



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story and Lessons Learned

Food Day Fun: Classroom Container Gardens

1,200 students in nine Mono County schools celebrated Food Day 2014 by planting a “Grow Your Own Salsa” garden in their classrooms, featuring tomatoes, jalapeno peppers, and cilantro.

Intervention Summary

Gardening in the high altitude and often harsh mountain environment of Mono County can be a great challenge. To bring the experience of gardening to students in Mono County, we decided to bring the gardening indoors! We used Food Day to highlight our county-wide gardening event. Every classroom received several “Grow Your Own Salsa” kits, each featuring three 6” pots; a bag of gardening soil; tomato, jalapeno, and cilantro seeds; and the Pico de Gallo recipe from the Flavors of My Kitchen cookbook. Teachers were provided with the Grow Your Own Salsa lesson from the Toolbox for Community Educators, Harvest of the Month newsletters, and several nutrition worksheets for their students to complete during the week leading up to Food Day. The event was promoted on Facebook, the Food Day website, and local websites. Overall, this fun, interactive gardening activity reached 1,200 students spread out across 61 classrooms in nine Mono County schools.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

As mentioned earlier, successful gardening can be very difficult in Mono County, especially with limited resources. The average altitude is over 5,000 feet; the climate is arid; and winter can come as early as September and stay as late as June. We overcame these environmental barriers by bringing gardening directly into classrooms, so that students could still enjoy the experience of growing food and learn about the many benefits of gardening.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

While outdoor school gardens are difficult and expensive to build and maintain in Mono County, several schools have expressed interest in exploring large grants specifically for school garden projects. We have encouraged the use of greenhouses to extend the growing season and allow for gardening activities while school is in session. We will support these endeavors through continued nutrition education, gardening activities, and technical assistance as needed.

Contact information about this Narrative

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