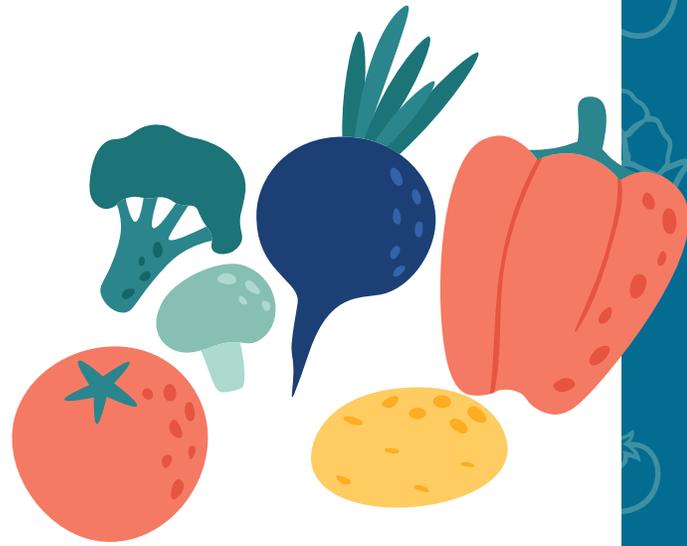




COMMUNITY HEALTH
IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS
making a difference together



CREATING A MESSAGE



INTRODUCTION TO MESSAGING

Creating effective messaging is important for building your school district's Farm to School promotional strategy. In designing what messages are the most effective for your audience, you will first want to consider what makes your Farm to School program unique, important, and useful for your audience. Remember to consider your audience when drafting messages used to promote your school district's school meal and Farm to School programs.

MESSAGING CHECKLIST:

- **Identify key messages:** If you try to communicate too much information, you may lose your audience's attention. First identify what information you want to convey about your school meal or Farm to School program. To get started, identify the top three highlights you want to share through marketing and promoting your program (See *Staff Brainstorming Activity* below). Keep these messages short (fewer than 12 words).
- **Identify emotions to convey:** In creating a communication plan, it is important to think about what emotions you want to convey to your audience. Emotions can help to direct the colors, images, and design you use for your materials. Think about what emotions you want your audience to feel when they think about your school districts' Farm to School program. What messages or images could you include to create these emotions?
- **Identify your audience:** Your message may shift depending on who you are speaking to. Students, families, and staff each respond to different messages depending on what they care about and value (see *Tips to Get You Started* below for ideas). You will want to consider who you are marketing to, what your audience values, and what language your audience will respond to in drafting your messaging.
- **Select communication methods:** Your audience will respond to your messaging depending on how the information is conveyed. Consider what method is most effective in sharing the message you want to get across. For example, if you want to convey that you have a variety of fruits and vegetables available in your cafeteria to students, perhaps consider offering taste tests or posting colorful pictures of the variety of options available.

ACTIVITY**MESSAGING IN ACTION: STAFF BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY**

1. Pass out notecards to each of your staff members.
2. Have each person write down three things they want to highlight about the district's school meal or Farm to School program. Take a few minutes to have each person share.
3. As a group, finalize the top three highlights you want to share in your messaging. Write these three options down on a white board or poster paper.
4. As a group, discuss how you want to share each of the top three messages to different audiences. How might you share these differently with your students, families, and staff?

**TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED****What is Important to Students?**

- Food that tastes good
- Food that has a variety of different options
- Activities that are fun and engaging
- Health and environmental benefits (particularly for older students)

**What is Important to Families?**

- Food that is of value (i.e., inexpensive)
- Food that has high nutritional quality for students
- Food that is convenient
- Food options that their student(s) enjoys

**What is Important to Staff and Administrators?**

- Academic performance: Students who eat breakfast perform better academically
- Student behavior: Eating breakfast is linked to fewer absences and behavior improvements
- Student success: Farm to School programs build skills such as teamwork, cooperation, and creativity.¹

¹ **Source:** USDA. (2018, July). Menu Planner for School Meals: Marketing School Meals for Success! Retrieved September 22, 2020 from https://childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov/information-resources/menu-planning-production/h1819_menuplennr_ch7.pdf

Farm to School Collective: Example Resources

- [Farm to School Collective Promotional Video](#)

Additional Resources:

- [School Breakfast Program Marketing Strategy - USDA](#): Guide to developing a marketing plan, including instructions on how to define your objective, target your audience, and create your image.
- [Menu Planner for School Meals: Marketing School Meals for Success! - USDA](#): Guide to marketing school meals, including considerations for messaging for different audiences (For more information on messaging, visit pg. 233-235).
- [Health and Academic Achievement - CDC](#): Resource outlining different audience-specific messages, including benefits of farm to school programs for different audiences. (For more information on messaging, visit pg. 4-7).

