



Grow Eat Think (GET) Local Farm-to-School

Increasing the availability of 'aina-based distance learning

The Situation

Continued school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have presented a challenge for educators who provide hands-on, 'aina-based education for youth in Hawai'i. In many places, school gardens, cafeterias, and farms are not accessible to teachers and/or students, therefore, there is a need for farm-to-school opportunities appropriate for distance and hybrid learning models.

Informal and formal needs assessments are integral to seeking community input for developing community-relevant, farm-to-school programming that is responsive to the current pandemic climate and builds a model to meet future needs.

Extension's Response

To meet the need for distance learning, new professional development opportunities, curriculum, and digital content have been created.

- A mushroom cultivation curriculum, as an indoor solution for distance learning, was piloted with educators during summer 2020.

- To bring farm experiences to children in the absence of field trips, interactive virtual-reality farm field trips are being developed in partnership with four community farms.
- New online resources to promote consumption of locally grown foods have been developed and posted on the *CTAHR Grow Eat Think (GET) Local* website and social media.
- *School Garden* talk story connects 116 Hawai'i school garden teachers with representation from every island to assess and meet teacher needs.
- The *Garden To Cafeteria (GTC)* program teaches students how to grow and harvest food safely to be used in the school cafeteria's salad bars and in scratch-cooking recipes.

Impacts/Outcomes

Growers Place-based educational programs are expected to increase the currently low levels of student engagement in distance learning, thereby increasing youth knowledge about agriculture, food systems, and nutrition while fostering a sense of connection to local farms.

Forty teachers participated in a *Ready to Fruit: Mushrooms in the Classroom* program, 60% of whom reported they are likely to integrate mushrooms into their program this year, where 100 students statewide are expected to cultivate mushrooms utilizing the curriculum in the second quarter with the guidance of their teacher.

In the long-term, the program is expected to increase the students' willingness to consume mushrooms, which could support a stronger mushroom industry as well as add to a nutritious diet for youth in the future.



Ē Komo Mai: Marshall Joy, Junior Extension Agent, engages with students in his online classroom.

