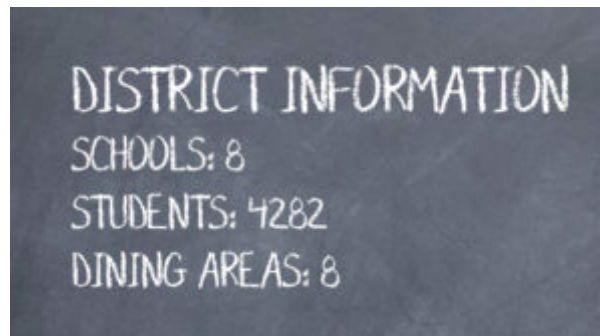


Harvest of the Month Profile: North Attleboro Public Schools

NEWS



Heather Baril is the food service director at the North Attleboro School District. We learned all about the new program she developed to help teachers integrate Harvest of the Month into the classroom.

Procurement

The North Attleboro school district uses a variety of distributors for produce, including

Nasiff

,

Costa

, and

Farm Fresh Rhode Island

. Heather particularly enjoys working with Farm Fresh Rhode Island because

they track both the farms and the items they supply. With this information, she promotes local foods in her Harvest of the Month activities by indicating where the produce came from.

Promotion & Implementation

One of the most effective ways that Heather engages students with Harvest of the Month is through a classroom program she created called Harvest of the Month Boxes. At the start of the school year, she reached out teachers (and principals) by email and set up an online sign-up asking if they would like to receive a monthly **Harvest Box**, which includes, the Harvest of the Month featured product, trading cards, stickers, and activity recommendations. Teachers can pick them up in the front office of their school on the selected Harvest Delivery Day.

“ Our 5S classroom is so very happy with the monthly Harvest treats! Thank you so very much for the opportunity to introduce my students to a healthier way of eating, and an awakening to environmental choices that preserve our precious environment!
-Anne Sullivan

Heather emphasized the importance of providing different colors and varieties of each Harvest of the Month product, and keeping them whole for students to see what they look like when they are unprocessed. This also allows for teachers to facilitate activities that allow kids to observe it from the outside, cut it open to see the seeds, and taste test it. The boxes have been so successful at the Martin School that the kitchen manager will frequently have conversations with students at lunch about the Harvest of the Month.

Another way that Heather has created excitement and interest around the monthly harvest is with Chef Days. She has partnered with





Tri County Regional Vocational Technical High School

I in Franklin and hosts a chef once a month to do a demonstration with students. Managers order the produce, and Heather will pick a simple recipe that includes the local food and simultaneously follows school lunch requirements. Based on student feedback, she adds it to the lunch menu. With many new recipes, she'll start introducing it gradually before adding it to every school's menu.

This year, Heather also was able to purchase and install **Tower Gardens** in several schools in her district. Students are learning how to grow greens in these gardens, which are installed indoors and which use grow lights.



Advice & Challenges

Heather believes that participating in Harvest of the Month is a great way to guide purchasing. She has even found that many of the highlighted produce are cheaper during the Harvest month. One challenge she has run into is maintaining a balance between planning ahead and being flexible. What she

advises is keeping an open-ended menu that still incorporates the Harvest item. It can be as simple as putting “butternut squash side dish” on the menu. In this way, there is room for last-minute change in prep – mashed, roasted, pureed into a soup, and more.

Another tactic Heather has employed is using entitlement funds from the USDA on center-of-plate items. This allows for more flexible spending on local produce as a side dish.

[Click here to learn more about how to create your own Harvest of the Month Box program.](#)