



# Urban Neighborhoods: Addressing food insecurity by implementing a farm to preschool initiative

Kendall Burdick, Kristina Jakobson, Niamh Mancini, Paige Mastalerz

# Square One overview

Square One is a private nonprofit organization, providing early education and care, and family support services in Springfield

## Interprofessional team

- Early education and care providers
- Family support specialists/home visitors
- Social workers
- Senior research associates

## Additional programs offered

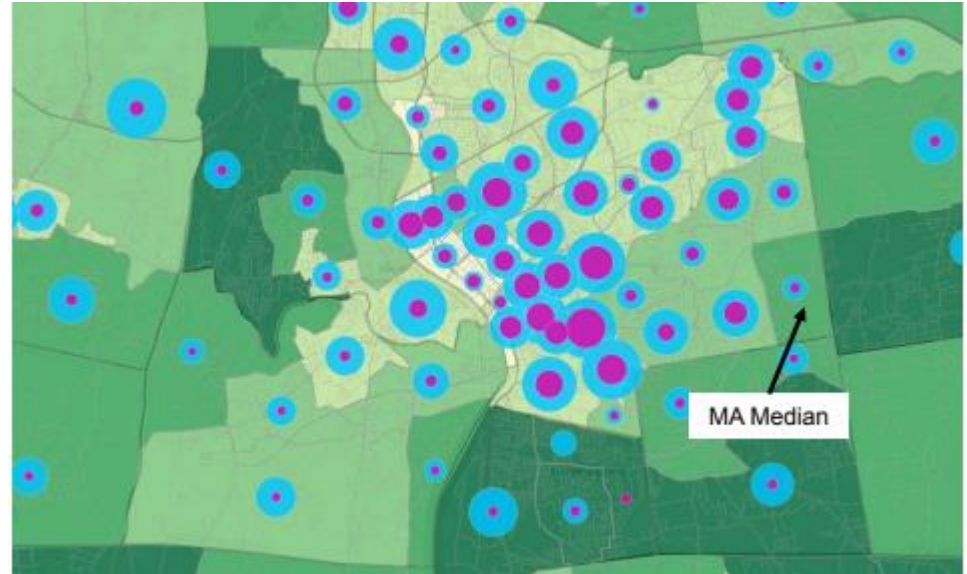
- Family support groups
- Home visitation
- Case management
- Food security assistance



# Population of focus

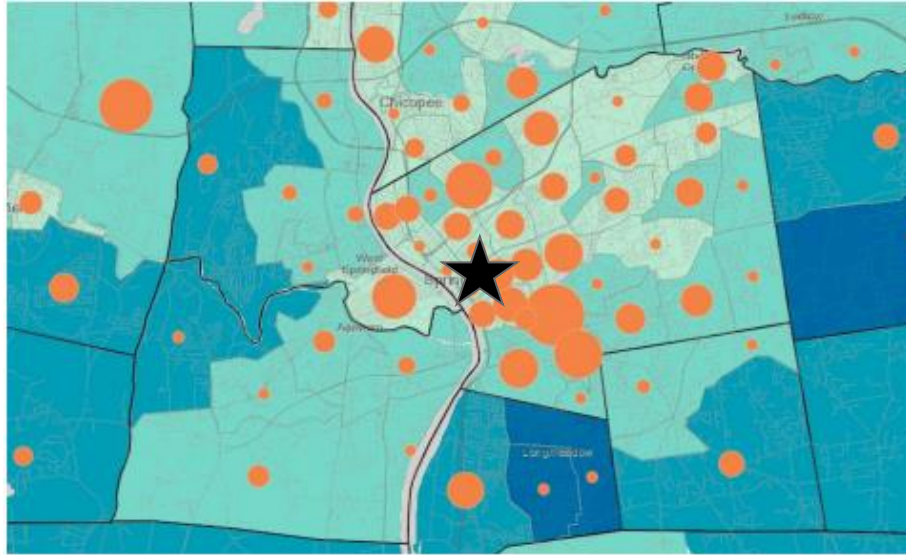
- Square One children and families
  - 500 students (ages infant-12)
  - Springfield/Holyoke area
- Approximately 100% participants are at or below the federal poverty level
- Over 40% of Square One children measure as obese/overweight
- Springfield population per 2019 American Community Survey is 44.7% are Latinx, 20.9% are Black

## Many areas with income below national median

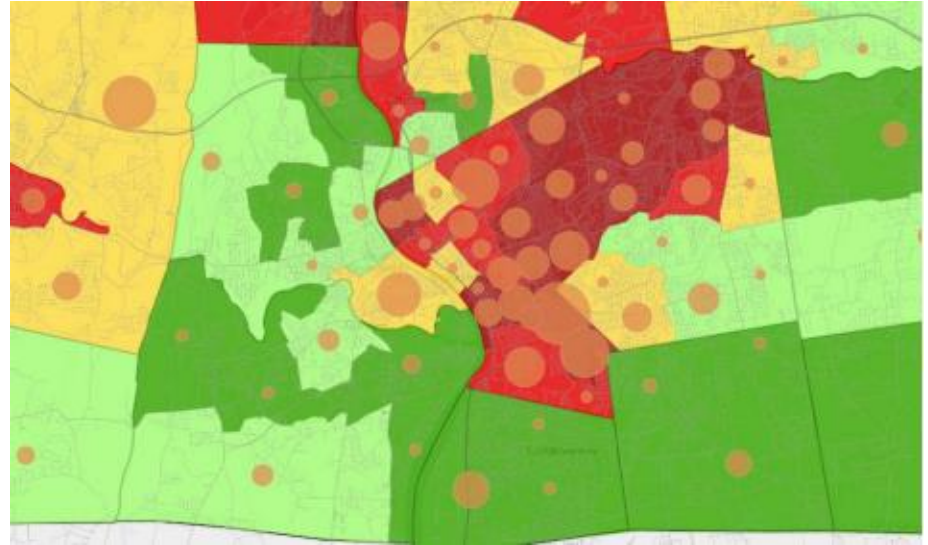


# Population of focus continued

**Household spending on fruits and vegetables**



**Child Opportunity Index**



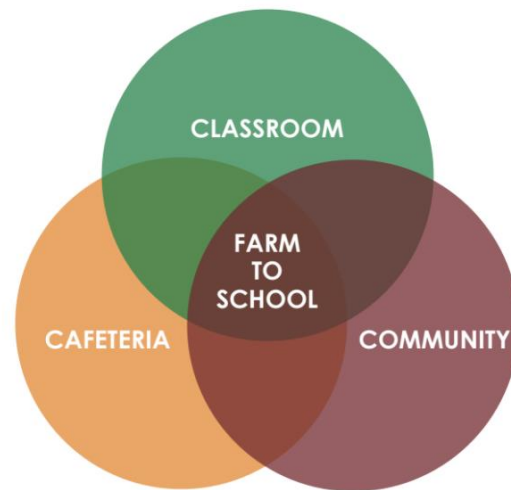
# Square One's commitment to healthy kids

Goal: Reduce number of children measured as obese/overweight through a farm to preschool model

- Increasing knowledge of connection between health and food
  - Dr. Yum Preschool Adventure
- Improving access to healthy food
  - Square One's focus is to expand



Source: 2019 PHC students



## The 3 Cs of farm to school

Farm to school is most successful and enduring when it is integrated into the cafeteria, classroom, and community.

Source: VT Feed



# Meet the Public Health Clerkship (PHC) team



Kristina Jakobson



Kendall Burdick



Paige Mastalerz



Niamh Mancini

# PHC goals

Expand upon the implementation plan of farm to preschool program at Square One's King Street location

- Survey Square One parents on
  - Interest in joining a parent engagement board
  - Access and barriers to healthy foods



Source: 2019 PHC students

# Survey implementation

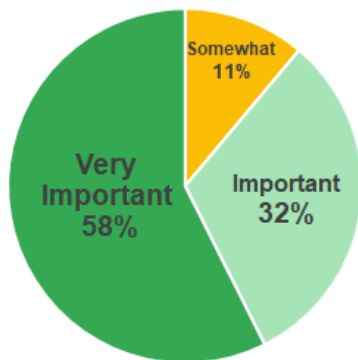


- How
    - Advertised on classroom bulletin boards and Facebook
    - English and Spanish
  - Where
    - In person for 2 days
    - King Street pick up and drop off
  - Incentives
    - Coffee
    - Apples
    - Square One hand sanitizer
- ★ Resources for food insecurity and mental health available



# Survey results

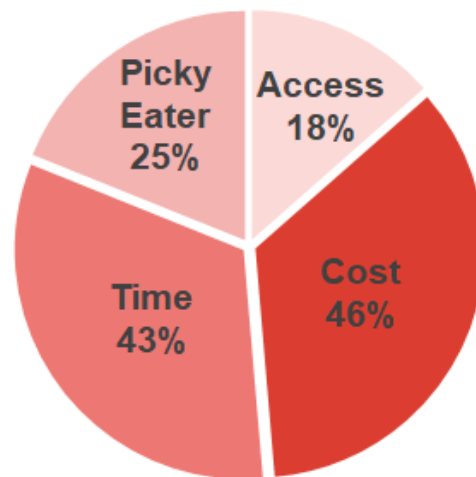
How important is healthy eating for your family?



How easy is healthy eating for your family?

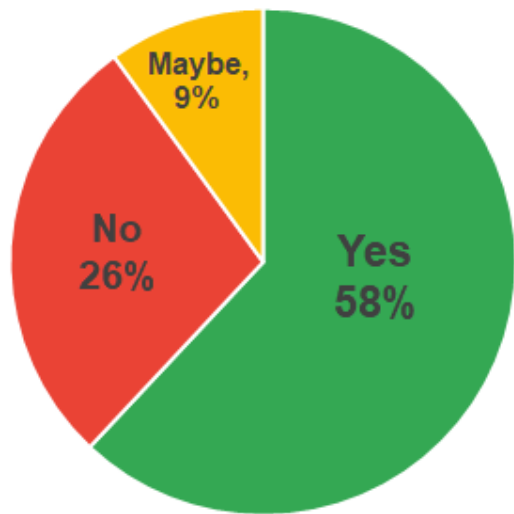


Why is healthy eating difficult?



# Survey results

Would you be interested in joining a parent engagement board?



- 51% (n=53) families completed survey
  - Compared to Square One average of 10%
- It is **important** but **hard** for families to eat healthy
- Parents **want** to and are **willing** to engage in a parent engagement board

# Additional PHC tasks

## Additional tasks

- Volunteered at mobile food bank
- Surveyed parents on COVID impact
- Sorted donated clothing for Square One Clothing Closet
- Created food and engagement survey for Square One staff
- Wrote agenda for the first Parent Advisory Board meeting
- Identified grants for Square One to utilize for parent engagement and farm to preschool



# Key takeaways

- Farm to preschool model will increase access to and knowledge about healthy food
- Parent engagement board increases parent feedback and involvement with child's education
  - Stipend to be provided to all who participate
  - Integrated staff and parent involvement is key to farm to school success
- Invest in children early to create healthy habits and lifestyles



# Summary

Situation



Task



Action



Result



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# Current situation



## What we have

- CACFP and CCDBG
- ECE teachers earn \$13/hr
- On average \$1/meal
- Serve: chicken nuggets, green beans and apple



# Solution



Invest in tiny eaters and their teachers

Set them up for success

- Your investment compounds over time

How? Increase funding and incentives

# Acknowledgements

HUGE THANK YOU to both **Jenise Katalina** and **Dawn Distefano** for the opportunity to work with Square One and guidance throughout our PHC's. We would have been lost without you!

Thank you to **Justin Ayala** and **Dr. Sarah McAdoo** for their help organizing our PHC and fostering the relationship with Square One over these years!

Thank you to **Melissa Mattison** for the guidance and feedback!

Thank you to **The Ripples Group** for the data maps on Springfield. Your work helps to support strong advocacy throughout Springfield.

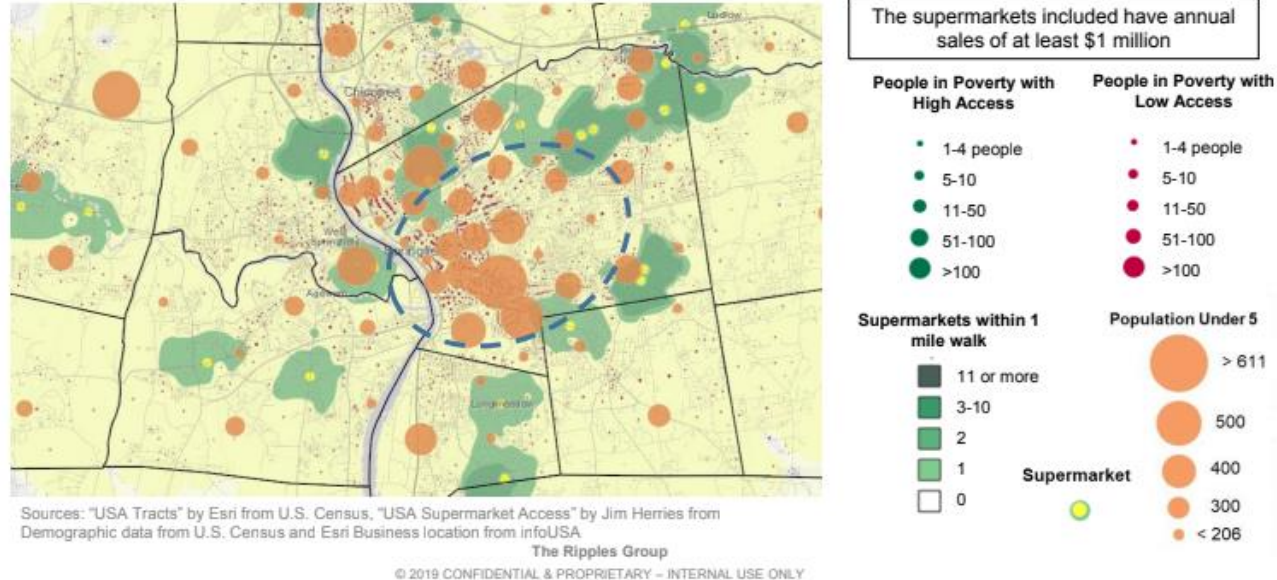
Another thank you to **Square One teacher's and staff** who helped make our surveying a success!

Above all, thank you to the **Square One families and children** for your willingness to engage with us students, we are grateful for the experience with you!

# Supplemental Slides



## Large areas of Springfield have limited access to supermarkets, especially in the southern part of the city



Large areas of Springfield do not have access to a supermarket