Social Media:** There are free venues for communication at your fingertips. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and many others often provide a free platform to share your program highlights, current news concerning school food and local foods, upcoming events and other pertinent information. Create a bright and attractive space on social media and be sure to use multiple hashtags when posting!

### **Slide Five: Tying up loose ends.**

Now you have a strategy, a logo and a tagline. What's next? Tie up any loose ends!

#### **Photos Will Tell Your Story.**

Do you have a device that can take great pictures? A camera, or a tablet, or smart phone is all you will need to capture moments that will tell your story. Share pictures of tasting events; up close photos of students enjoying a new vegetable for the first time, or attractive local foods artwork created by your students, on social media and in newsletters to help tell your story.

Do you have a garden? Snapshots of students planting seeds, listening avidly to teacher lessons, maintaining, or harvesting the school garden are a wonderful way to share their experience. Be sure to be aware of your district's photo policy. If student faces are not allowed to be shared, then get creative! An up close shot of a student's hand holding seeds, or a newly harvested vegetable, can make a great shot. Long shots of student's hands poised to self-serve on the salad bar, with local signs in view, will promote your efforts. Think of different ways to capture the excitement and energy during your events!

#### **Looking for Funding?**

Do you need additional funding to bring your marketing plan to life? Search for grants and private funders who will fill the bill! Our Might Mini Video on Innovative "Funding for Farm to School" explains many of the options to secure extra funding while building up your program. Check it out on our website!

#### **Extra Hands Are Wonderful!**

Everyone knows extra hands make light work! But, who makes a great volunteer? Where can you find an intern, or an assistant? Here are several suggestions to find those wonderful volunteers.

**School Volunteers:** Send out the call to involve parents, family members and extended family members in your activities. Look for helpers through your PTA or PTO, Ag partners, community garden partners and other school groups. Engage multi-generational family members and encourage food education beyond the school setting, into the homes of your students. FYI: Grant providers will appreciate your multi-level approach to educate!

Does your district have a community volunteer requirement for graduating seniors? Can you add your Farm to School program to the list? It's a great fit!

**Intern Opportunities within Your District:** Engaging high school students as interns in your program is a perfect example of exposing students to nutrition and food education during the school day. Culinary, marketing, ag and sustainability classes are a perfect fit, and will have great candidates to add interns to your Farm to School program. Be sure to create a learning plan for those young interns!

#### **Community Volunteer Opportunities**

**Employees from Local Businesses:** Often times local businesses encourage their employees to become engaged in the community through volunteering with civic groups and local organizations. A Farm to School program volunteer can be a great fit! Look for opportunities on local business websites.

**Chefs in School:** There are programs available to bring local professionals into the school setting. Chef's Move to Schools can connect you to interested chefs in your community willing to help educate your students.

<http://www.chefsmovetoschools.org/chef-locator/>

**College Interns:** Local colleges which offer sustainability, culinary, communication and health degrees will have an intern program which can be a great fit for Farm to School! Connect with colleges in your area by simply visiting their website. Click on their internship page and explore opportunities at each college. A link to the Elmhurst College Internship page is listed below.

<http://www.elmhurst.edu/internships/133167583.html>

### **Slide Six: Thank you!**

Thank you for watching this instalment of the Illinois Farm to School Networks' Mighty Mini Video series. If you have questions, please connect with us online at: <http://illinoisfarmtoschool.org/>

Have a picture perfect day!

