



Gather

**Around the
Crock Pot**

Building Community In the Classroom

Background

- Classes are stacked at UF IFAS CALS @ Plant City, so students are in class for 6 to 9 hours at a time.
- A need developed to be able to offer a meal time that was inclusive and regulated.
- Students were packing lunches and eating alone between courses.
- Class sizes were small.
- Crockpot meals have been utilized for three years in the communication and leadership development specialization and was recently adopted by the agricultural education specialization.



“In three years, I have not had one student miss their turn to bring a meal.”

“I have noticed
an amazing
by-product of
in-class meals.
Students bond with
myself and with one
another, much like a
family bonds over
dinner table
discussion.”



Outcomes

- Students form a community where they can express their opinions on all matters and have open discussion with one another.
- The instructor has the opportunity to see students outside of the classroom and gain a more holistic understanding of them.
- Students went from eating by themselves to eating as one big family, it was magical to see such different personalities mesh in such a powerful way.
- The instructor has the reassurance that students have a warm, home-cooked meal at least once a week.

“I personally felt like doing the Crockpot meals were such a fun thing. It was a way for us to get together and discuss the hardships of the week over a warm dish. It’s what really made us a family, and I’m so thankful for that.”

Haley Flack, current student

Lessons Learned

- Have your sign- up list ready the first day.
- Don't make it optional.
- Have a bank of easy recipes, even create a Pinterest board.
- Make sure students attach instructions to the meals.
- Access to a fridge/freezer is essential.
- Students who have meals for the following week need to bring items (with instructions) to class the week prior.
- Be prepared to put crockpot meals in at the appropriate time.
- This works best for small class sizes, but can be adapted to larger groups.



Questions?