HARVEST OF THE MONTH

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Abstract

Harvest of the Month curriculum exists in many states, but Indiana lacks a statewide effort in this area. To meet this need, collection of lessons with complementary activities that are specific to Indiana agriculture were created. The driving force behind the curriculum was to create a lesson that is fun and engaging for students, but also well-rounded and standards-based for teachers. Components of the lesson include Life Cycle Discussions, Taste Testing, Interactive Activities, and Journal Prompts. Partnering with Indiana farmers, a harvest video was created to accompany each lesson that features a different agricultural product grown in Indiana each month. A Google Classroom was also created for each month, allowing teachers to assign lessons on E-Learning days.

Project Description and Results

Childhood obesity, lack of agricultural awareness, and lack of nutritional understandings all go hand-in-hand. Classrooms are key environments to combat all three issues and provide opportunities for students to increase their understanding of food, nutrition, agriculture and its impact on their lives. Multifaceted lessons taught in classrooms have proven effective in teaching students to make healthy choices (Knai, Pomerleau, Lock, & Mckee, 2006). Harvest of the Month programs are utilized in many states across the US in an effort to bridge the agricultural knowledge gap of elementary aged students. Indiana does not currently have a Harvest of the Month curriculum in place. While surrounding states do have a similar curriculum, each is tailored specifically to that state and does not emphasize the rich agriculture that exists in Indiana.

Agricultural Education, especially in states such as Indiana with high production outputs and numerous rural communities, must be a cornerstone of educational programming. It is important for consumers, or in this case future consumers, to understand where their food comes from. Including agriculture in elementary curriculum allows students to make connections across multiple content areas and apply those connections to their lives and choices (Knobloch, N. A., Ball, A. L., & Allen, C., 2007). The Harvest of the Month curricula features a specific agricultural product each month, with in depth lessons centered on that featured product. The lessons written for Indiana Harvest of the Month allow for interaction with locally grown Indiana products and the farmers who grow them. Each lesson follows a similar structure, including the following: Introduction of product, life cycles, harvest and processing video, product exploration, taste testing, advanced activities, journal prompt and reading. Each lesson is written in a formal format and has been correlated to Indiana Department of Education standards, allowing teachers to utilize the lesson in their unit reporting. Due to virtual instruction needs in 2020, online options for all lessons were developed that aligned with the varied instructional platforms between each participating school. Through Google Classroom, each lesson was adapted for 1 to 1 instruction either for virtual classrooms or in person. Web-conference meetings with each class were held to provide verbal instruction for each unit from the curriculum developer. This adaptation allowed the Harvest of the Month curricula to continue occurring in classrooms across Orange County, Indiana. In this pilot year, three schools and thirteen classrooms have participated in Harvest of the Month lessons. Evaluation data will be collected, reviewed, and utilized to continue adapting the curricula for future use across the State of Indiana.

References

- Knai, C., Pomerleau, J., Lock, K., & Mckee, M. (2006). Getting children to eat more fruit and vegetables: A systematic review. *Preventive Medicine*, 42, 85-95. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2005.11.012>. Accessed December 3, 2020.
- Knobloch, N. A., Ball, A. L., & Allen, C. (2007). The Benefits of Teaching and Learning about Agriculture in Elementary and Junior High Schools. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 48(3), 25-36.