

CONNECTING PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS WITH LOCAL AGRICULTURE THROUGH COOKING EDUCATION

BOULDER COUNTY

Maggie Ngo

Emma Dhimitri – BS, Supervising Mentor, Community Health Extension Specialist
Heather Hauswirth – RD, Farm to ECE Program Specialist
Victoria Lee – MS, RDN, CLC, Child Health Promotion Dietitian
Jessica Clifford – RDN, Extension Nutrition Specialist

HELPING KIDS FOSTER HEALTHY EATING HABITS

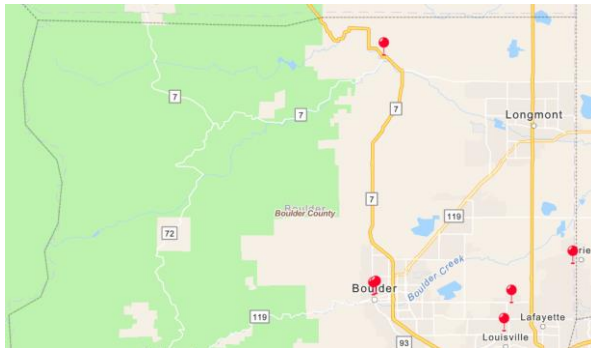
Exposure to new foods, particularly healthy ones, plays a vital role in setting children up for success with healthy eating habits in the future.¹

This internship worked with childcare centers enrolled in Boulder County's Farm to Early Care & Education Program (Farm to ECE) to deliver a hands-on nutrition education curriculum that utilized low stakes taste-testing, sensory play, and hands-on cooking experiences to expose children to locally grown produce as well as build confidence in trying new foods.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

- Formulate lessons and create a curriculum based on the 2023-2024 pilot program and the established Farm to ECE curriculum.
- Offer programming and assistance to childcare centers as requested.
- Create an evaluation tool to assess program success.

Figure 1. Map of Reach around Boulder County



Locations of Preschool Cooking Classes around Boulder County, including Lyons, Boulder, Erie, Lafayette, and Louisville.

INTERNSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

- Corresponded with Boulder County Public Health experts.
- Scheduling and communications with the preschools, teachers and staff.
- Created lesson plans and organized materials.
- Taught cooking classes around Boulder County.
- Created and implemented an evaluation tool to measure program success.



Figure 2. Preschoolers make cucumber roll-ups by spreading cream cheese and chopping bell peppers.



Figure 3. Preschoolers make fruit pizzas with tortillas, almond butter, strawberries, and bananas.

Table 1. Total Contacts over the Summer

Total Summer Sessions	19 sessions
Total Summer Schools	6 schools
Total Preschool Classrooms	11
Total Summer Contacts	194 kids

RESULTS

- ★★★★★ (n=8)
- Each response from the evaluation was very positive.
- "The children loved the program. More classes would be amazing!"
- "I saw a few of our VERY picky children try some fruits and veggies - amazing!"
- Participants are interested in a recipe book, additional nutrition education resources, trainings for staff and families, and field trips to support the encouragement of healthful eating in their childcare.

Please Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements that start with the following prompt: "As a result of participating in the CSU Preschool Cooking Classes..."

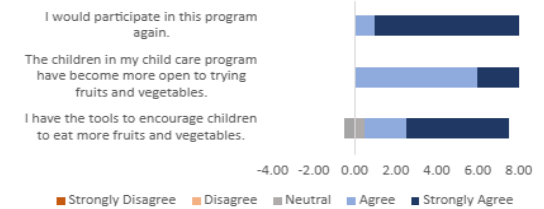


Figure 4. Participants' responses to level of agreement to statements pertaining to the effectiveness and success of the cooking classes.

CONCLUSION

- Had the opportunity to connect with professionals in the field.
- Learned how to conduct nutrition education for children ages 1-5.
- This program was a big success because it was received very well by each school.
- It has a lot of potential for growth as there is growing demand for more programming and expressed interest for future participation.

HOW THIS APPLIES TO MY EDUCATION

This internship focuses on the intersection of public health, nutrition, and early childhood education. I am an undergraduate student studying nutrition with the hopes of pursuing an MPH and becoming an RDN that specializes in maternal and child health. This internship has given me invaluable experience in community and child nutrition.

NEXT STEPS

The hope for this program is to continue growing and evolving to meet community needs, and also expanding the program to increase capacity and reach within the county. With the evaluation tool, the program can improve each year to better meet the needs of the preschools and children in this community.

REFERENCES

1. Farm to Ece. Boulder County. (2024, April 2). <https://bouldercounty.gov/families/pregnancy/child-health-promotion-program/farm-to-ece/#farm-to-ece-participants>