

INTEGRATING AND EXPANDING FOOD JUSTICE EDUCATION IN MADISON SCHOOLS



Food and Agriculture Learning Service Program

In 2023, REAP received a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (FALSP) grant, with the guiding idea that advancing a more equitable food system requires increased youth education in food systems and food justice.

Three Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) high school educators partnered with REAP over a 2.5-year project, representing Capital High, Madison East High School, and Malcolm Shabazz City High School. Together, they developed hands-on learning experiences for students, including field trips and guest speaker visits with local food system leaders and a pilot internship program.

The project also convened a Food Justice Task Force of five members representing diverse sectors of the local food system to guide grant activities and develop recommendations for MMSD on integrating food justice concepts into the existing curriculum.

The project concluded with the project team co-hosting the *Nourishing Minds, Sustaining Futures Summit*, in partnership with ECO Madison, gathering leaders and members of the community to discuss food, nature, and wellness for a resilient world.

REAP Food Group

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

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHT

Experiential learning opportunities enhance students understanding, skills, and continued engagement in food justice

According to students, MMSD educators, and the speakers and field trip hosts themselves, these activities consistently enhanced students' understanding, skills, and continued engagement in food justice.

After hearing from the speaker or participating in the field trip, 93% of students felt they better understood the topic and 72% were more interested in learning about the topic. More than half of students (62%) also reported feeling more interested in being involved with efforts related to the topic.

Internship students reported increased understanding, skills, and interest in continued engagement in food justice, as well as greater awareness of related career paths they had not previously known about.

The Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison provided evaluation of this project ([view full report](#)).

'I witnessed numerous students "seeing themselves" in spaces and careers that they may not have otherwise thought about. I also think in both classes it gave students a richer and wider understanding and perspective of our food industry. Students not only came away with a context of what goes into growing our food, but also why and how.' HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATOR



Best Practices

Provide Stipends

In alignment with recommendations from the *Advancing Racial and Social Equity in Wisconsin Farm to School* report, all speakers and field trip hosts were compensated with a \$250 stipend.

The stipend rate was determined using a rate of \$50 per hour, with:

- 1-2 hours of preparation and travel
- 1-2 hours of in-classroom time
- \$50 for samples and materials

Involve Students

Intentionally involve students at every stage, from selecting topics for speakers and field trips to participating in hands-on learning experiences not typically available in a traditional classroom.

Early Coordination

As schedules fill quickly, reach out to speakers and field trip hosts early. In initial communications with speakers and field trip hosts, include key details, including the project overview, compensation, goals, expectations, and potential dates.

Recommendations to Leadership

REAP recommends that Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) leadership continue to support the connections and experiential learning opportunities established through this project.

Evaluation findings indicate strong support for continuation, as these experiences enhance students' understanding, skills, and continued engagement in food justice. New and continued partnerships with the community align with the MMSD Wellness Policy.

To support sustainability, MMSD should streamline opportunities to collaborate with community partners on grants and/or secure donations to sustain these initiatives.

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