



## 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

- Incorporate locally sourced farm to school menu items into the foodservice menu.
- Add additional grow towers to provide more farm to school learning opportunities for students.
- Involve more local livestock producers in the farm to school program.

### Accomplishments

- Grew enough lettuce, peppers, spinach, and other produce to fill the salad bar in the high school cafeteria for two weeks.
- Purchased two grow towers.
- Received 200 pounds of donated ground beef from a local producer, with plans for an additional donation from another local family in the near future.



<b>Southern Public Schools</b>	Southern Public Schools participated in the inaugural school year 2021-2022 Nebraska Farm to School Institute as a full school district.
<b>Student Population</b>	Pre-K to 12th grade students: 376
<b>Farm to School Team Members for School Year 2021-2022</b>	Kim McMurray: Food Service Manager Brady Meyer: FFA Advisor/Ag Teacher Jeff Murphy: Jr./Sr. High School Principal
<b>School Year 2021-2022 Coach</b>	Tara Dunker: Food, Nutrition & Health Extension Educator



## Outcome

Southern Public Schools, located in Southeast Nebraska, is home to almost 400 Pre-K to 12th grade students. Southern hit the ground running by implementing farm to school in their Future Farmers of America (FFA) program and Plant and Animal Science and Agriculture classes. Their team set goals related to the classroom, cafeteria, and community and learned that there were many challenges and rewards that would come along with these efforts.

Brady Meyer, Agricultural Education teacher, led these efforts with the support of his principal, Jeff Murphy, and food service manager, Kim McMurray.

Using the funds provided to them through the Farm to School Institute, the team was able to purchase a Dutch bucket hydroponic system. They have 10 Dutch buckets running off a 40-gallon tank of water that have been used to grow tomatoes, peppers, and cilantro. They also have a propagation table, and two grow towers that the agriculture class used to produce a variety of lettuce that went straight to the cafeteria salad bar. Additionally, Southern students successfully grew watermelon, sweet corn, carrots, and radishes in an outdoor grow bed. Southern's success within the school's walls is evident, but it doesn't stop there.

The community of Wymore has stepped up to support Southern Public Schools in all their farm to school efforts. One local producer donated 200 lbs of beef that the cafeteria used in two different meals: tacos and beef and noodles. Local businesses were able to provide the funds to cover the cost of processing. After hearing of this, it prompted another local family to donate a quarter of a cow that will also serve two meals in the cafeteria.

To wrap up the school year, FFA hosted an Inaugural banquet that community members, local producers, and farmers were invited to attend. Attendees were given the opportunity to purchase labor from the youth during a labor auction. Additionally, they used this as a platform to spread the news about their farm to school efforts in hopes of getting the community more involved.

Southern is looking forward to expanding their farm to school program in the coming years. They plan to build a new greenhouse with the hopes of filling it with as much produce as possible as well as adding an aquaponics system to experiment with growing fish. Additionally, Mr. Meyer is excited about a new high school Entrepreneurship class next year that will open the doors for youth to grow and sell produce at local farmer's markets.



### Contact Information:

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