



Nebraska Farm to School Institute

The Nebraska Farm to School Institute was established to strengthen local food purchasing and education practices within interdisciplinary school teams. Eight school teams were competitively selected to participate in the Institute during the 2021-22 school year, engaging in training, technical assistance, and coaching support. The Nebraska Farm to School Institute is modeled after the "3 C's" approach, pioneered by Vermont FEED, which integrates the Classroom, Cafeteria, and Community into the development of farm to school action plans. Nebraska Farm to School Institute teams were granted \$3,000 in funds to assist in advancing their farm to school goals.

Farm to School Goals

- Create an internal team to better integrate farm to school activities between the cafeteria and the classroom.
- Plan, fundraise, and implement the building of a greenhouse for the Agriculture Education program.
- Build relationships with community members to form a Farm to School Committee.

Accomplishments

- Created a strong internal team with participation from the principal, food service director, Extension professionals, and local community members.
- Raised close to \$20,000 for a new greenhouse facility on their school campus.
- Developed close ties between foods being served in the cafeteria and learning opportunities for students.



Gering High School	Gering High School participated in the inaugural school year 2021-2022 Nebraska Farm to School Institute.
Student Population	9th to 12th grade students: 640
Farm to School Team Members for School Year 2021-2022	Mary Carman: Food Service Director Mario Chavez: Principal Carrie Johns: Agriculture Education Teacher Carole Knaub: Extension Master Gardener Tina Luz: Extension Master Gardener Tammie Ostdiek: Food, Nutrition & Health Extension Educator
School Year 2021-2022 Coach	Erin Kampbell: Early Childhood Extension Educator



Outcome

When it comes to farm to school, Gering Public Schools in Nebraska's Panhandle is no stranger to bringing in local foods to their cafeteria. When they joined the Nebraska Farm to School Institute, the Gering team knew they could do more to grow their own food on school grounds and to integrate farm to school into their school culture. Over the 2021-2022 school year, Gering's farm to school team worked closely with new principal Mario Chavez to get approval from the board of education to fundraise and build a new greenhouse, build a chicken coop and raise 20 chickens to supply eggs to the cafeteria, and identify unique projects for students to take on.

For years, Gering food service director, Mary Carmen, has worked diligently to find local food products any way she can. To expand this effort, and make it more meaningful to students, Mary and the Gering farm to school team have worked diligently to create learning opportunities that show students the impact of local food production. Gering has been implementing a "naturally rooted" campaign that helps students get excited about eating fresh fruits and vegetables and provides information on eating healthy. For the Farm to School Institute, the Gering team has continued to source local products from area farmers, the nearby community garden, and from local ranchers supplying beef to the schools. As the greenhouse gets going, Mary is excited to be able to get local products right from school grounds.

But the Gering team isn't stopping there. Their plans are ambitious and reflect the commitment of school leadership to build a strong, sustainable farm to school program. Gering's farm to school team has raised close to \$20,000 for construction of the new greenhouse facility. They also applied for \$250,000 in USDA grants to help cover costs for the growing farm to school programs and to build momentum going into the 2022-2023 school year. The sky is the limit for this team; their commitment to the Farm to School Institute and building a stronger program will take them to new heights for years to come.



Contact Information:

Sarah Smith | Nebraska Department of Education | Farm to School Specialist
402.525.3128 | sarah.e.smith@nebraska.gov

education.ne.gov/ns/farm-to-school/

