



**MASSACHUSETTS
FARM TO SCHOOL**

Telling Your Farm to School Story

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Presenters: Introduction

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About Massachusetts Farm to School

Mass. Farm to School strengthens local farms and fisheries and promotes healthy communities by increasing local food purchasing and education at schools.

Get involved through our:

- Professional learning opportunities
- Networking
- Policy/Advocacy
- Communications



Workshop Agenda



1. What Makes a Good Story?
2. Exploring Story Structure
3. Interview Techniques
4. Get Your Story Out There

Why Storytelling?



What are the stories you want to tell about the work you do and how do you want to tell them?

Why is storytelling an effective tool?

- Stories allow people to build personal connections to issues within our food system.
- Stories challenge people to envision the change they seek in their communities and to articulate and actualize change.
- Storytelling is a way to increase awareness about the work you do.
- What else? (Put your ideas in the chat)

What Makes a Good Story?

We all have stories to share....

- What makes a good story?
- What are the stories you want to tell about the work you do and how do you want to tell them?
- How can we increase engagement and awareness and demonstrate the nutritional, educational, and economic benefits of the farm to institution movement?
- How can we create material to support meaningful connections?
- How can personal stories change our understanding of big ideas or moments?
- What kind of springboard can your stories provide?
- What are some communication strategies and storytelling structures to connect with and engage your audiences?



What Makes a Good Story?

Small Group Discussion:

- What are some attributes that make a story engaging?
- What are the stories you want to tell about the work you do and how do you want to tell them?
- What are some communication strategies you have used to share with your stakeholders?



Story 1: Story Dissection

Pennsylvania Farm to School Network Success Story:

EXTRACT AND BOX SUPPORTS STUDENT BEEKEEPERS IN CHESTER COUNTY

Chester County, PA



Malvern Preparatory School and Montgomery School in Chester County have maintained successful beekeeping programs over the last five years with the mentorship of Tim Ferris of [Extract and Box](#), a Chester Springs beekeeping service providing apiary services across the region and selling [PA Preferred](#) honey.

In the early days of the beekeeping club at Malvern Preparatory School, Tim mentored the students in the full life cycle of bees, caring for the hives through seasonal changes and extracting honey for market. Today, the program is thriving

and has eight hives. Students participating in the club work to maintain healthy hives, prepare the bees for seasonal changes and create labels for their honey products.

This past spring, students harvested over 200 pounds of honey from their hives and, with the help of Extract and Box's facilities, turned that into 375 bottles of honey to sell in the school's bookstore and donate to the Chester County Food Bank.

"Beekeeping club is a thriving community partnership between a neighbor and the school. Our kids learn relevance from encountering others who care about their work and support their growth."

-Tom McManus,
Head of Montgomery School

Goal: Spice up this case study about student beekeepers!

- What changes could you make to make this story more alive?
 - If we understand why it matters to them, it will matter to us as listeners! Have a great first line that sets up the stakes and grabs our attention.
 - Read through the story and mark it up with your ideas.
 - Dissect: How to give the story more pep?
 - Re-work: Start in the action!
 - Discuss the changes.
- [Download the Story.](#)



Farm to School Northeast: A Podcast



- A monthly podcast where we explore the creative ways that local food is getting into school cafeterias and how food system education is playing out in classrooms and school gardens across the northeast region.
- Each month we release a 20-30 minute episode that highlights the innovative work of educators, food service staff, school garden coordinators, policy makers, farmers, and more.
- You can listen [here](#) or [here](#) or wherever you get your podcasts.

Interview: Interview Tips

- Be open to possibilities, but prepare questions before you begin.
- Introduce yourself and get the interviewee's name
- Don't be afraid to ask someone to repeat something.
- Ask open-ended questions. Avoid yes or no questions — they lead to boring answers.
- Ask for explanations/ask follow-up questions.
- Don't talk over your interviewee. Let them finish completely before you jump in with the next question. *Don't be afraid of silence.*
- You can try to ask a question several different ways if you're not getting an answer.
- At the end of an interview always ask: "Is there anything I haven't asked you that you'd like to say?" and "Do you have any questions for me?"

Interview Questions: Practice and Discuss



2025 SUMMIT
BUILDING COMMUNITY & BELONGING THROUGH STORYTELLING

 MASSACHUSETTS
FARM TO SCHOOL

QUESTION LIST

What is your earliest food memory, and how does it shape your relationship with food today?

What food traditions from your culture or family do you hold most dear?

Do you think about where your food comes from before you eat it? Why or why not?

How does food bring you together with others—whether through family, friends, or community?

What foods do you consider “special treats,” and why do they hold that significance for you?

How do your food choices reflect your values, such as sustainability, health, or ethical concerns?

What role does food play in your mental well-being or self-care routine?

Have you ever tried to change your eating habits for personal or health reasons? What was that journey like?

What’s a food you used to dislike but have grown to enjoy over time, and what changed for you?

If you could only eat one cuisine for the rest of your life, what would it be, and why?

What’s the most adventurous food you’ve ever tried, and what was your experience?

Does food influence your identity or sense of belonging in a particular culture or community? If so, in what ways?

If you could have any meal, prepared by anyone, living or deceased, what would it be?

How does cooking or preparing food make you feel—do you find it therapeutic or stressful?

How has your relationship with food changed throughout different stages of your life?

What’s the most meaningful food-related gift you’ve ever received or given?

Choose a person in your area of work that you would like to interview.

Develop a list of questions you would like to ask that person.

What are the key themes you hope would come out of this conversation?

Get Your Story Out There!

- WHY should you share your story?
- WHEN should you share your story?
- WHO wants to hear your story?
- HOW can I create engaging visual messaging?



GET YOUR STORY OUT THERE: HOW?



- Newsletters
- Email
- Print
- Social Media
- Photographs
- Videos
- Podcasts
- News Media
- Bulletin Boards

GET YOUR STORY OUT THERE: WHEN?

WHY SET UP A CALENDAR?

If you take the time to set up a monthly plan, you can communicate more effectively with your audiences. With everything else on our plates, it's easy to drop communications off the to-do list. Starting with a communications calendar can help provide a framework for engagement going forward.

FARM TO SCHOOL MONTH EXAMPLE CALENDAR

Week #1
Announce Farm to School Month

Week #2
Share a Lunch Tray photo featuring a local ingredient.

Week #3
Share a data point about your local food procurement & tag your legislator.

Week #4
Do a taste test, and share results. Include quotes from students if possible.

GET YOUR STORY OUT THERE: WHO?

THINK ABOUT YOUR AUDIENCES

You are likely speaking to many different audiences. Different stories will appeal to different audiences.

FAMILIES

- Great food their children are eating
- School gardens providing opportunities for hands-on learning outdoors
- Local purchasing supports local economy

STUDENTS

- New and interesting menu options
- What farms their food comes from
- Food that comes from gardens at school
- How to get involved in farm to school

SCHOOL STAFF

- Connecting the cafeteria and the classroom
- How to advocate for more local foods in the cafeteria
- Benefits of local, healthy food to students

LEGISLATORS

- Benefits of local, healthy food to students
- Benefits of experiential learning (school gardens, etc.)
- Economic benefit to farmers & local producers

GET YOUR STORY OUT THERE: GRAPHIC CONSISTENCY



HARVEST of the MONTH

September

This month we are enjoying local tomatoes in our school meals!

IN MASSACHUSETTS, OVER 500 FARMS PRODUCE 6.5 MILLION POUNDS OF TOMATOES EACH YEAR.

THERE ARE OVER 25,000 VARIETIES OF TOMATOES, FROM TINY CURRANT TOMATOES TO GIANT BEEFSTEAK TOMATOES.

THE USDA REPORTS THAT EACH OF US EAT ABOUT 20 POUNDS OF TOMATOES PER YEAR.

Facebook Graphic



MASSACHUSETTS FARM TO SCHOOL

HARVEST of the MONTH TOMATOES

September

Harvest of the Month promotes a different MA-grown crop from local farms each month in school cafeterias across the state. To learn more, visit: massfarmtoschool.org/home

Fresh tomatoes are a wonderful treat this time of year! Pick them after they turn red for the best flavor.

Healthy Serving Ideas

Salsa: Make a salsa with chopped tomatoes, diced red onion, a seeded chopped jalapeño, and a splash of lime juice.

Stuffed Tomatoes: Slice tomatoes in half and remove seeds. Stuff with cooked brown rice, corn, chopped garlic, salt and pepper. Sprinkle with a cheese of your choice and broil for 3-5 minutes until cheese melts.

Roasted Tomatoes: Toss whole or sliced tomatoes in olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Bake at 450°F for 10-20 minutes.

Fun Facts

- Tomatoes come from Peru. Their Aztec name means "plump thing with a navel (belly-button)."
- In the U.S. people eat 20 pounds of tomatoes every year.
- In Massachusetts, over 500 farms produce 6.5 million pounds of tomatoes every year.

At-Home Activity

Tomato Taste Test & Seed Counting Activity

1. Gather 2-3 different types of tomatoes (small, medium, large or different colors).
2. Guess how many seeds are in each tomato.
3. Cut the tomatoes, remove the seeds and count them.
4. Compare guesses to the actual seed count.
5. Taste each type of tomato and talk about flavor, color, and size differences. What was your favorite?

Adapted from Green Mountain Farm to School

Where to Find Local Tomatoes

MassGrown Map (MDAR)
<https://massnrc.org/farmlocator>

Harvest of the Month Book Club

Gr. K-5: *Strega Nona & Her Tomatoes* by Tomie dePaola
Gr. 6-8: *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman
Gr. 9-12: *The Color of Food: Stories of Race, Resilience, and Farming* by Natasha Bowen

Tomato Purchasing Pointers

- Look for tomatoes that are firm and smooth.
- Store tomatoes at room temperature, out of direct sunlight.
- Buy tomatoes when they are in season. They cost less and taste best!

MASSACHUSETTS

MDAR
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

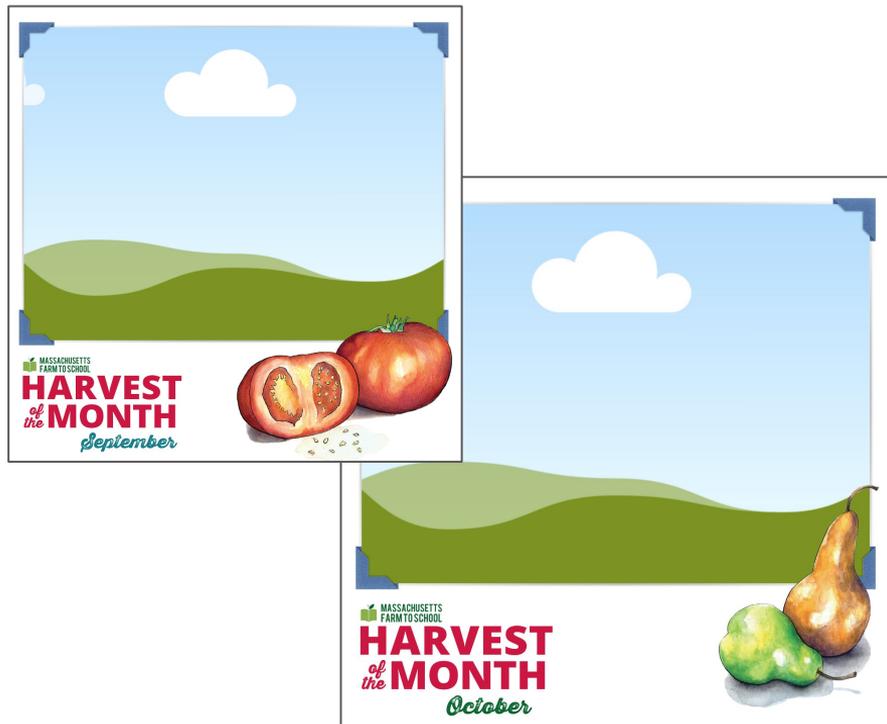
Thank you to Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources for helping make Harvest of the Month possible.

October Preview: PEARS!

www.massfarmtoschool.org

Family Newsletter

GET YOUR STORY OUT THERE: GRAPHIC CONSISTENCY



Harvest of the Month
[Instagram Templates](#)



Harvest of the Month
[Cafeteria Line Local Food Sign Templates](#)

STAY IN TOUCH!

Reach out!

Dena: dena@massfarmtoschool.org

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STORY STRUCTURE?

From the Moth– Story Structure Map (<https://themoth.org/>)

1. The World As It Was

- What do we need to know about you to understand this story? Why is this story important to you? Setting the stage: Who, what, when, where...

2. And Then One Day...

- What happens to set the story in motion? What's different about today....

3. Raising the Stakes

- What do you have to win or lose? What matters to you at this moment?

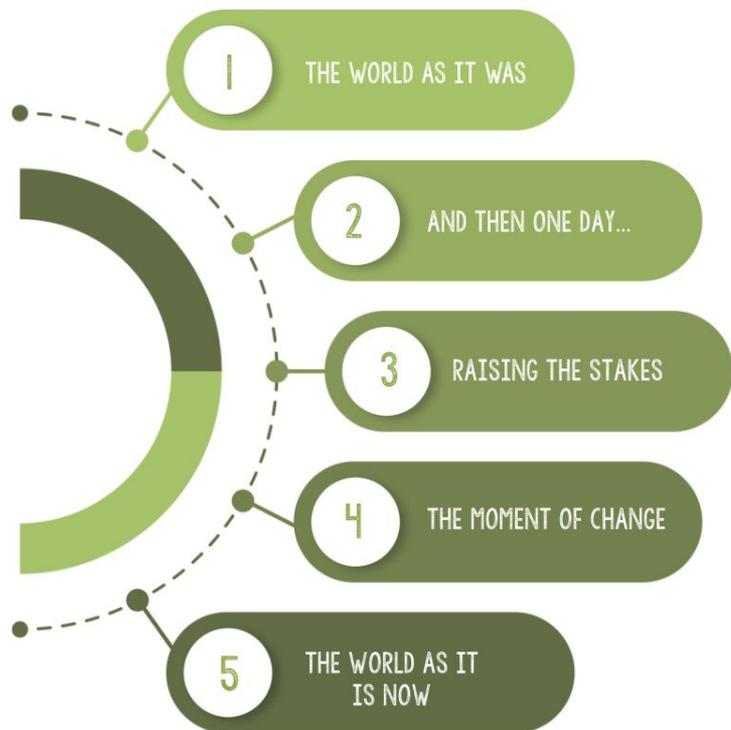
4. The Moment of Change

- What happens that changes how you see things? Did you realize something new? Did your world change? Changes can be big or small.

5. The World As It Is Now

- How are you different after the events of this story?

STORY STRUCTURE MAP



- 1 What do we need to know about you to understand this story? Why is this story important to you? Who, what, when, where?
- 2 What happens to set the story in motion? What's different about today...
- 3 What do you have to win or lose? What matters to you at this moment?
- 4 What happens that changes how you see things? Did you realize something new? Did your world change. (Changes can be big or small).
- 5 How are you different after the events of this story?

From The Moth- Story Structure Map

RESOURCES

Storytelling

- [StoryCorps: Great Questions List](#)
- [Radio Rookies: Educator Resources](#)
- [The Moth Storytelling School](#)

Communications

- [School Nutrition Outreach Toolkit](#) (Wisconsin Public Schools)
- [Tell a Compelling Story](#), Chapter 6 of "Making Local, Healthy, Sustainable Delicious" (UMass Amherst)
- [Photographing School Food](#) (Center for Ecoliteracy)

Advocacy

- [Farm to School Advocacy Toolkit](#) (Farm to Institution New York)
- [Tips for Meeting with & Hosting Your Legislator](#) (Mass. Farm to School)
- [Tips for Hosting Your Legislator](#) (National Farm to School)
- [Cafeteria Visits 101](#) (School Nutrition Association)

Farm to School Data & Background

- [Farm to School Census](#)
- [USDA Farm to School Site](#)