Ag in the Classroom
Grand Forks County Youth Get SMART about ND Agriculture

The Situation
Only twenty-four percent of North Dakota’s population are employed in the agricultural sector and only 4% of the population are farm operators (2012 USDA NASS). Therefore, many of North Dakota’s youth are disconnected from agriculture.

This issue was raised by North Dakota communities during NDSU Extension Service’s 2015 Community Forums and can be found in the statewide report https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/features/2015_Community_Forum.pdf. A public disconnect with agriculture was identified as a priority issue. This highlighted that farm-to-table consumer education programs are needed for all ages.

When children learn about agriculture they also learn about making healthier food choices. According to the Obesity Action Coalition “Developing these healthy habits early-on will last a lifetime and will naturally become a part of [one’s] lifestyle.” This can be accomplished through farm-to-table programs but also through providing resources for families to engage in discussions about agriculture.

Extension Response
Agents Knutson, Bakewell and Knudson developed Ag in the Classroom to educate students about the role agriculture has in their lives. Four lessons were created and delivered to two 2nd grade classes and one after school program with 2nd and 3rd graders from three Grand Forks County Schools. All 64 students that participated in the program received a copy of the book “How Did that Get in My Lunch Box- The Story of Food” by Chris Butterworth. Books were purchased through funding made available by the ND Ag in the Classroom Council.

Flipbooks consisting of Family Meal Time Cards were created and given to each student to facilitate family discussions about agriculture and nutrition.

Lessons included education on seeds and plants, agricultural commodities, MyPlate, and agriculture in North Dakota.

Impacts
Results (surveys from 56 student and 34 parents were returned):
- 82% of the students were able to define why agriculture is important
- 95% of the students were able to identify agriculture as the source for food and fiber
- .90% of the students identified the resources that crops need to grow
- 96% of the students understood MyPlate
- 71% of the families read the take home book at least one time
- 79% of the families discussed North Dakota agriculture and nutrition at home
- 58% of the families used the Family Mealtime Cards at least 1-2 times a week

Feedback
Parents of Participants:
“Our daughter now likes to ask questions about cattle and people that farm.”

“Our daughter really enjoyed reading the book and sharing the information with us. We all took turns answering the mealtime cards.”

“We really liked Ag in the Classroom. It’s fun for kids to get to do hands-on activities while learning.”

Public Value Statement
Understanding where food comes from strengthens ties between people and agriculture throughout life.

Primary Contact
Carrie Knutson, Kayla Bakewell and Michael Knudson
Extension Agents Grand Forks County
151 South 4th St. S302 Grand Forks, ND 58201
701-780-8229 Carrie.Knutson@ndsu.edu

1 United States Department of Agriculture National Ag Statistics Service.