

Garden to Cafeteria Using Onsite Gardens to Supply Meal Webinar Transcript

Abby Harper: There we go. Hi folks, this is Abby Harper, The Farm-to-School specialist at the Center for Regional Food Systems. It's 2 p.m., so we'll go ahead and get started. I just want to cover a couple of housekeeping notes before we get started with our webinar today. The call-in information is there on the screen. Please, everybody, please type *6 to mute your phones. We get a lot of feedback on these webinars if people don't mute their phones so please make sure to press *6 to mute. We'll have some time for questions at the end, but if you have questions as the webinar goes along, you can feel free to type them into the chat box on the lower right corner of your screen, and if they are relevant at the moment, maybe our speakers will present them, but we'll be sure to back to them at the end of the webinar, and lastly, you heard that buzz at the beginning. That meant this webinar is being recorded. Just so everybody is made aware of that. It will be made available afterward on our website, and you will be able to access it afterwards. So with that in mind, I'm going to pass it off to Katelyn Cook from MSU Extension, who will be leaving our webinar today. So take it away, Katelyn.

Kaitlin Wojciak: Thank you, Abby. How is my sound? Could I get a quick note in the chat box from folks if you can hear me or one person at least? I see some typing so that's a good sign. Okay, good, well, welcome, everybody. Thank you for joining us today. As you can tell, we will be talking about garden-to-cafeteria, and I'm just going to give a quick introduction of myself and then pass it along to my co-presenters to introduce themselves. So my name is Kaitlin Wojciak, and I work for MSU Extension. I'm based in Southeast Michigan, and one of my areas of work is farm to institution. So part of that work is what led me to this topic of garden-to-cafeteria, and I helped to co-author a guide on this topic with lots of assistance from people throughout the state, many school examples that helps to inform some, I don't know if I'll say best practices, but definitely good practices in the way that folks are already doing this work, and we tried to be representative for work that is already happening. So we'll draw on some of that wisdom today, and this webinar will be framed by that guide, and I'll introduce it a bit more, but before I do that, I'd like to have the folks who are going to be co-presenting with me introduce themselves. I feel very lucky to be co-presenting with two representatives of school districts that are already doing this work quite well throughout the state, and I think I will pass it off to Jennifer to introduce herself and tell you a bit about her program before we get started.

Jennifer Dietrich: Hello, I'm Jennifer Dietrich, and as you can see I'm from West Michigan Academy of Environmental Science in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and I am a school nutrition director at a charter school. We are a pre-K-12 charter school, and our focus is quite heavily



on environmental science and Gardens, using our gardens to supplement our school nutrition program. Super excited to be here today, and then, I will pass it on to Monica.

Monica Degarmo: Hi everyone, my name is Monica Degarmo. I'm with the Detroit School Garden Collaborative, and we are a farm-to-fork program operated through the Detroit Public Schools Office of School Nutrition. So we're also very excited and grateful to be here with you all. In a nutshell, we have kind of two components of our program, which we'll dive into later, but we have a school garden program. We have 78 gardens that we provide services and support to, and then we additionally operate a 3-acre farm at one of our Detroit Public Schools at Drew Transition Center.

Kaitlin Wojciak: Wonderful. Well, thank you for introducing yourself, ladies. So what we're going to do, sort the way this webinar will be framed is, as I mentioned, through the Garden-to-cafeteria Guide. So this guide, I'll say a little bit more about it to give you some context. This guide is one of many step-by-step guides that are published by the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, and they sit within sort of a toolbox to assist on schools with advancing their Farm to school efforts. So this is just one component of that, and it's very much intended to focus on the element of school gardens of sourcing produce grown in school gardens and serving it in school food programs. So school gardens have a very rich list of resources onto themselves, and especially for the educational component that often goes with school gardens, this guide is not necessarily intended to address that, since there are many, many good resources out there that already exist on that topic. This really focuses in on that growing with the intention of serving some of your produce in your school programs, and how to do that, the components of it. So I just wanted to highlight that in case you felt like it could be, you know, resource for education. There are a few tidbits in there, but it's really not the focus of it.

So what we'll do today in relation to the guide is not walk through it in detail, but will use it as sort of a frame for what we'll talk about, and I'd like to try and draw out some of the higher-level themes in the guide and highlight some of the really practical and applicable steps for folks that already have school garden-to-cafeteria programs or are thinking of starting one, and what we'll do with both Jennifer and Monica on the webinar and call is they'll be sharing some of their experiences to really bring the steps to life of the guide. So I think I'll be sharing some of the themes, and then they'll be sharing some of the examples of their experience, and I guess one note before we begin diving into the guide is just that I'd like to say that there's many different motivations for having school gardens. So, you know, your personal connection with the way you would have a garden-to-cafeteria program, much like having a school garden, is going to be dependent on your motivation and objectives and having those, and to be a bit more concrete, I think there's sort of a spectrum from all of the folks that I've talked with in the



development of this guide that range from more educationally focused to more production focused, and I've been thinking of that on sort of a spectrum of, you know, one and being more educationally focused and the other end being more production focused, and there's lots of ground in between those things. It's not an either/or way of being with your program, but most programs tend to have slant or the other, and some folks can occupy that middle space pretty nicely, but what that means is that your part in the cafeteria program would look different, depending on which slant your program had or your school garden had. So, for instance, if you are more educationally focused, you know, your goal likely would not be to source, you know, a certain percentage of your school's food produce purchases from your garden. It might be more based in the goals of helping students to realize some of the, you know, agricultural opportunities for careers that might be available to them in the future, or, you know, learning some business skills or something like that, and then on the other hand, if you were more production focused, you might have a goal like that of, say, sourcing 5% of your produce budget from your school garden. That's an arbitrary number, by the way. I don't have a good idea of what a reasonable percentage would be, but just to frame the rest of our conversation around that, that if you're clear on what your goals for your garden and your garden-to-cafeteria program are, it will help inform the actions that you take. Either start a garden-to-cafeteria program or, you know, expand one that you might already have. I'm going to move on then, and the way that the guide is framed in steps. So the first step we're going to spend quite a bit of time on, because there's a lot of content to it. So one of the first things that you'll find in the guide is this Garden-to-Cafeteria Assessment, and what it will do, I don't anticipate that you'll be able to read the little screenshot on the side. It's more of a visual reference for you. What the assessment will help you to do is to figure out what your assets are within your school context that relate to your garden-to-cafeteria program, and just along with the second point here, sort of help you to figure out what the pieces that you might want to consider in holding your garden-to-cafeteria program are. So figuring out what that landscape is and what assets you already have to work with. So it takes the shape of the survey, and it'll just help you to think through, again, the components that already exist in your school, maybe some specific circumstances that you might be working with, and what your goals are in starting or expanding your garden-to-cafeteria program, and to help make this a little bit more tangible, Monica is going to share an example of a process that their program went through to begin.

Monica Degarmo: Hi everyone. Thanks, Kaitlin. Essentially, how are Detroit School Garden Collaborative operates. Originally, we started off with school garden beds not with the intention of being able to feed an entire school, and then with the wonderful support and leadership of Betty Wiggins, who's our executive director, she has just grown the program to a point where now we are, as I mentioned earlier, operating a 3-acre farm that is existing primarily for production. So that being said, within our program, you really have two avenues. So our school gardens, we have 78 schools we work with, and I'll just kind of give you a brief rundown of kind



of what that looks like. So each school within our program receives six raised beds from us that are 4 by 8, and it's really neat. We actually have the beds built by students here in DPS. We provide seeds and transplants, a hose initially when folks join the program, and then kind of some additional components that we're really excited to offer. Can you guys hear me okay? Sorry, I was getting some funky feedback. There's some other exciting assets that we have are our Nutrition Education Curriculum that we worked with the Office of Science within the district to create. So there's that education component, and then some other just foundational garden resources, in addition to the seeds and transplants, our compost, annually if schools need that to top off, and then in terms of support for the teachers, we have a position called the Garden Attendant. So we have people on our staff who work part-time seasonally to go out and help teachers and students with the maintenance of the gardens, and then we have monthly teacher trainings for the key teacher at each school. So that's kind of the focus of our school gardens. I think it's really important for us to note that as Kaitlin mentioned earlier, you know, every garden can have a little bit a different purpose, and for schools in our garden program, the food grown absolutely goes to classrooms, but it's not enough space to grow enough crops that can serve all students, right? So that being said, the school garden aspect of our program is still very much on the education side. Whereas through farms, we have a total of six high tunnels, and then we have about two and a half acres of outdoor field space that we grow on, and the vast majority of all that food is going directly to schools, which we're really excited about, and we do have students at Drew Transitional Center, which is a school for -- it's a really wonderful program. So young adults, 18 to 26, who have cognitive and physical impairments, and we bring them outside to help them do job training skills as much as we can, and we actually just received funding for USDA High Tunnel that is going to be used in an education center. So we can work with those students even more, and now also bring -- provide field trips for other Detroit students in the district to come for a day at True Farms. So I guess, long story short, school gardens for us, the purpose primarily is for education; whereas Drew Farms is for production.

Kaitlin Wojciak: Thank you for sharing, Monica. So that was sort of, you know, a narrative that you might end up with if you go through the assessment. Obviously, Monica's program is very well developed. So your assessment, you know, the results of that might look a bit different than what would happen if you were just starting a garden to cafeteria program, but it's a really great, lifelike example. So I'm going to switch gears now and jump into the regulatory climate for this type of work. This is one of the most popular questions that come up when we're starting to talk about garden to cafeteria programs, because folks are really interested in sort of the regulation component as to what is allowed and what is not allowed, and I would like to direct your attention to a number of resources that exist that help support these programs. So in terms of the regulatory context, we're going to start on the federal level, because that applies to everyone, including us in Michigan, and highlight a couple of memos that the US



Department of Agriculture has published in the recent years on this topic. So the first one is actually entitled School Garden Q and A, I think, and it's very brief, I will say that, and what it essentially says is that school food authorities are able to use funds from their nonprofit food service accounts to purchase supplies for school gardens such as seeds, you know, watering cans, compost, equipment, et cetera, things like that, as long as the food from that garden that the school food service account is supporting is going back into either the classroom or the food programs. So it also says that if a garden is funded by the school food service account, it can sell produce to the food programs. So there can be like a monetary transaction there, as long as that revenue from the sales goes back into the food service account, and then another point is that food service may purchase produce from gardens that are run by other organizations. So if it's not a school-run garden, if it was run by an outside organization such as 4-H or Future Farmers of America, it's still legitimate to purchase produce from gardens run by those types of organizations or other community organizations. Those are just examples, and then one thing that it does say is not allowable is that you cannot, if you're part of the fresh fruit and vegetable program, use those dollars to purchase supplies for your garden. That's not acceptable. So that memo, I would encourage you to look at, and I think, so Abby is maybe posting links to them.

She is. Thank you, Abby. So if you wanted to reference these memos further, either while I'm talking about them or in the future, they would still show up in the chat box later. You can check them out and read them in depth. So that one is pretty basic, and I believe what happened is that the USDA got a number of questions more specifically about, "Well, what does that mean?" So they published an update to this memo last year, and this one is, you'll see if you look at them, quite a bit more detailed, and what this one does is that it dives a bit more deeply into what expenses are allowable to support school gardens, particularly when they're paid for by the food service account, and like I said, this is quite a bit longer. So I'm not going to read it for you word for word or give you all of it, all of the information that's in there, but what I feel the bottom line is that the expenses coming from the food service account have to still align with federal guidelines for purchasing, and if you either are in food service or work with food service on these projects, you will know there are a number of regulations related to what can and cannot be purchased using food-service dollars. So they still have to align with those federal guidelines, and also, sort of the measuring stick is that those purchases have to support the operation and/or improvement of school meals. So that's really sort of the litmus test whether your expense is allowable or not. If it's improving the operation or school meals of the food service, and that it provides a more specific guidance, this memo, on purchasing and donating procedures. It also provides some information about constructing hoop houses using food-service dollars and I think that's all that I'll highlight from that. I don't want to get too technical with this, because I feel that it may not be relevant to everyone on the webinar, but if you're interested, please do check it out. Abby's got the link posted there in the chat box, and then I'm going to move on to our state context. So to just reiterate, I'm highlighting some



specifics, but the USDA is generally supportive of using school garden produce in food programs, and these are just some of the considerations when you do so. So then, as you know, from a regulatory standpoint, the federal applies to everyone, but then it's possible that our state regulation would be more strict, and the good news is that our Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is also supportive of these efforts. So they have a memo, which is pretty brief, but what it says is that in our Michigan context, it's acceptable to procure raw, uncut produce directly from a grower or from produce that is grown on site, and that's for a food establishment, which is school food service is a food establishment.

So I'll just highlight this. This is a dual approval from our Department of Agriculture and rural development that it is okay for, you know, direct sourcing from a farm if you're engaging in a farm-to-school, but it's also acceptable for you as a food service body to grow your own food or another body that is belonging to the same school on your school site. So that gives us approval in the Michigan context, which is wonderful, and I will just say that it is possible that within your district or if you have a food service management company at your school or district, that they may have more specific policies around this, and I do know that Chartwell's Management Company has some specific policies around this. They're still very much in favor of using garden produce in school meals, but they have some additional considerations, and some of those considerations are highlighted in our materials in the guide, but regardless of what situation you're in, it's worthwhile to investigate what your local policies are to make sure that you're in alignment with the different folks that you are accountable to. So I would welcome questions on this. If you wanted to enter them in the chat box now, we can hold them for later, or what I would recommend that you do if this is relevant to you is to read the memos that we've highlighted, and I'm happy to be in communication later if you still have more questions that come up.

So with that, I'm going to switch gears again in a related topic but planning for food safety is really critical if you're going to be sourcing produce from your school garden and serving it in your school meals, and it's really critical because in other instances if you're sourcing food from the distributor or from another source, some of that liability on the food being safe lies with those folks, the businesses that you're working with, but in this instance, it really lies on you and your school district. So it's really essential that you're serving safe and healthy food to your student population if you're going to be doing this, and I'm not meaning that in a scare tactic kind of way, but just to, you know, allow the gravity of that to set in for a second. It is very important that you consider how to grow food safely if you're going to be serving it to your students. So we do offer quite a few tools in the guide, and a couple to check out are a training checklist. So that is designed to, it's designed to be a template, I suppose for trainings that you might conduct with people that would be working in the garden, and would be with students or teachers, volunteers, and the food-service staff. Depending on your context, that group of people will look at different, but it's just a starting point for conducting food safety training with



those folks, and you can adjust it, as needed, depending on what is relevant for your school. We also have a planning guideline document, which is more of, I would say, of framing document of some of the things that you should take into consideration when you're starting to plan your safety plan for your school and school gardens. So those are just going to be tools that you can use and shape to your own situation to make them really applicable, and I am going to pass it to Monica. She's going to mention a couple of things that they do with their program, and some lessons learned, I think.

Monica Degarmo: Great, thanks Kaitlin. I will be brief, but speaking from an institutional level with 78 schools to manage, we do our very best to find ways to make the food safety aspect, which is so important, to make it really have some added value for teachers and worth their time. So our route of doing that, we very much so use the USDA School Garden Food Safety Guidelines as our primary source that we share with our teachers. So as I mentioned earlier, we do have teacher trainings once a month. I'll be frank, they're not mandatory, but we highly encourage teachers to come, and we're really lucky that we've developed a great relationship with our Office of Science here in the district. So those trainings, teachers do get paid to be there through the Office of Science, and they also receive their credit. So I just put that out there as for anyone that's working on an institutional level or even if you're able, if that your one school is to provide that, it's very helpful, but again, in terms of the food safety, we do have a training. We provide those guidelines and go over the importance of them and just best practices that are expected of teachers when they're working with their students in the gardens.

Kaitlin Wojciak: Thanks for sharing that, Monica, and I don't think that I mentioned earlier that the USDA Tip Sheet is referenced in the guide. So it's easy to find that way.

Kaitlin Wojciak: So transitioning, again, into -- this is another subsection of the getting started step. It is considering what to grow in your garden. So if you folks have gardens, you probably know that this is a part of the process of having a school garden, and I think that planning for people looks different, depending on, again, what your focus of your school garden is. So here I'm just going to highlight a couple of reasons why you might plan what to grow in your garden, especially if you're thinking of serving some of your produce in your food programs, and on -- what it does, is it makes it quite a bit smoother if you have a crop plan for your garden for all parties involved. So that would include folks that worked in coordinating the gardens, and it would also include folks that work in food-service, because it allows your communication to be more smooth, in terms of food-service being able to anticipate what will be coming out of the gardens. Ideally, food-service would be involved in the planning process, so that they can, you



know, give you some feedback if you are a garden attendant or manager or volunteer to know what is going to be more easily incorporated in the school meals, because certain things are more, I guess, friendly for that. Friendly is not the best word there, but they're easy to incorporate into school meals, and food-service will definitely have some feedback on that, and then on the garden side, what it can -- having a crop plan, what it can do for you is help you to, if you're a gardener you probably already know this, but it can help you quite a bit with your soil fertility management. It can help you from the educational side of deciding, you know, what different things you want to highlight in terms of connecting to curriculum, and it has a lot of benefits from a horticultural aspect, I suppose. The picture that's on the screen right now is going to be something that you would probably see in a more production-oriented school garden. So what it is is a crop plan for an entire growing season for a hoop house, and it's just a four-bed hoop house, and it's very detailed. So it shows you when you put a crop in, what it is, and then these little green squares would be when you would be harvesting, and then the pink or red square at the end shows you when it's basically reach maturity and it will be done, and I would say that this is helpful if you're coming at your school garden or garden-to-cafeteria program from a more production-focused stance, but you certainly wouldn't have to go to this amount of detail. If you're looking at it from a more educational stance, might be more simplified, and you might say that you're growing peas in the spring and peppers in the summer, and perhaps, spinach in the fall, and that would be good enough. But I will say that there are quite a few educational lessons, more than quite a few. Many, many, that you can engage your students with in terms of planning a garden and a crop plan, and there are a few worksheets in the guide that can help you to facilitate an activity like that. So I will, at this point, turn it over to both Monica and Jennifer to share some of their experiences in planning and some tips that they may have.

Jennifer Dietrich: I will go first. This is Jennifer, and we have been doing our garden-to-cafeteria program for about eight years now, and we have a hoop house on property and quite a few gardens. We have 63 acres on our school campus. So we have a lot of space to be able to grow multiple items. We do a lot of tomatoes lettuce, peppers, carrots. Our environmental science teacher, she likes to buy some really fun stuff for the kids. She buys like rainbow and purple carrots, different spinach's, beans, lots of tomatillos, things that will grow on trellises, heirloom tomatoes. She does a great job of planning out of it and then her and I will sit down in the spring and just go through everything that we'll be able to use in the food-service department. Those items are very easy to harvest, to clean, to prep, and to be able to use on the salad bar. We do write on our menu board every time that we have something from our garden. We write what item it is and if a certain class went out and picked we do make sure that we acknowledge that class, that it was picked by the first-grade classroom or it just makes it exciting for the kids to be able to see that what they have been working on in classes is actually coming into the cafeteria, and they're getting to eat it. So it's a great process that we



have in place, and the kids enjoy it thoroughly. So I will pass it over to Monica

Monica Degarmo: Thanks, Jennifer. I'll just give one quick example, because I think you shared a lot of really great information. So at Drew Farms, we grow a lot of spinach and cherry tomatoes and yellow squash, and that is prepared as what has come to be known as a Stop-Light Salad. In our district, we have a wonderful chef, Kevin Frank, who has kind of tagged that for us. So in the school gardens, we provide transplants of those three things, spinach, cherry tomatoes, and yellow squash, so that kids are not only seeing the stop-light salad like in the lunch line, but they can actually make it themselves in the classroom. So I would just echo what Jennifer said about planting things, especially if you're growing, you know, just on a small scale, to have fresh foods to use as a, you know, taste testing or cooking demo, to really think about growing things that are easily harvested and washed and don't need a lot of, like, cutting or preparing.

Kaitlin Wojciak: Perfect. Thank you both. Another thing in terms of planning what to grow in the garden is sort of dictated by our Michigan weather here and our climate. So I think Jennifer mentioned their program's use of the hoop house, and I suppose rather than, you know, thinking of our sort of abbreviated season, as compared to some other places in the country as a challenge, we can think of it as an opportunity, and season extension is definitely one of those things that we can take advantage of within our Michigan climate, and in particular, for our friends that live in Northern Michigan. We have some great examples of folks that are really using season extension in a powerful way to increase the growing season here, and season extension in the school context is wonderful because it can really help us to get more produce in the times where school is, you know, traditionally in session. So you can grow a number of crops throughout the year, and maybe not for every month of year but some folks can do that and can harvest for every month of the year, and that allows us to use food throughout the entire school year, as well. That is, one of the things that comes up from folks who think that farm-to-school is less possible because our Michigan growing season has most of our products coming into season in the summer when school isn't traditionally in session. So season extension kind of flips that on its head and allows us to harvest certain crops within the school year, and on that slide, you'll see a picture of lettuce and greens growing in a hoop house, but you'll also see, next to it, the Michigan Produce Availability Chart, or a portion of it.

It's not the entire thing, and this is another really useful tool that's developed by the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, and what it does is shows you when specific crops are going to be in season in different ways. So the green portion is going to be when they're in season and the field, so without any additional help from a season extension structure, and then the orange is going to show what the extended season is for certain crops that are able to



be grown within some type of season extension structure, and the blue show storage, and all be honest and say that we don't have a lot of information in the guide about extending your garden produce life through storage, but that's a topic that I'd be interested to learn more about from somebody if they're doing it, but just to demonstrate that you really can use specific produce throughout the year with season extension capabilities, and another opportunity that I'd like to mention, which is timely for us in Michigan, is using your produce in summer food-service programs. So there are many examples of schools that are already doing this. If your school does run a summer food-service program, but it does align. Your school garden would align with the Michigan season in the sense that many of your, or much of your produce would be harvestable during the summer season when school, you know, the regular school year isn't in session, but your summer food-service program would be in full swing. So there's some great examples of folks that are doing that successfully, and I would encourage you to think of that as an option, if you would like to grow throughout the summer. So that sort of wraps up our first stop of getting started, which, as you can see, was sort of a long one, but there's a lot to consider before you do get started, and so, those are all good points. What I'm going to do is transition into the second step, and this is the idea of building some community connections around your garden-to-cafeteria program. So, as you've probably figured out, these programs and school programs really don't exist in isolation. They will be much more vibrant and have a greater chance of success and being effective if you can reach out to folks, as many folks as possible within your school and within your community and really build those relationships. So Monica has some good examples of how their program has done this. I will turn it over to her for doing that, and Monica, I believe that you can advance the slide, as well. The points will come up if you do that.

Monica Degarmo: Okay, great, let me just play with this. Okay, great. Let me just get the -- oop. Okay, so the first bullet point here regarding the cafeteria planning meeting, and again, even if it's garden-to- classroom planning meeting, I guess the focus I would really emphasize with this is creating a support team for whoever this key teacher is that you're working with, and maybe it's you, whoever's on this webinar. But we have found that it so important that at this initial planning meeting, that you got all the folks at the table that are really going to create a plan for sustainability essentially. So that being said, identifying the people, which I think is going to come up in a second, and then be on the same page about the purpose, right? So, you know, for our gardens, we really try to emphasize diversity and variety in the garden beds, because, you know, there's six of them, they're 8 by 4. So it's not a huge growing space. So we really, our goal, is to create, you know, essentially an outdoor classroom with these garden beds. So we really want to expose students to as many different kinds of crops as we can within kind of a limited amount of space, and then in terms of identify crop plans, that really stands on its own for a second, right? Because we're working within schools, so something we've really had to navigate and, quite honestly, learn as we go and make adjustments as



needed is what do we do during the summer time? So, you know, in a nutshell, we started with less than 30 gardens. So we were able to provide more frequent support going to those schools. Now we have 78, right? So we're kind of readjusting how are we providing support to those schools and allowing teachers and students to take more ownership and for us to take a little bit more of a backseat in terms of providing that direct support regularly with on staff, on-site staff maintenance. So identify a crop plan. Who will be responsible? So is it going to be, from our institutional standpoint, somebody from our staff? Or if it's at an individual school, if they're going to grow during the summer, who's going to be taking care of the garden? So that's important. And then necessary equipment, which has Kaitlin mentioned earlier, quite the spectrum. So do you need to write some grants for spades? Or do you need to write a grant for a tractor? So putting in the time to really nail down what are those necessary equipment items, which leaves us to creating a budget, right? So I think it's helpful to kind of have that training stage in the beginning. What equipment would be love to have, and then breaking it down, okay, what do we absolutely need? And then creating a budget accordingly.

I apologize. I jumped ahead a little bit in terms of building a school garden team. I really want to point out that in our experience, folks that can sometimes get overlooked when schools are starting a garden. Certainly, you need to have a key teacher or two who's really on board, right? Of course, the principal, and depending on what school or district you're in, that can be really difficult with turnover rates. So keeping those relationships intact and having folks that you can be in contact with or when those changes are made are extremely important, but the other one I really want to hit on is the building engineer, or maybe it's the custodian, whatever their title may be. You know, particularly when it comes to water, so having those people who know how to turn on and off water if there's an issue with the pipes being frozen or whatever it may be. Those are also people that are really helpful to have on your team, and then, oops, sorry, thinking broadly about how to build. I would emphasize build internally first. Have a solid internal team, and then from there, identify whether it's a nonprofit organizations or, you know, external volunteers. Then kind of start to build out. So I should probably just quickly identify some of those excellent partners.

So I mentioned the Office of Science within our district, and they have been just a huge, added value. I mentioned the curriculum we created with them earlier. So that was internal, right? And then the slide before you saw a market set up, and I think you'll see a couple more down the line, but we do have a really wonderful partnership with Eastern Market, for those who are familiar. So during the summer, we do grow quite a bit at Drew Farms, and Eastern Market reached out to us, and we have a joint farm stand with them during the summer. So that's allowed us to not only, you know, to provide our food at a very reasonable cost to our communities, but it also, you know, allows us to get out in the community and promote our program and let people know what we're doing, which it's nice to be able to share something really positive about our school district. So that's important to us. Okay, I kind of mentioned



make a summer plan. You know, I think it's just really depending on the resources that you have at your school, and quite honestly, the manpower that you have that surrounds. So to give you a sense of our situation, you know, we have some schools that they close on June 17th. That's it. And they come back in September. We have other schools that have summer programming through the end of July. So we do our very best to work with schools and figure out, essentially, how long can we grow into the summer, but also being realistic that there are some schools that, for better or for worse, we put down, you know, like in the middle of August, just because there's not enough support to keep it going, and then have it ready to go, clean, and healthy for when students come back in September. So that's the model that we work with. Suggested checklist from DPS. Essentially, everything I mentioned earlier in terms of the summer plan. Who's going to take care of it? What are your resources? Do you have access to water if the building's closed? And reach out to other organizations for support. So, you know, are there other organizations in the area that have folks that would be happy to volunteer during the summer? Are those people that you can tap into to keep that garden running even if the school is closed? Research and check the guide for potential partners in your area. That kind of goes without saying. If anyone is interested in kind of how to go about that, please feel free to reach out. That's something that we really pride ourselves on, being the Detroit School Garden Collaborative, especially being at the institutional level. There's absolute no way we can do it on our own. So those community partnerships are key. So as I mentioned, please feel free to reach out if someone would like guidance in that area.

Kaitlin Wojciak: Thank you, Monica, that was a great overview. That was sort of, for the portions that we're going to highlight at least, we're at building community connections, and on the third step that's included in the guide is developing an agreement. So this really gets to the point at which you have produce growing in your garden, and you would like to use it in your school food program, and sort of how do you do that. So some of these things might seem a bit obvious, but if you don't do them, it can create challenges for you. So some of the things that we found other schools were doing that really assisted them was being very intentional about the having a communication plan and a timeline, so in particular, if your garden is managed by someone other than food service, that those two parties or more than two parties are really on the same page about communicating and what that looks like and when that should happen, so that it's easy as possible for, you know, making changes or substitutions, and just, you know, in particular for food service, food service staff is very much accustomed to procuring their food on a specific timeline. Often times, orders are due on a certain day or they have a certain time range within which they have to make orders. So this will be helpful to them. It would be, you know, challenging if someone from the garden just kind of like showed up and said, "Hey, we have 10 pounds of beets today. Here they are." Because there's quite a bit of planning that goes into the menu, and often in a much longer timeline than something like a week. So as long as all parties are cognizant of one another's timelines and are openly



communicating and developing those systems, it will make the whole process quite a bit smoother. So the second point that I have here is selling, donating, or trading? And what that refers to is the different mechanisms that the garden can get their produce into the food programs legally. So this is straight from the lips of our USDA representative, and these are the different options that you can have for that transaction of getting the produce into the school food program. I'm not going to go into too much detail with this, because again, I don't know if it will be relevant for everyone that's here, but I'll just give a quick overview of each of these points, and then if you are interested more, please do follow up. I'd be happy to talk more. So the selling, sort of non-intuitively, I think, is the more complicated of the three options, because what selling produce to the food service would entail is that the food service would need to get some quotes. Not formal quotes but just basically price quotes from other gardens to justify the fact that they chose yours. So that would only really be the case if you were from an organization that was not affiliated with a school that you would be selling to the food service, and I'll get to why that is in a moment, but it is absolutely an option, and it is absolutely workable and legal, but there are some more steps that go into that option. The second option is donating. So that what is pretty straightforward.

That would be just the school garden or gardens would donate their produce to the food service, and there's always record-keeping that should happen, but there would not be any additional requirements for getting things from other gardens, and then on trading, the third option is basically going to work the best if the garden is run by the school, and food service can trade, you know, equipment or some resources to help support the garden for the food within the garden. So we talked about that a bit earlier with our regulations in mind, and that is going to be just sort of an intra-department trade within the district, and that is also pretty straightforward for folks, and that's what I think happens often. So I will leave that at that, but again, feel free to follow up if you have further questions, and then the last thing here is just keeping records. So I believe I have an example of one of the, we have templates in the guide that can be helpful to get you started in terms of some of the things that are useful to keep track of, and this one, again, I'm sure you can't read that little font unless you have beyond 20/20 vision, but this is a harvest and sales log, and it keeps track of a number of things that can be useful in the future. So we have the date that the item was harvested. Who harvested it? What product it is. Where it came from. This has a bed number, and then the amount of product that was harvested, and this is helpful for a number of reasons, for one, it's definitely recommended from a food safety lens. So that in the event that there was something wrong with produce that was served in the food program, you would know where it came from and, you know, who harvested it and what it was so that you could trace it back essentially and correct any issues that had arisen, and from the garden standpoint, this is helpful if you want to be tracking, you know, what was sold the most our trait of the most or whatever means you use to get your food into the food program. What products were popular essentially, and then how much you had harvested, and I think both food service and garden representatives would



be interested in that volume amount, because that can be very useful in terms of promoting what you're doing, sort of see what kind of impact you had on the overall sourcing of food, and just it's interesting to see how much actually ended up going into the food service, and, yeah, I forgot what came next, but Jennifer is going to give an example of, I think, communication in terms of their developing an agreement. So I'll pass it off to her.

Jennifer Dietrich: Sorry, I accidentally muted myself, and then unmute myself, and then muted myself again. Gotta love technology. So communication. We, here, we have an entrepreneurial program with our high school students, and they do a lot with our gardening program, as well, and so we spend a lot of time with the environmental science teacher working out who's going to use what produce, and just making sure what they're going to use we know and what we're going to use we know. Making sure that everything is all on the same page and that if there's anything left over, one year we had a huge tomato crop, and we weren't going to be able to use all the tomatoes in the cafeteria before they went bad. So our entrepreneurial students decided to make homemade salsa with it. They came into the kitchen and prepped it there, and we used it on our salad bar. The kids absolutely love that. So the entrepreneurial students decided to go ahead process more, and they took it to a local farmer's market and sold it there, and it was absolutely a huge hit. It was a really neat experience to see the high school students learn how to run a business and figure out, you know, pricing and what to do with -- like next time they said if they ever do it again, they want to take orders in advance because they just sold so fast, and it was just a really neat experience to see. All of the items were donated to the high school students because it was going to be excess. So it was stuff we were not going to be able to use, and we didn't want it to go bad. So, you know, there would be times where it would end up being sold to the students from the food service program, and that would just be something that we have to have, you know, in writing and written down and explained, you know, in advance, you know, what the price was going to be, and how we were going to take care of all of that, but there's always options of things to be creative with, especially if you have a surplus of items.

Kaitlin Wojciak: Thanks, Jennifer. I think Monica is going to jump in now with an example, and I'll let her take that.

Monica Degarmo: Great, thanks. So I guess I would just hit on, where we're at in our program, we just added the five new high tunnels this past August. So we've had one growing season, essentially, just to see what works? How much can we grow? And working with our kitchen and our cafeteria. So essentially, we're moving into a point now where we want to be more than a value-added program and be able to justify ourselves as a financially viable program, as well, right? So I just wanted to highlight in the garden to -- or the Garden Cafeteria Guide that



has been referenced throughout this. There's a great mathematical equation that our -- I'm not a math major. It's in layman's terms. So I find it very helpful that I think can definitely be used with students, whether it's an entrepreneurship class or for us, as well, on a more institutional scale where we're really factoring in labor costs, material costs to see by us growing, you know, 15,000 pounds of spinach and sourcing it locally, is that going to be cheaper than the \$2 a pound USDA price? So I just wanted to highlight that part of the guide, and I think, you know, Jennifer mentioned all the points on communication, but here at DPS we have one central kitchen that we shift all of our produce to unless it needs to go to a local distributor that we partner with to get prepared. Like squash, for example, we use [inaudible] here in Detroit, and then it goes to our central kitchen, but absolutely, in terms of the menu, planning ahead, and again, we're kind of learning as we go, but knock on wood, we're kind of moving into a pretty set system where we work directly with our district chef. We get feedback from him, you know, in terms of what he needs on the menu, but also, very much so, what is reasonable in terms of quantity but also the actual item itself. Is it something that he has enough staff to wash? Are they trained enough to actually prepare it and wash it. So I guess moral of the story, whether you're working with one school or you're working with dozens, to ensure that your kitchen staff is on board, and they're not getting the surprises. They're the last people that you want to surprise.

Kaitlin Wojciak: Excellent points, as always. So we're going to move now into the last step, which certainly doesn't mean that if you get to this point that you're done with your program, because it's ever evolving, but the last thing we choose to highlight is linking to garden produce, which is sort of, it's just a way of thinking about how to keep your program operational and sustainable. So in this section, we really cover things like how to procure resources, if you need to, such as grant funding or income. So there are a few suggestions of where you might look for some grant funds, and some other suggestions of how to stay looped into current opportunities, and then a different way of looking at that is that you could also incorporate sort of an entrepreneurial aspect to it by hosting a youth farm stand. I think that, you know, many folks have done that, and what that allows is more of a student engagement component to it, and also, you can create some revenue by selling produce from the garden, as well, but it's not going food service, and that can be helpful for creating some income for the program, and there are other options, as well, on how you can create revenue for your program, because I guess I don't mean to say that grant funding is necessarily a sustainable option, but it can be an option for specific projects for getting started, and it's definitely something to consider if you have the time and ability to do that. I know that most folks who are on this webinar are probably very busy, and that can be a challenge. The last thing that this section highlights is really making sure that you promote what you're doing. If you do get a garden-to-cafeteria program up and running, do ensure that you're promoting what you're doing to the public for support and for attention and, you know, to just celebrate all the work that you've put into a



program like this, but also internally, especially to your students. So it's very helpful to allow your students to know that you are serving produce that they may have helped to grow, and there are some benefits that come with that, and I think we'll talk about that in just a little bit, but what I would like to do now is turn it over to both Jennifer and Monica. Jennifer goes first, I believe, and some examples of how they have done this in thinking about sustainability for their program and promoting what they are doing and just how they'd engage with the folks that are benefiting from their program. So here you go, Jennifer.

Jennifer Dietrich: Thank you. This is a picture of some of our high-school students that were actually harvesting some of the lettuce from the hoop house. You know, our students take great pride in caring for the gardens. You know, they love to see the items grow from the seeds. It's really cool to go out there when the classes are out there, and you see the kids, you know, just pulling carrots out of the ground, and they know that they had a hand in planting it and growing it, watering it, and now they're going to get a chance to eat it. So it's really a cool little program in a little circle to watch it. The parents, they've take a great interest in hearing about our garden program, learning how to make it work at home. We have started a garden program for the summer for all ages, and different groups will come in, help with maintaining the garden, making sure those plants are watered and weeded. This has helped with allowing us to work with parents and showing them how simple gardening can be. At this point, our school garden is self-sustaining, but we did start out with a small garden grant, and then once everyone saw all the positive benefits, they jumped on board and decided that they wanted to continue with the garden program and put up the funding to be able to continue offering it to students. So it can be done on a very small, simple scale, and then grow into something much larger and whatever your school can handle. Oops.

Kaitlin Wojciak: I'm just advancing it for you, Monica, because I think you have a story to share, too.

Monica Degarmo: Okay, great. I think that's okay, I'm going to skip the first one. I think I touched on the importance of building internal partnerships earlier. So going on to the second point, considering large- and small-scale grant opportunities. I think Jennifer brought up a really good point in her last slide. I think the dream for all of us is to not have to rely on grants, but if you are still at that point, or, you know, like Kaitlin said, you do have a special project or something you're working on. My two cents would be don't work harder, work smarter, right? So connect with people who it's their job to look up grants rather than spend hours googling school garden grants because, guilty as charged, I've done it, and it can be very helpful. So just a couple of resources. Michigan State Extension, they have, I promise they didn't pay me to say this or anything. They have an excellent school garden newsletter that comes out, I believe, it's monthly, and they always put grant information in there. We have a Detroit School



Garden Collaborative newsletter that comes out monthly. They also try and put grant info in there, as well. You're welcome to sign up for that. Just shoot me an email. So anyway, point being, there are grants out there. Connect with people that are in the know, and just save yourself some time, and then additionally, let's see here. Exploring farmers market partnerships. So I mentioned that we partner with Eastern Market, and that's been wonderful for us on many levels. I will just add the caveat that kind of came up earlier. So we have 78 school gardens, right? If any of those schools had a firm stand at their school, legally, the money that they made would have to come back to the Office of School Nutrition, because it was office of school nutrition dollars that funded those beds and the resources that went into it. So, you know, transparency wise, does it happen? Not to our knowledge unless we have a staff member there that's helping lead that market so we can handle the money afterwards. So there are kind of loopholes you can do. Like if they give us the money they've made, but we can give them a gift card, something like that, but ultimately, our model has been that food that's grown at schools is used, as I mentioned, in the classroom or it can be put outside. It can't be like on the cafeteria line, but it can be a snack like on a table in the cafeteria. Otherwise, a lot of the food, quite honestly, goes home with families, and we are absolutely 100% okay with that. So just to kind of include this within the firm stand model we have and really just what our regulations are, we put our energies toward two or three markets that happen during the summer, just so, again, we have staff there.

We can have 100% accountability for the money, and also, the community component, as well, right? So that we're getting out in the community in promoting ourselves and sharing this good food with people in Detroit, and then get creative with programming possibilities. So I'll just mention a couple of things that we are hoping -- where we're actively like moving forward on them. So we kind of have our feet on the ground with growing. In my role, I'm working to promote our program more, and really just invite people to be part of it. So consistent volunteer days, that's a great way to reach out to parents, but even folks right in the neighborhood around Drew Farms. I think a lot of times, our staff are always baffled that, you know, I mentioned that our executive director, Betty Wiggins, who is a work horse, for anyone that knows her, and she's traveling at conferences and sharing about our program, and yet, people down the street from our Drew Farms don't even know we're there. So really finding ways to promote locally, and again, and provide opportunities for people to be involved. So, consistent volunteer days, this is at Drew Farms, but I think certainly, at the local school garden level, if you've got someone that can kind of spread the word, you know, Wednesdays after school, come volunteer for an hour. You know, that kind of thing I think is ideal, and then secondly, just briefly, and you know, Jennifer, I don't know if this would be applicable, because you have such an amazing space or to anyone else on the line, but at Drew Farms, we're also working again with our Office of Science to invite school groups to come for field trips. So, you don't want just to -- you know, it's great to say like here's the food that was thrown at Drew Farms, and the students are like, "Well, where the heck is that?" Right? So we're excited to be able to



bring students to the farm for a day and really experience what that means to grow food on a larger scale, and just to kind of bring this full-scale, full circle back to funding, all those programs are absolutely value added, right? So stick to your purpose, that original purpose of your garden, whatever size it may be, but when you're at a point where you can add additional assets, that just increases the funding opportunities.

Kaitlin Wojciak: Great, thank you. So we're sort of at the conclusion of walking through the guide, and, I sort of hesitate to do this, but because I feel like most of the folks that are on this call are probably already interested in this topic, but to just sort of tie up our presentation, we wanted to offer a couple of reinforcements of why programs like this can be really beneficial, and on some positive notes. So, you know, a few of the themes, I suppose, of why a garden-to-cafeteria program can be really impactful for students is that, you know, you can provide really healthy options for your students in your school meals, and they may be already getting healthy options, but this is healthy in the sense that you probably won't get any food that is fresher than if you go and you harvested from a garden that is going to be on your school site and then serve it in your food program, and there are lots of great options to get fresh food now with many of our initiatives, but this is really an excellent way to do that in terms of making sure that the food that you're serving is very fresh and very special. It also has, anecdotally, and through some studies, shown to increase lunch participation. So if students have a hand in growing some of the food that's served in school meals, they're more likely to want to eat it. So for food service, that's really good news, because it can help get your numbers up, and it can allow your student population to have some agency in, you know, some of the ingredients that they're eating, and that's really meaningful in ways beyond increasing your lunch participation, but it can have that, as sort of a side effect, and I also feel like it really brings the school garden, the idea of school gardens, full circle in the sense that, you know, just having a school garden and having that be an educational and experiential space for students is really important and meaningful for many different reasons, but if you can just sort of complete that cycle by allowing students to eat what food came out of the garden on sort of a regular basis that can be -- it's a very important lesson, I feel, and I don't know that I have the words to express why, but it really can be meaningful, and I think what we're going to do now is I'm going to pass it to Jennifer, and she and then Monica are going to share some of their fond memories or favorite memories from their programs to just end on sort of a narrative note. So Jennifer, you can take over.

Jennifer Dietrich: Wonderful, thank you. As Kaitlin was saying, the garden-to-cafeteria, you will notice, you will notice an increase in lunch participation and lunch sales, and we have noticed a huge increase since implementing a full garden, salad bar, you know, all of that. The students, you know, they just love knowing where the items came from, and it's exciting to see,



you know, when they come in and go, "This is from the garden!" So, you know, it's just a really exciting thing. We have done samples of garden-fresh spinach smoothies just to get the kids to try spinach in a different way, and it actually was, you know, pretty exciting to see their faces when, you know, they realized that it was spinach. We didn't really tell them beforehand. We just said it was a smoothie. So it was exciting to see them willing to try it and actually enjoying it. One exciting thing that we have had happened quite a few times is after school breaks, we have noticed a huge increase in the amount of vegetables and fruits being taken off the salad bar, and I started asking some of the kids about it, and they just said, "Well, we miss it when we're on break. We like all the fresh fruits and veggies." So, to me that is why we do this program, is to get the kids excited about eating fresh fruits and fresh vegetables, and getting it to the point where it becomes an everyday thing for them, and they are excited to have it, and when they don't have it, that they miss it. So that's kind of my little wrap up and I'll pass it over to Monica.

Monica Degarmo: Great, thanks, Jennifer. I just have two brief stories to share. The first one is this past summer was our first time partnering with Eastern Market to do a farm stand, and it was in a very low-income neighborhood, and I hate saying this, but even for Detroit. Just a very impoverished area, and I was just mind blown, and this comes from my own biases, I guess, but we had parents that were coming to the farm stand who didn't have a lot of money, right? Were struggling to make ends meet, struggling to put food on the table for their kids, but they knew what vegetables were. And I don't just mean generally speaking, but they knew the difference between fresh food and old produce that you can get for sale at a grocery store. So it was just a reminder, eye-opening to me, that for those of you working in low-income areas, I think sometimes there's a message, and you know, there's certainly truth to it, but you know, "Those people don't know about healthy and fresh foods, and if they don't we need to provide the programming to provide some awareness." But there really are people that, yeah, they do know what it is, and yes, they do want it. And so I think it's really powerful when we can have a school program that's providing food to folks no matter what they can afford, because everyone deserves it, right? And the second story I just wanted to share, we have a summer youth program, and there was a high-school student working in one of our gardens, and it was really exciting. He asked. You know, he shared with me he was going to be a first-generation college student, and he was like, "You know, Monica, I've never even considered studying what it means to grow food in college. Like is that even a possibility?" And so that was just awesome to hear that students, or at least this one student, was realizing this isn't a just like a summer gig. This is an employment opportunity, but something that just goes much deeper, right? So those are two stories that I think really speak to our program, and what hopefully your programs can be too.



Kaitlin Wojciak: I'm really grateful to hear both of your stories. Thank you for sharing. So that sort of concludes our presentation. I'm just going to highlight a couple of things that are coming up in the pretty near future for ways that you might be interested in getting involved or staying in the loop on related topics. Not necessarily specifically garden to cafeteria, but they certainly have connections. So if you need any more information on these events, please feel free to follow up with me after the webinar. I'm not sure how easy it is to get the information off of the slide. So the first thing is a 4-H Junior Master Gardener Workshop, and that's going to be held in Novi at the MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center. That's at the end of this month, and then we also have two iterations of a workshop. These are both extension programs, but two iterations of a workshop. Starting and Sustaining a School Garden, and one is in Jackson at the end of this month, and I believe that today might be the last day for registration for that one, and then the other one is in April in Novi, and registration is definitely open for that, and that's just a one-day workshop, and it covers lots and lots of topics about school gardens generally, and you can feel welcome to contact Christine Hahn, who is on the presentation today. Her email is up there. If you'd like more information about that, she can direct you to a good spot and answer any questions that you might have, and then also, thank you, Monica for the plug earlier about the school Garden newsletter. Through the Michigan Farm to School list, there is a monthly School Garden newsletter that comes out. Christine and I co-author that, and that just has lots of different topics and highlights about school gardens, educational opportunities, and grant opportunities that are open at the moment, and in addition to that, it falls under the umbrella of the Michigan Farm-to-School Register, which has wonderful resources about anything farm-to-school related.

Abby, who is hosting us today, puts out a weekly farm-to-school newsletter with media highlights, opportunities, job opportunities, lots of other interesting things. So those are good ways to stay in the loop, and then on more of a national scale, we have a National Farm to Cafeteria Conference, which is this year. It's a biannual -- is that how you -- I don't know if that's the right word for that. It happens every two years, and this year, it's in our region. It's going to be in Madison, Wisconsin. The program has just recently been released, and it looks amazing. So if you are interested in learning more about that, check out their website, and I can see that we are, you know, getting close to the end of our hour and a half here, but we would love to give folks the opportunity to ask any questions of any of us if you have them, and if you are not able to ask today but you still have something, you can feel free to be in touch with any of us. So we do want to thank you for joining us today. It was a pleasure to have this group of people to talk with you. I feel grateful to Monica and Jennifer for being here and Abby for hosting us, and please let us know if you have any things that you would like to follow up on. And Abby is saying if you have any questions, you can type them into the chat box, or you can unmute your phone and ask on the line. Also, if you would be so kind, we have just a very short survey about the webinar. If you could follow the link that's the last one in the chat box



right now, it would give us some feedback as to topics that you're interested in and if you thought this was useful. So hopefully, it would take less than five minutes of your time to do that.

Abby Harper: All right, it sounds like there are no questions. So thanks so much to Kaitlin and Jennifer, and Monica for this great webinar. We'll have it available on the website, probably within 1 to 2 weeks, and again, all of our contact information is up there. You can feel free to email anyone if you have questions about the Garden to Cafeteria Manual or either of the programs that were mentioned today or any other farm-to-school questions. So with that, we will end our webinar. Thanks to all of you for joining. If you could please complete the evaluation in the box, it will help us make other webinars effective for your learning. So we will sign off there. Thanks so much, everybody.

