



Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – March 2016

Farm succession requires early planning and good communication.

- [District Equity Leadership Team](#)
- [Moving Forward – Farm Succession Series](#)
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Fond du Lac School District DELT (District Equity Leadership Team) is a working team comprised of multiple stakeholders charged with ensuring systematic racial equity and cultural relevancy for all students served by the District community.

Our Mission: To eliminate race as a predictor of academic success or failure.

Purpose: To analyze and align policies and practices in order to meet the needs of a racially diverse school community; increase knowledge and capacity for culturally responsive practices among practitioners and policy-makers in order to eliminate disproportionality and close the achievement gap; function as a communication mechanism between school, community and parents to address equity concerns and share resources.

Moving forward we have created a team action plan. Through implementation of the three goals below, the District Equity Leadership Team aims to increase equitable outcomes between students of color and their peers within the Fond du Lac School District.

- **Goal #1:** Analyze and evaluate District policies and practices for inclusive opportunities.
Desired Result(s): Increase diversity among District staff, culturally responsive practices provided by all staff; equity in extracurricular and advanced standing academic tracks.
- **Goal #2:** Improve relationships between students, families, community and the School District.
Desired Result(s): Break down issues of racism, build trust, have better understanding of the different cultural experiences of students and families in the community.
- **Goal #3:** Decrease the disproportionate amount of suspensions for students of color.
Desired Result(s): Increase the amount of time students spend in school, have a shared understanding of expected school behaviors, use discipline that is restorative and includes alternatives to suspension.

Araceli Oswald, 4-H Youth Development Assistant, is a member of this team representing not only UW-Extension, but also the Latino community. She belongs to the Goal #1 subcommittee, which is developing a plan for the recruitment of diverse staff.

Moving Forward - Farm Succession Series

Farmers make decisions every day to improve their farm business and provide their family with a home and lifestyle they want for them. However, many of them have not planned for the family's and/or farm operation's long term sustainability regarding farm succession and retirement. Based on USDA numbers, there are about 8,400 farms with operators between the ages of 45 and 64. Unfortunately it is estimated only one-third of these farms have a business succession plan in place. That means of the 8,400 farms, 5,600 farms will need some type of business succession or exit

plan over the next few years. Based on pre-meeting evaluations of those attending the “Shifting Gears for the Later Years” Farm Retirement meeting:

- 23% indicated they have a written plan or goal for finances
- 29% indicated they have a written plan or goal for future lifestyle

Farm succession from one generation to the next can be overwhelming for families when added to the daily decisions necessary to run the farm. If a farmer is lucky, succession will be something experienced just twice in a lifetime: once when first taking over the business and again when passing it down to the next generation.

We recognize there are many issues and challenges for farmers when it comes to retirement and farm succession: attachment to the land, both financially and emotionally; attachment to farming; variable income due to high and low commodity prices; and the farm business operation itself. Based on pre-meeting evaluations of those attending the “Shifting Gears for the Later Years” Farm Retirement meeting, participants indicated financial security in the later years (88%), financial viability/sustainability of the farm for the next generation (64%), and how to transfer the farm (80%) were the items that concerned them the most about planning for the later years. Participants in the “Returning to the Farm” meeting indicated their farm succession plan is most vulnerable to “poor communication/poor conflict management.”

Farm succession requires early planning and good communication. It does not happen overnight and not only do we have to address the actual transfer of assets, but address issues relating to retirement for the older generation and an estate plan regarding the farm operation. UW-Extension Dairy & Livestock Agent Tina Kohlman developed a three-day farm succession series focusing on farm transfer, farm retirement and estate planning. The series was designed for attendees to attend all three days or to pick and choose the topic that best fit them. This agent worked collaboratively with UW-Extension Dodge County and Jefferson County offices and UW-Center for Dairy Profitability Outreach Specialist to provide the seminars. The seminars included:

- ***Shifting Gears for Your Later Farming Years*** focusing on retirement topics
- ***Transferring the Farm in a High Stakes Era*** providing information on the nuts and bolts of business succession
- ***Making Decisions Now So Your Family Doesn't Have to Later*** delivering important topics as one considers their estate plan

Speakers included UW-Extension family living educators, agriculture agents and community resource development educators, and private sector individuals to provide education regarding these topics. Over 65 individual contacts were reached during the three part series.

Based on post-meeting evaluations, participants (n=49) increased their knowledge 1.18 points (retirement), 1.55 points (farm transfer), and 1.36 points (estate planning), on a 5 point scale.

At the conclusion of the meeting, participants were asked to complete a “to-do” list or action plan. These action plans were collected and will be mailed to individuals at a future date they requested, as a reminder of the items they planned to work on regarding farm transfer, retirement and/or estate planning. Follow up, one-on-one meetings will be conducted to help provide personal, confidential guidance for the families.

Community Health Coaching

The Community Health Coaching process has come to a successful end for Healthy Fond du Lac 2020. The Community Health Coach, provided in partnership between the UW-Extension Family Living Programs, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, has been working with Amanda Miller and other public health leaders in Fond du Lac County since June 2015.

The team built for the coaching process was intended to represent leadership from each of the four health priority areas that are a part of Healthy Fond du Lac 2020 – obesity, mental health, dental health and drugs/alcohol. The team included: Mary Bennett (Community Health Coach with UW-Population Health Institute), Amanda Miller (Facilitator of the process, Family Living Educator/Nutrition Coordinator with Fond du Lac County UW-Extension), Dr. Heather Schmidt

(Healthy FDL 2020 Steering Committee Chair and physician at Agnesian Healthcare), Kya Diehl (Community Wellness Coordinator and Living Well FDL), Ellen Sorensen (Drug Free Communities Grant Coordinator with the Fond du Lac School District), Samantha Twohig (Oral Health Program Coordinator with the Fond du Lac County Health Department), and Anne Brunette (Psychotherapist with Agnesian Healthcare, Doll and Associates.)

The original coaching goal was to bring these four areas together for collective impact, which is a framework to tackle complex social problems and requires approaches and measurements that are consistent across diverse areas. However, a thorough needs assessment called “Poised for Progress” identified a variety of strengths and opportunities, which helped the group realize that for collective impact to happen, the team needs to strengthen in a few areas.

Accomplishments:

- Built strong relationships among the four priority areas with the coordinators for each group meeting on a monthly basis moving forward. Prior to this process, the coordinators did not have a relationship.
- Demonstrated commitment to the coaching process and a willingness to address challenges in an honest, respectful and trusting environment.
- Challenged traditional ways of thinking about public health and embraced evidence-based approaches to build a “Culture of Health” (which is about addressing health equity within communities, rather than addressing health for only one group or population).

The conclusion is that a “look within” or assessment of the structure, team, processes and goals of a health coalition is of tremendous value and should be routinely conducted.

Miller has commitment from both the Steering Committee and priority areas to apply for long term health coaching, which may help the group achieve collective impact. Miller and the team received feedback from the national health coach, quoting “your facilitation and leadership skills are some of the best I’ve ever worked with” and “the dedication and achievements throughout this process puts the Fond du Lac County team in a very good position to receive the long-term coaching award.”

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