

Plain Connection – Outreach to Amish and Mennonite Communities

Elizabeth Miniatt and Caitlyn Mowatt

August 26, 2025





D.R. Moon Memorial Library

Small, rural public library, pop. ~3600

Plain presence increased ~5 yrs ago

Caitlyn Mowatt

**Wisconsin Area
Health Education
Center**



MISSION: Wisconsin AHEC advances health equity in our rural and underserved communities through education and training opportunities that aim to increase the diversity, distribution, and development of our healthcare workforce.



WISCONSIN AHEC
Area Health Education Centers

Pop quiz!

The state of Wisconsin has the _____ largest Amish population in the US.

1. 2nd

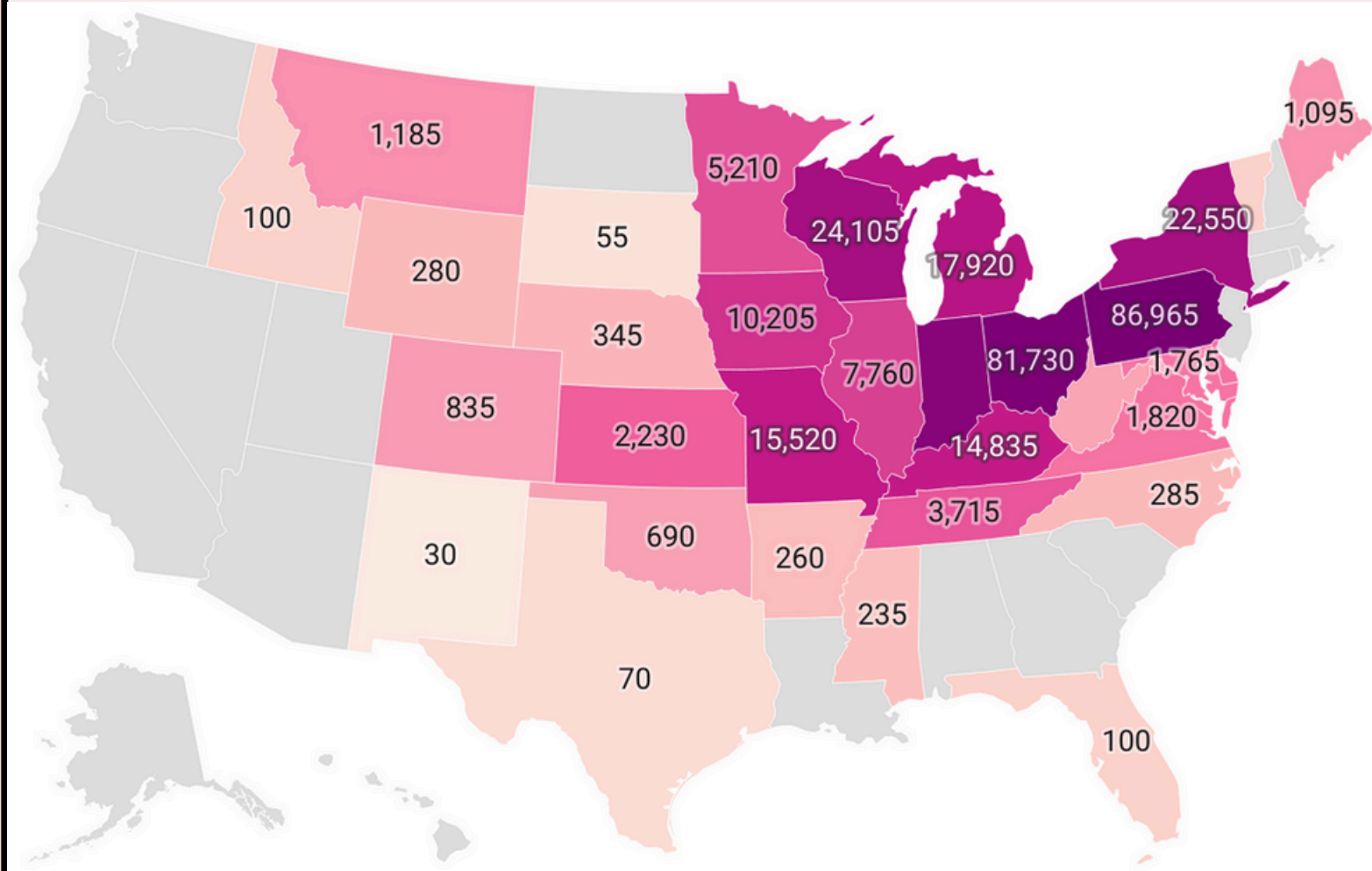
2. 4th

3. 5th

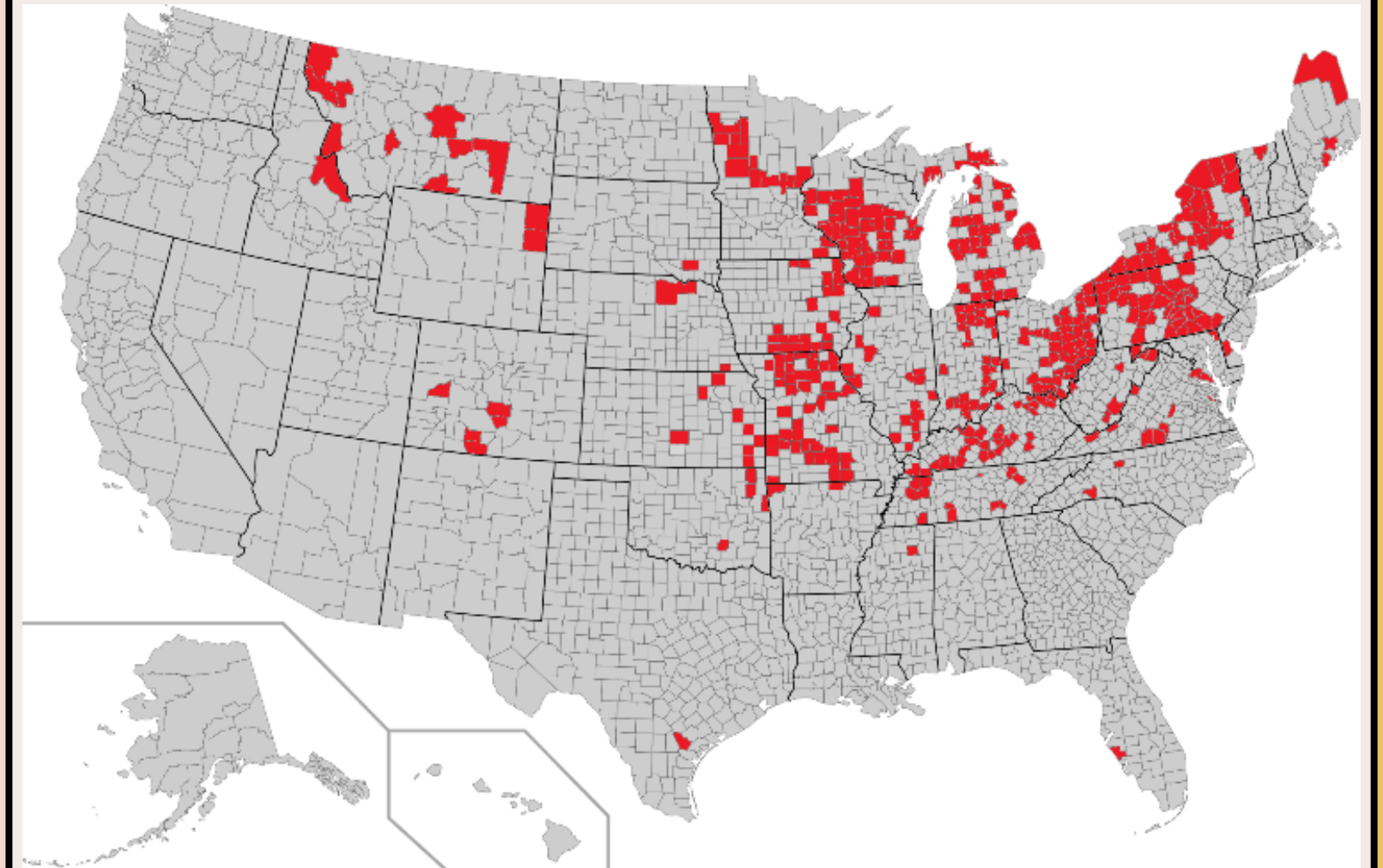
4. 7th

Plain Communities in the US

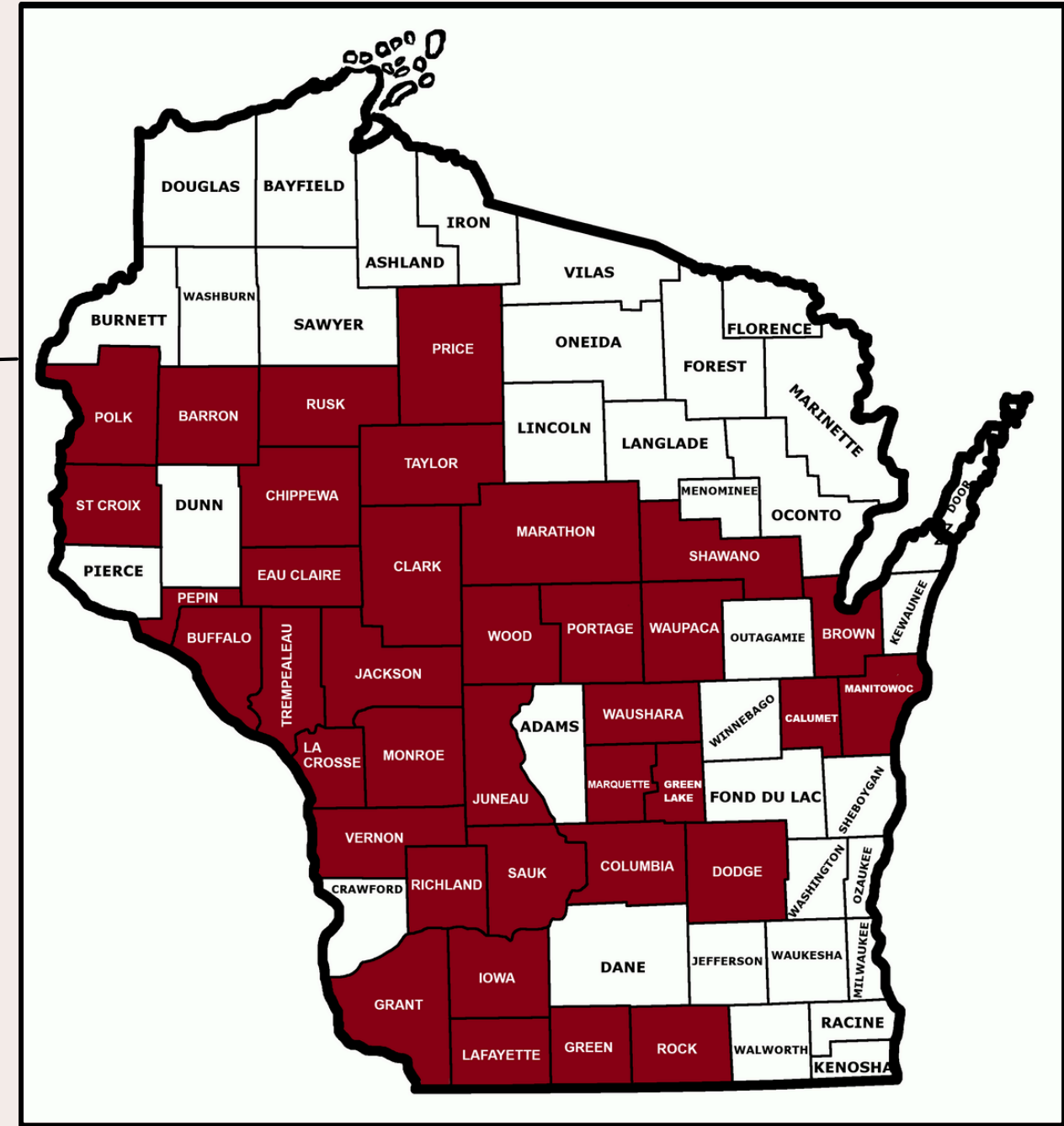
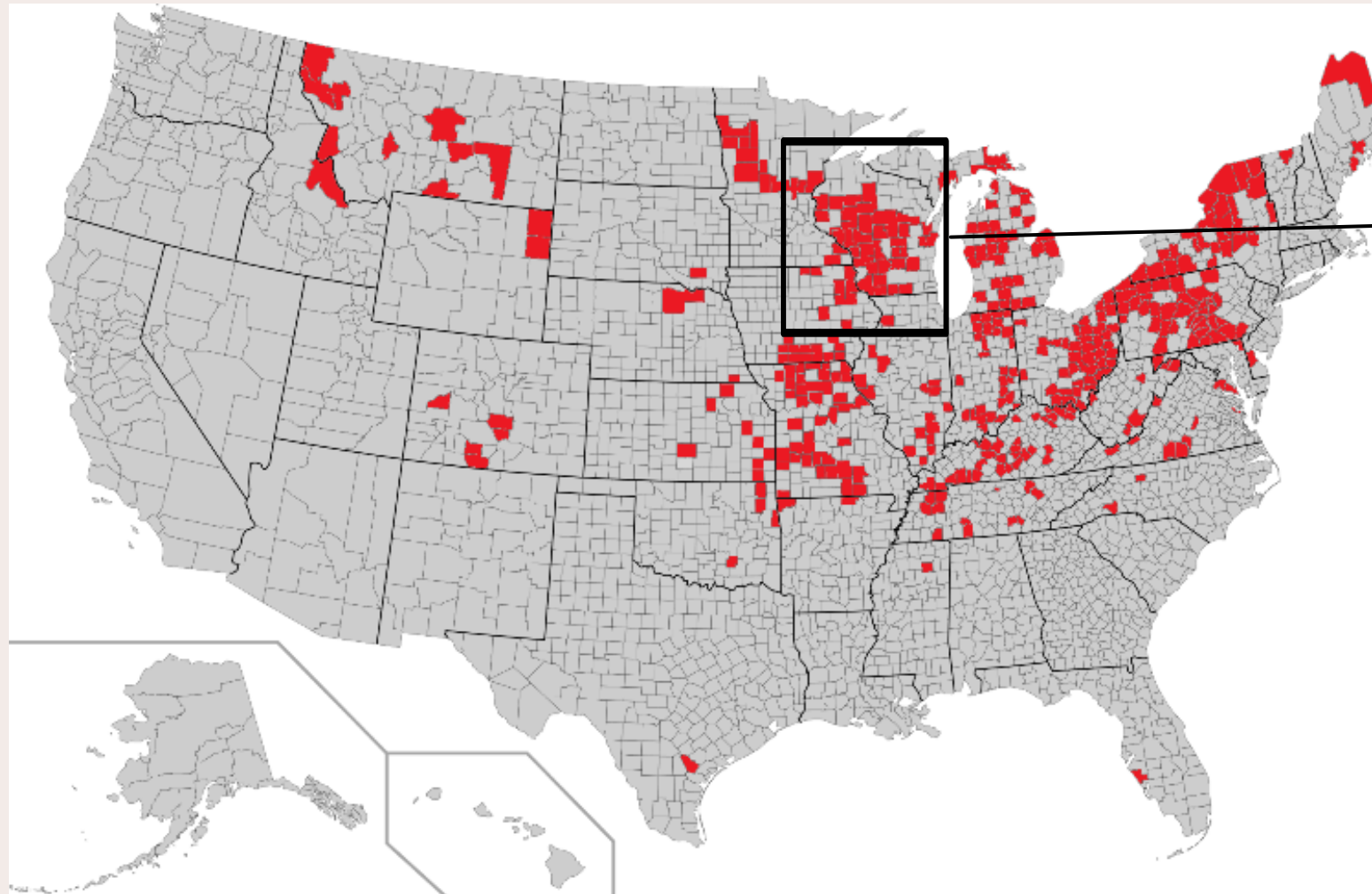
Amish Population by US State, 2022



Map of Amish Counties, 2020



Plain Communities in WI



“Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else”

-Margaret Mead

Bridging Barriers

- Transportation
- Digital Divide
- Unique Culture and Norms





Relationship

Connection → Relationship → Trust → Outreach
Service



Respect

Accept differences

Be open

Learn about their culture and history

Be respectful of different values and perspectives

Which of the following books was deemed unacceptable?

1. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
2. Forts in the Wilderness
3. Peter Pan
4. Tabby in the Tub (Animal Ark)
5. None of the above
6. All of the above



Flexibility

Each community is unique
Prepare to do things a little differently

Getting Started



Dental Health



NNLM State Advisory Group



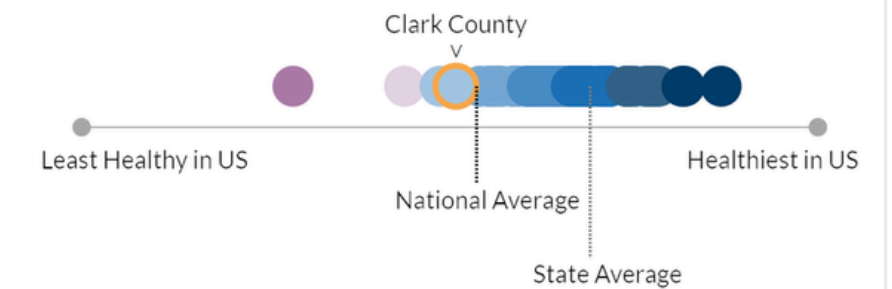
Rural Dental Health

SAG member input
-
County health rankings
-
Health profession shortage area

Clark County Health Factors ⓘ

Many things influence how well and how long we live. Health Factors represent those things we can improve to live longer and healthier lives. They are indicators of the future health of our communities.

Clark County is faring worse than the average county in Wisconsin for Health Factors, and worse than the average county in the nation.

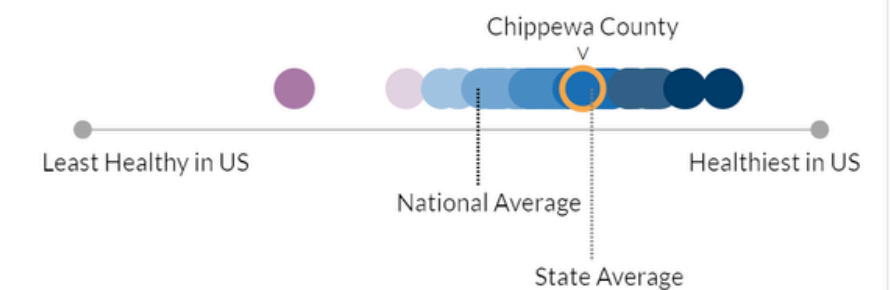


☐ Show areas to explore ☐ Show areas of strength  Trends Available

Chippewa County Health Factors ⓘ

Many things influence how well and how long we live. Health Factors represent those things we can improve to live longer and healthier lives. They are indicators of the future health of our communities.

Chippewa County is faring about the same as the average county in Wisconsin for Health Factors, and better than the average county in the nation.



☐ Show areas to explore ☐ Show areas of strength  Trends Available

Plain Dental Health

Higher cavity incidence rate

- Barriers to access

- Lacking preventative care information



Project Smile!

Design and develop a high-quality dental health resource that is acceptable to local Plain communities.



01.

Collaboration with local Plain elders and leaders.

02.

Recruit local art students from a nearby college.

03.

Recruit dental student to provide medical expertise and information.

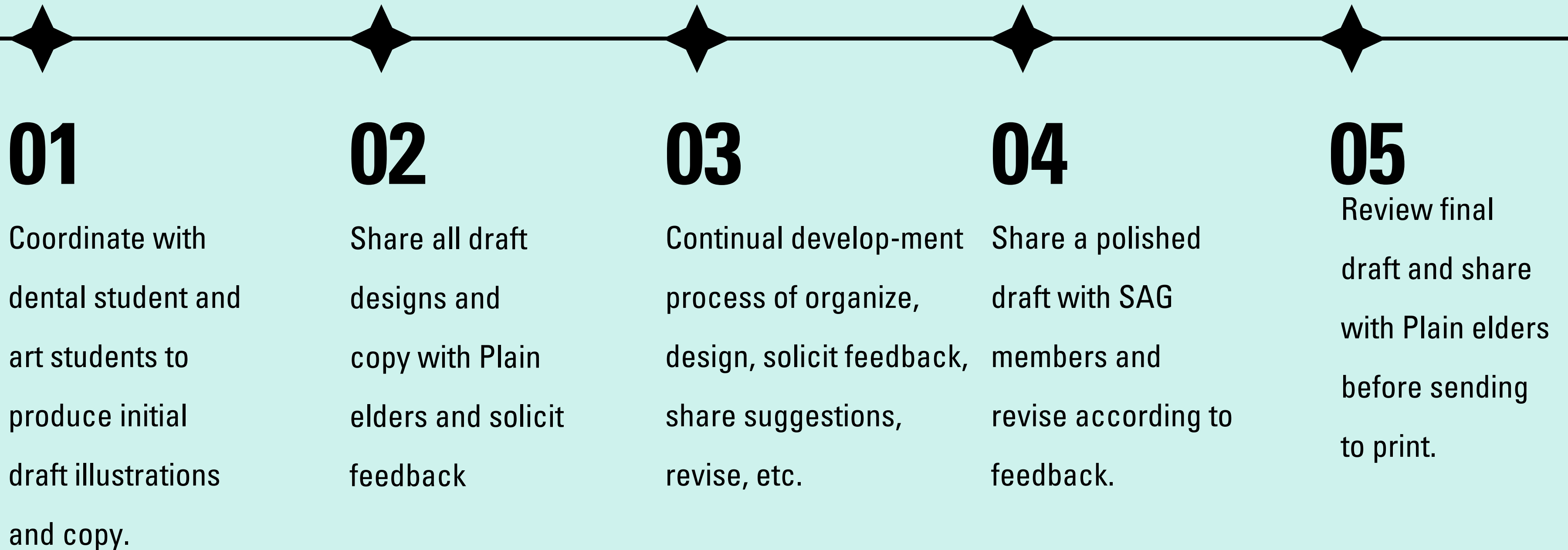


Inspiration & Creativity

Art and Design: Anna Carlson and Alexia Folkman
University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire art students
Alexia's portfolio: alexiafolkman.com
Anna's LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/anna-carlson-717554264](https://www.linkedin.com/in/anna-carlson-717554264)

Narrator: Mumal Tunio
Marquette University Dental Student (now dentist!)
AHEC Scholar Alumni
Aspiring to work in rural and medically underserved areas
Currently working at the Menominee Nation Dental Clinic

Design & Development



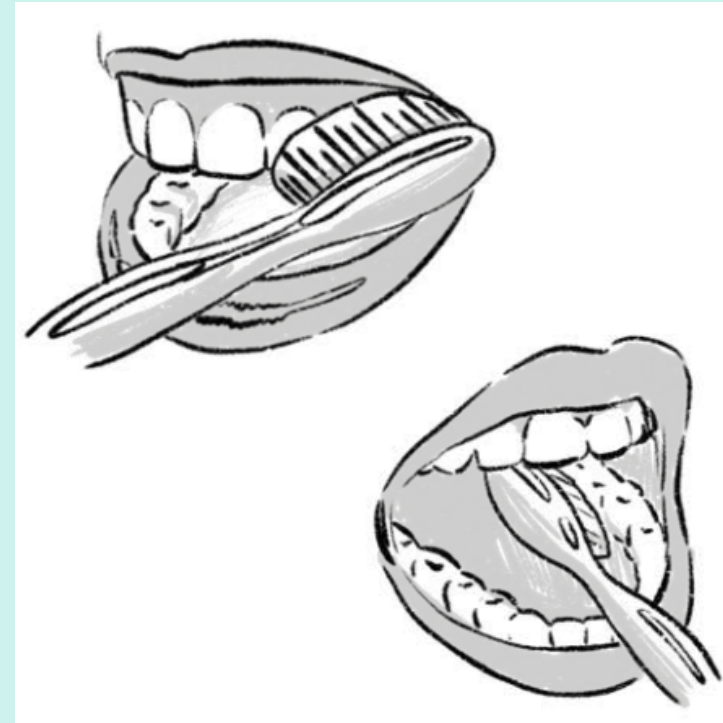
Design & Development

01

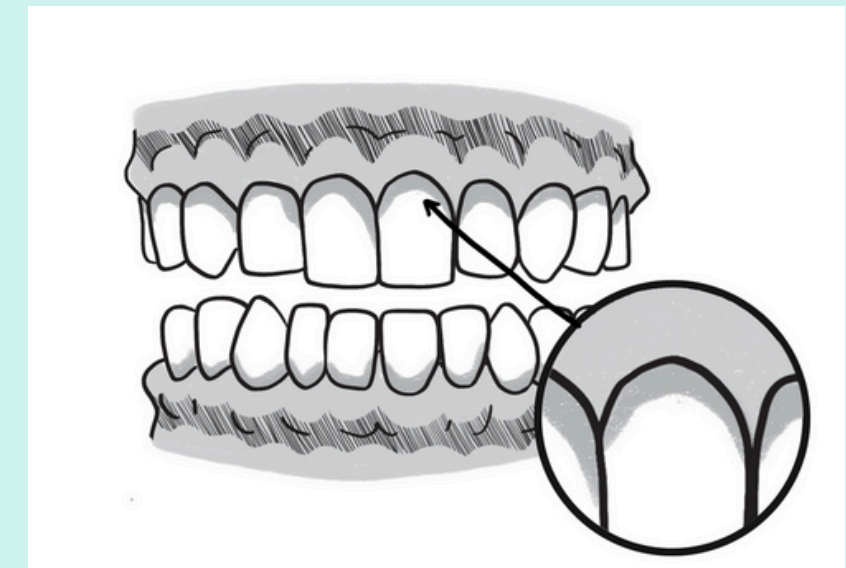
Coordinate with dental student and art students to produce initial draft illustrations and copy.

02

Share all draft designs and copy with Plain elders and solicit feedback



Draft illustration



Draft illustration

While it is important to maintain good oral hygiene, it is also important to see a dentist regularly. Dentists help by diagnosing and treating cavities, gum disease, and even cancer. It's a good idea to visit your dentist twice a year to monitor any problems and keep your mouth healthy and happy.

Draft copy

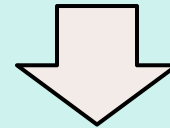
Design & Development

03

Continual development process of
organize, design, solicit
feedback, share
suggestions, revise,
etc.

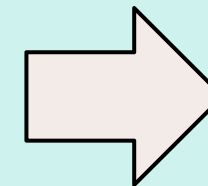
A film of bacteria called plaque begins to form and stick to our teeth in as little as an hour after we brush and floss. As plaque mixes with minerals in spit, also known as saliva, over time, a hard substance called calculus forms and is much more difficult to clean off than plaque. The buildup of plaque and calculus leads to irritation of our gums, and this can be noticed if gums bleed during brushing, flossing, or a cleaning at the dentist. Eventually if the irritation gets bad enough and is around long enough, it can lead to bone loss in our jaws.

Original copy



Health Literacy

4th-5th grade reading level
Adopt universal precautions
Plain language
Teach-back



Bad germs called bacteria form on teeth. These germs can stick and make plaque. This can happen only an hour after brushing and flossing.

When plaque mixes with spit, also known as saliva, calculus can form. This is hard and harder to clean off a tooth than plaque. Plaque and calculus together make gums hurt. You can see this when gums bleed when you brush, floss, or have them cleaned at a dentist. If gums are hurt for a long time it can make the jaw lose bone.

Final copy

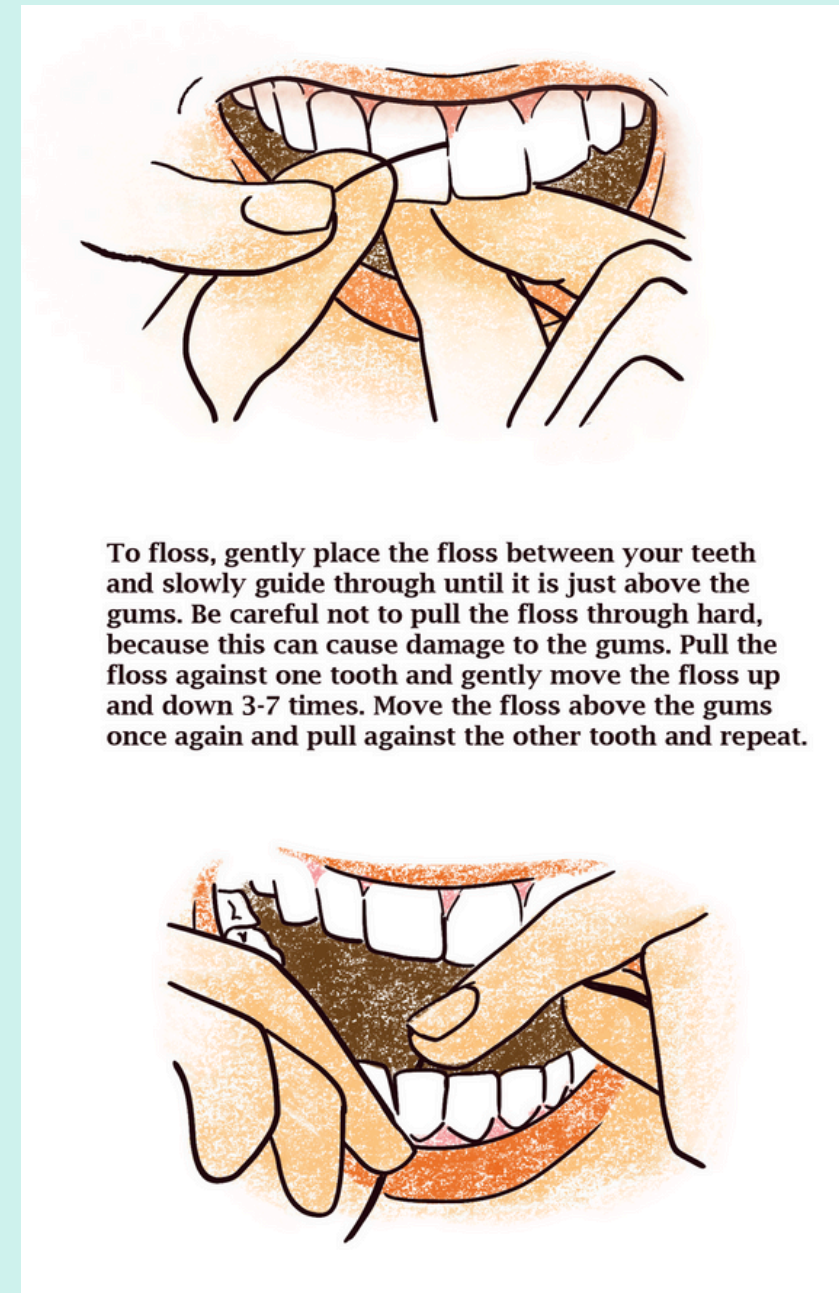
Design & Development

04

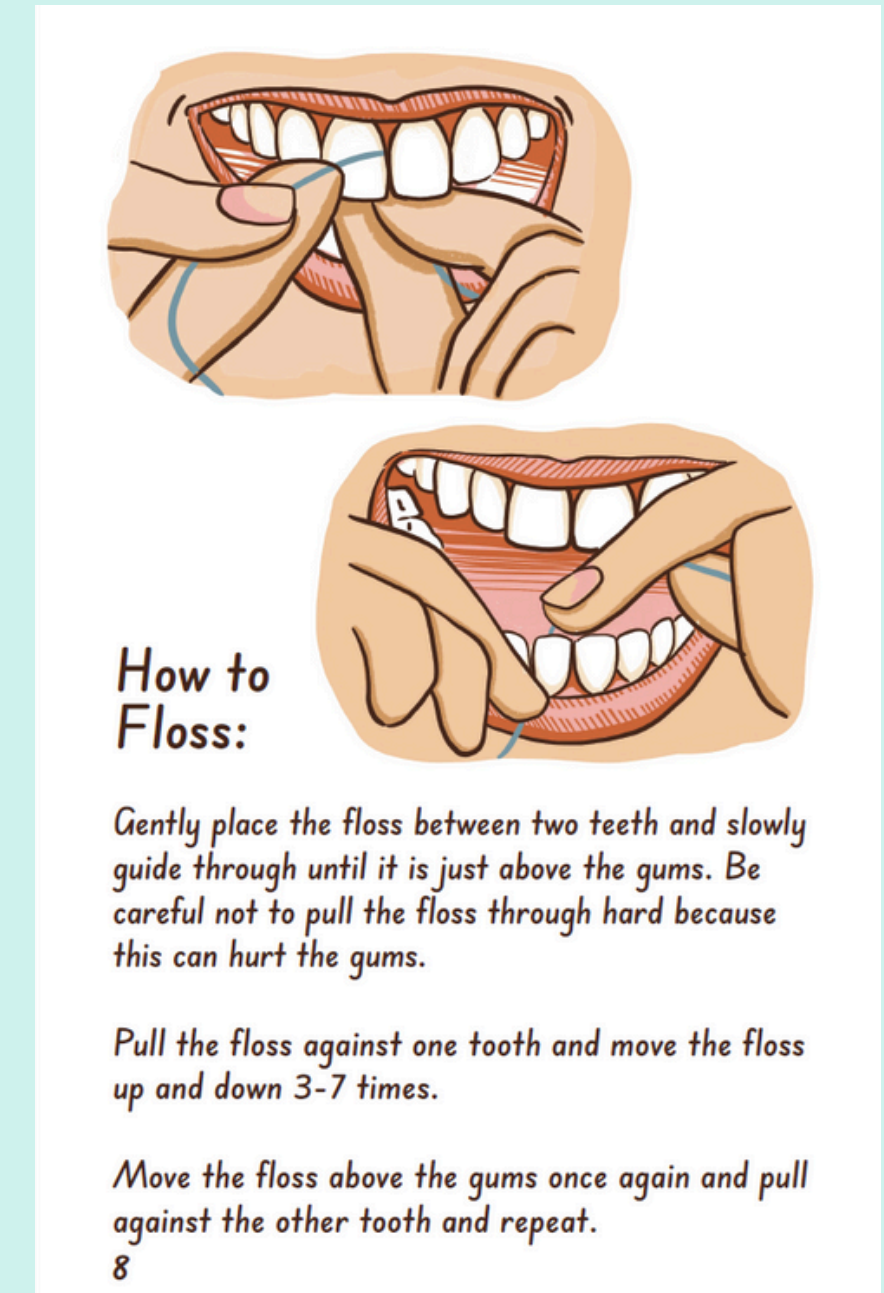
Share a polished draft with SAG members and revise according to feedback.

05

Review final draft and share with Plain elders before sending to print.



Draft page



Finished page



Smile! A Guide to Healthy & Happy Teeth

The Booklet

Tooth Anatomy

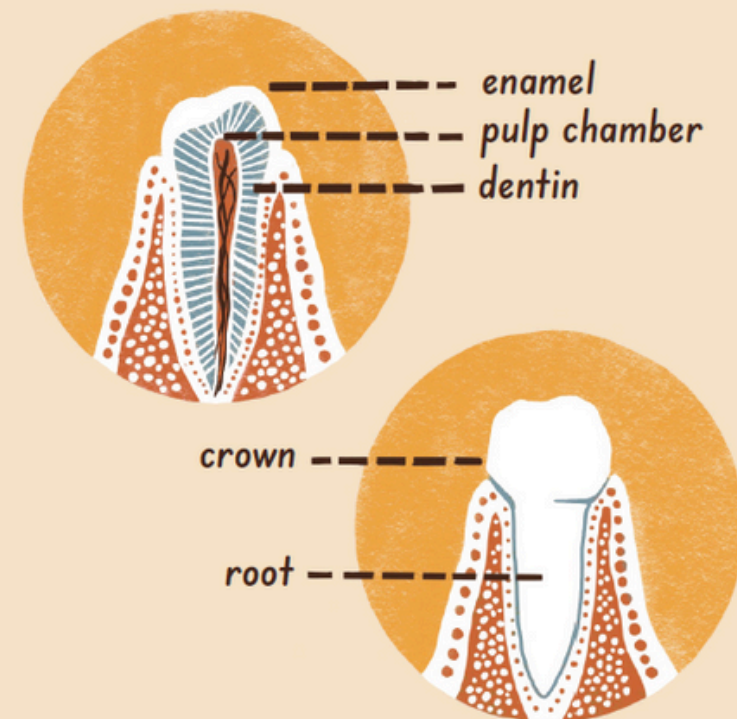
The outside of a tooth is called enamel. It is hard and like a bone.

The next layer of the tooth is called dentin.

The inside of the tooth is called the pulp chamber. It is filled with blood vessels and the nerve.

The part of a tooth we use to bite and chew is called the crown.

A tooth has a root that connects to the jaw bone. The root and jaw bone are covered by gums.



3

To keep our teeth, gums, and body healthy, we need to:

- Take time to clean
- Brush twice a day
- Floss at least once a day
- Clean tongue twice a day



This can seem like a lot but it is the best way to keep your teeth and yourself healthy.

5

How to Brush:

When you brush, spend 5-10 seconds gently making circles on each part of each tooth. Remember to wait thirty minutes after a meal to brush.



To clean under the gumline of your top teeth, tilt your toothbrush up a little.

For your bottom teeth, tilt the toothbrush down a little.



7

The Booklet

I BRUSH MY TEETH

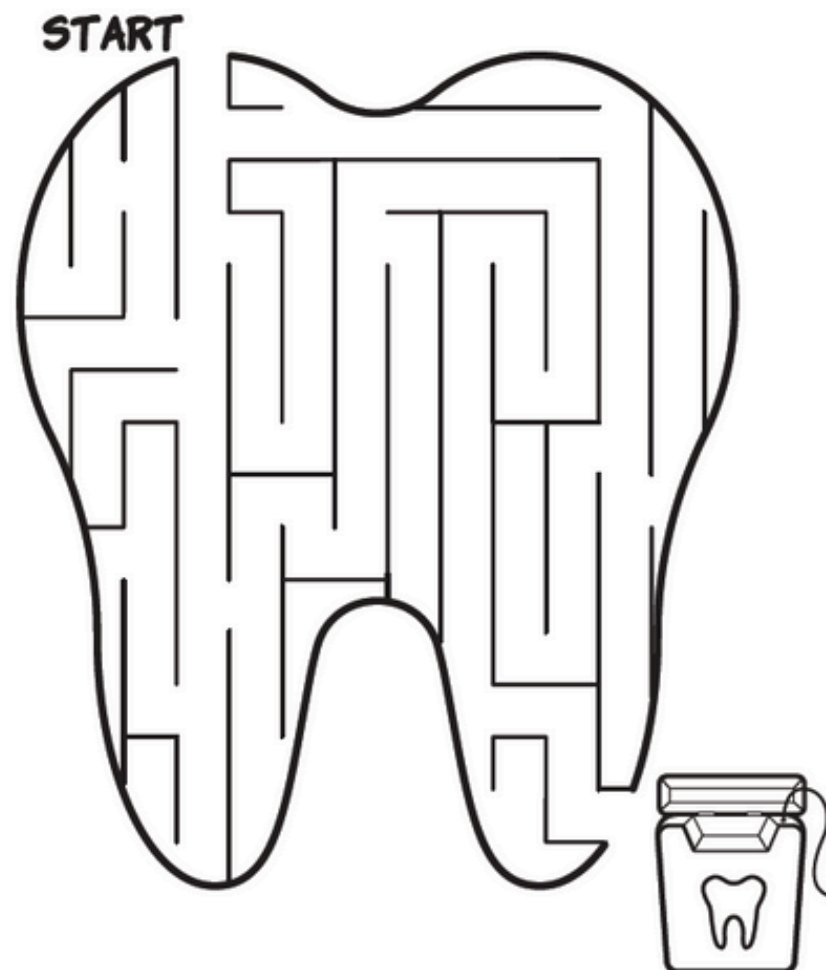
Brush and floss every day to keep your teeth healthy. Color a tooth every day that you brush and floss. Make it a habit for a healthy smile!

Name: Date:

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun

TOOTH MAZE

Remember to floss your teeth everyday.
Can you help get the floss all the way around the tooth?



LUNCHBOX WORD SEARCH

To have a healthy smile, it helps to choose foods that aren't sugary treats.
Can you find all the hidden words?

O K O R A N G E E M W N R O S
R L B R E A D S H A U S Q C T
A I Z T S L T I T D C A P E R
N M Y A Q O J E G B D N R L A
G R E T R Y R K V A S A E E W
E F P R G M F O N E K N T R B
J S A Z E U A B I Y L A T Y E
U C M L P L C R E J A B U Z R
I Y O E M V R K E S V I B O R
C N X O W E R Y C E O C T T I
E G N A B U O A U P C H U O E
F D Q E T G H P T A A E N M S
S D U V U X C P T R D E A A H
I L K R S W B L E G O S E T X
B J T L M N U E L R W E P O T



TURKEY	MILK	ALMONDS
PEANUT BUTTER	CHEESE	APPLE
STRAWBERRIES	GRAPES	AVOCADO
CARROTS	CELERY	TOMATO
BANANAS	BLUEBERRIES	WATERMELON
YOGURT	LETTUCE	ORANGE



(Your Name) _____
has completed this booklet on oral health!

TO BE AN ORAL HEALTH ACE, REMEMBER TO:

- Brush your teeth two times each day
- Floss your teeth daily
- Eat fruits and vegetables instead of sugary foods
- Visit your dentist regularly

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS I LEARNED:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

100% Approval

Feedback

Elders approve
Teachers appreciate it
Scholars have been excited

Comments

"This will be fine to share with our scholars."
"I don't see anything wrong with this."

100% Collaboration

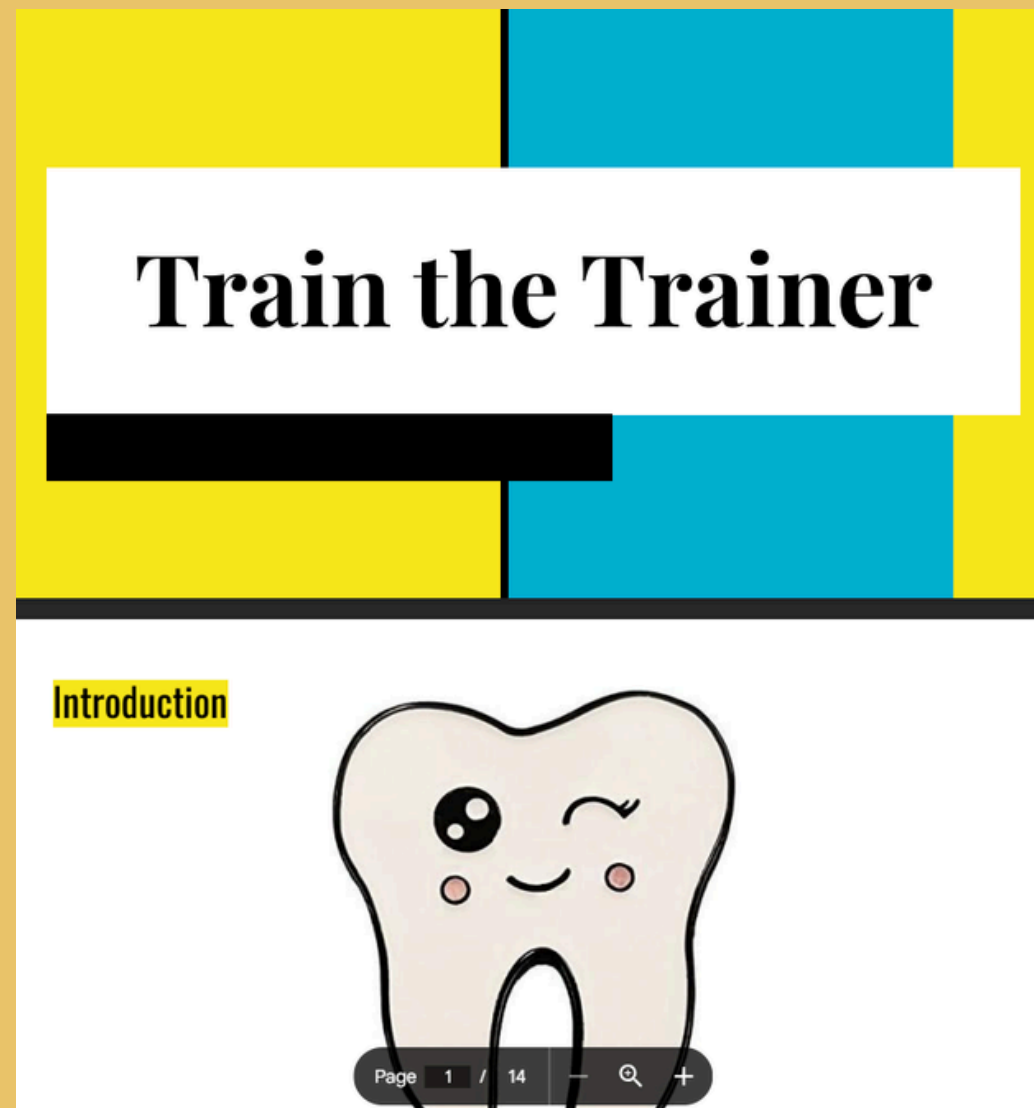
Co-Creation

Hearing from intended audience
Subject matter experts
Support from local dentist

Train the Trainer

Used established connection
Facilitated staff understanding
Increased confidence

Train the Trainer Materials



Three overlapping "Train the Trainer Assessment" forms are shown. Each form has a header with the title "Train the Trainer Assessment" and a sub-header "To be completed following completion of training". The forms include a user email address "cmowatt@wnhahec.org" and a "Switch account" link. The assessment questions and response options are as follows:

- Form 1 (top):** "I feel confident in my ability to explain concepts outlined in the booklet".
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
- Form 2 (middle):** "The training enhanced my understanding of and ability to explain oral health concepts outlined in the booklet".
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
- Form 3 (bottom):** "I feel confident in my ability to explain why teeth and oral health are important".
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree

Other visible text on the forms includes "To be completed prior to training", "cmowatt@wnhahec.org", "Switch account", "Not shared", "I have a basic understanding of tooth anatomy", and "I understand gum health".

As someone who grew up in a region with a prevalent Amish population, being involved with this project was personally impacting in multiple ways. I could see myself developing skills related to the design, illustration, and production of educational material while my knowledge and perspective of Amish/Plain communities expanded as well. Having a hand in developing this great educational resource is meaningful because I know it can play an important part in improving the health and wellbeing of people in our communities. I'm grateful to have been included in this project, and want to thank the D.R. Moon Memorial Library and all involved parties for providing this opportunity to learn and create.

- Alexia Folkman



*No one can whistle a
symphony. It takes a
whole orchestra to play
it.*

— H.E. Luccock

Community Partnerships



Building and leveraging relationships
with other organizations for
successful outreach

Funding



Community Support
-
Data-driven Advocacy
-
Grants



Patience

Take the time
Expect collective decision making
Go with the flow

Thank you!

Elizabeth Miniatt
stanleypl@stanleylibrary.org
715-644-2004

Caitlyn Mowatt
cmowatt@wnhahec.org
608-399-4177



Questions?

