

FOOD JUSTICE EDUCATION GETTING STARTED IN YOUR SCHOOL



ABOUT

REAP Food Group

REAP Food Group (REAP) is a nonprofit community service organization based in Madison, Wisconsin, dedicated to cultivating connections with communities to build a resilient local food system.

In 2023, REAP launched a pilot project to expand youth education around food systems and food justice. In partnership with educators at three area high schools, students engaged in hands-on learning through guest speakers, field trips, and a pilot internship program, connecting them to local food system leaders while exploring future leadership and career opportunities.

This handout highlights the project's implementation and coordination of guest speakers and field trips, offering ideas to inspire and support similar efforts in schools and communities. A [project summary](#) and [evaluation report](#) are available on the [REAP Food Group website](http://www.reapfoodgroup.org). (www.reapfoodgroup.org).

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Laying the Foundation

Project Management

Having written the grant, REAP served as project manager. It was critical to keep participation manageable, rather than add to the workload of educators and local food system partners. REAP coordinated meetings, shared reminders and surveys, incorporated feedback, and handled logistics and payments. Designating this role early is important for keeping the project moving forward.

School Partners

This can include teachers across a range of grades and/or subject areas, such as history, culinary arts, and language arts, as well as school social workers, guidance counselors, and others who help plan and facilitate student learning. For this project, REAP partnered with three high schools, each distinct in school size and programming, and worked with a different type of educator at each location: a culinary arts teacher, a science teacher, and a school social worker.

Consistent Opportunities for Connection

REAP established monthly 45-minute virtual group meetings with educators. In initial meetings, it is important to share the project scope, discuss anticipated workflows, and, most importantly, listen to educators' needs. As the project progressed, these meetings provided ongoing space to reflect on classroom experiences, plan upcoming activities based on student interests, and troubleshoot logistics.

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Scheduling Logistics

Ask each school how far in advance they typically schedule. In our experience, approaches varied.

REAP found there is no single best approach to coordinating guest speakers and field trips. In this project, REAP typically contacted local food system partners first to confirm availability before connecting them with educators, though this sometimes caused delays. In the future, REAP recommends including both partners in initial communications to reduce delays, outlining the project, compensation, and expectations, and inviting the educator to propose potential dates.

Funding

For Local Food System Leaders and Educators

In alignment with recommendations from the [*Advancing Racial and Social Equity in Wisconsin Farm to School*](#) report, all speakers and field trip hosts received a \$250 stipend. The stipend was based on a \$50/hour rate, covering 1–2 hours of preparation and travel, 1–2 hours of instruction, and \$50 for food samples and materials.

REAP managed stipends for local food system leaders, with payments typically initiated the day of or the day before each event to ensure prompt compensation.

As the project was beyond standard responsibilities, it was important to compensate educators for their time. REAP worked within district compensation requirements, which proved time-consuming due to complex tracking. In the future, consider simpler compensation structures such as stipends or collaborate early with district finance teams to streamline processes.

For Project

While funded for 2.5-year implementation period, key components could be adapted for smaller-scale use. Along with funding for local food system leaders and educators, it is important to allocate or secure resources for project management.

For the Future

While successful, REAP offers the following considerations for future implementation.

REAP recommends engaging the local food system network early to gauge interest in working with students and hosting field trips. This can be done through a simple interest survey. Along with the survey, REAP recommends continued use of a theme-based list of potential speakers and field trip locations. For this project, REAP shared several local food system partners with educators, organized by themes such as food entrepreneurship, women in farming, and seed saving for food sovereignty.

Once scheduled, offer a virtual training to standardize information for speakers and hosts or provide a handout with key logistics, including student engagement tips, parking and access details, timing expectations, and safety reminders.

Some schools expressed interest in working with the same local food system leaders, so consider how to coordinate across multiple locations. It is also important to discuss with educators the goal of engaging a broad range of partners.