

Lessons Learned from the CFWNC Haywood County Farm to School Project

Haywood County Schools has a long history with farm to school programming. Growing Minds, a program of Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), had its roots in Haywood County. ASAP is now a national leader in the Farm to School Movement throughout the United States. Grant funds and new partnerships brought new life to the Haywood County Farm to School Program during the 2012-2013 school year. The following are stories about how Haywood County Schools brought Farm to School back to life.



Recipes and Cooking

Refrigerator Pickles

Jonathan Valley Elementary 5th Grade

Ingredients:

2 lbs cucumbers, sliced
1 clove garlic
1 sweet onion, sliced
2 celery stalks, sliced
Coarse salt
2 cups sugar
1 cup cider vinegar
1 teaspoon celery seed
1 teaspoon mustard seed

In a colander, set over a bowl or sink, toss cucumbers, onions and celery in 1 ½ teaspoons of salt. Set aside to drain for 30 minutes, tossing occasionally. In a separate bowl, combine sugar, vinegar, celery seed and mustard seed, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Divide cucumber mixture between clean jars (with airtight lids) and pour vinegar mixture over. Place lids on jars and refrigerate at least 8 hours or up to 2 weeks.

“Second graders came together to discuss how pickles are made. The students were fascinated to learn that sour pickles come from cucumbers that can be grown in a garden!

K-2 students participated in a pickle taste test. They tasted store bought pickles and the pickles the 2nd graders had made at school. After collecting data from all classes, we found that the majority of students preferred the homemade pickles!”

- Ann Trader, Hazelwood teacher





Salsa Competition

Jonathan Valley Elementary, 5th Grade led, whole school involved

Recipe for fresh tomato salsa (thanks to ASAP's Growing Minds):

1 green pepper
2 pounds ripe local tomatoes
1 medium onion
1 bunch cilantro
1 jalapeno pepper or other hot pepper (optional)
1 clove garlic (optional)
salt and pepper to taste

Remove seeds from green and jalapeno peppers. Chop the green pepper, jalapeno, and onion and place in a large bowl. Dice the tomatoes, removing the stem and hard center and add to green pepper mixture. Finely chop cilantro and garlic. Mix all ingredients in your large bowl. Add salt and pepper to taste.

The 5th grade students made three different kinds of salsa. The 5th graders set up a table in the hall in front of the cafeteria. As students passed through to lunch (including Pre-K), each student sampled the salsas and voted for their favorite. The recipe above was the big winner. It was featured on the lunch line for several days after the competition and reappeared many times throughout the year.

"The kids truly enjoyed getting to participate and some 'picky' kids tried something new and like it!"

-Ginger Moore, *Jonathan Valley Cafeteria Manager*

"Students found recipes to experiment with using the potatoes we grew in the garden. The potatoes have been stored away and now we have taken them out to dish up. We are having garlic mashed potatoes, potato casserole, potato tacos, spicy fries, potato pancakes and potato candy! They love cooking! Especially with what they have grown."

- Tracy Fowler, *Bethel teacher*



"We created a cooking club this year that met 4 or 5 times on Friday afternoons and although they didn't necessarily cook with the "food of the month", they did cook using foods that are grown locally."

- Heather Hollingsworth, *Jonathan Valley teacher*

Field Trips



Field trip to the Haywood Historic Farmers Market Hazelwood Elementary 5th Grade

On Wednesday, September 25, 2012, fifth graders at Hazelwood Elementary took a field trip to the Historic Farmers Market in Waynesville, NC. Students were given a "Farmers Market Treasure Hunt" to encourage conversation with the farmers. It also helped ensure that students were looking for and learning about a variety of foods.

"Our students were very good sports about tasting new foods. What a treat to see them walking around eating raw okra!"

- Ann Trader, *Hazelwood teacher*

Field trip to JH Stepp Farms in Hendersonville Hazelwood Elementary Kindergardeners

The focus of the fieldtrip was on changes in the earth and the environment through the farm. "Children had to use their senses and problem solve when given the challenge of working their way through a corn maze on the property. They also noticed and examined the changes in plants that had occurred as a result of the changes in weather and seasons."

Students were able to taste different types of apples and then bring a pumpkin from the patch home with them.

For more information on farm field trips: <http://growing-minds.org/farm-field-trips/>

Field trip to Waynesville Research Station Test Farm, Christopher's Produce and the Francis Mill Bethel Elementary Third Grade

One third grade class used local agricultural resources to develop a greater understanding of the food system. First, they visited the Research Station to learn about soil, crop growth, crop testing and animal testing. The station supports the community by hosting a variety of events including field days, station tours and educational workshops for various area groups.

The next stop was Christopher's Produce for lessons about local produce, produce markets and making apple cider. Using the apple cider making process, students then connected to their math lessons by graphing information about apple varieties.



The third visit was to Francis Mill where students learned about making cornmeal with a water powered mill. Students received a history and biography lesson, focused on the mill. Francis Mill is a part of the National Register of Historic Places. Students also received a biology lesson alongside their hike to the pond where they could watch the water mill at work. To learn more about Francis Mill, visit: www.francismill.org

Garden Activities



Fall Feast Hazelwood Elementary, school wide

Students enjoyed their "Fall Feast" with area Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners. They sampled many delicious fruits and vegetables from the school garden.

"Through this culminating event, our boys and girls were able to truly enjoy the 'fruits of their labor' and better understand how food is grown and enjoyed by all."

-Ann Trader, *Hazelwood teacher*

School Gardens with Master Gardner Mentors Riverbend Elementary 2nd graders

The second grade classes teamed up with expert Master Gardeners to tend the school garden. After months of work, the 2nd graders hosted a harvest feast with community members, parents and families, sharing the food they created together in the garden.

For more information about connecting with Master Gardeners in your community, visit the Extension Master Gardeners Website: www.ncstategardening.org



"First grade students prepared and planted a pumpkin patch that will mature over the summer and be harvested by Kindergarten students in the fall. The children were very engaged and I am sure they will be anxious to check out their patch when school starts back!"

- Wendy Underwood, *North Canton teacher*



Classroom Lessons

"During the month of February, 1st grade teachers focused on sweet potatoes. The students read books about sweet potatoes, grew a sweet potato in a jar, and recorded a journal of the growth of the sweet potato. Teachers were able to incorporate math and science by observing the growth and graphing it."

- Nikki Barker, *Riverbend teacher*



"I did an apple exploration with an apple tasting. Students taste Golden Delicious and Gala apples from a local farm. I drew two apple trees on a piece of poster board and added an apple for each student that preferred that kind of apple (Golden Delicious and Gala). The students were very receptive to this demonstration."

- Katelyn Shaffer, *North Canton intern*

"Students did a cabbage exploration activity where they learned how cabbage grows and made booklets of it in different stages of growth. Later in the week they tasted local cabbage in a slaw."

- Jill Chambers, *Riverbend principal*



"Students had a lesson on the importance of Bees to our school garden. They were able to watch a video on bees and see a real hive up close. This lesson was brought to us and taught by some of our Master Gardeners that have been helping the students cultivate the school garden."

- Nikki Barker, *Riverbend teacher*

Student Benefits

"Having my students feel that it is okay to taste new things and ask their parents to bring these foods to their homes."

- Carla Billups, *Jonathan Valley teacher*



"The children enjoyed being taught by the master gardeners and creating the garden together. They really learned "hands-on" what it takes to grow these plants in a real garden. The students also learned the importance of working together on a project and how to share with one another. It is a very rewarding experience for everyone involved!"

- Ann Trader, *Hazelwood teacher*

"I feel that a basic understanding that food doesn't just magically appear in the grocery store is the biggest benefit. Also, we have had very high percentages of students who were willing to taste foods they have never heard of before...healthy foods...and hopefully they will ask their parents to get those things at the store or maybe even convince parents to grow a small garden at home."

- Heather Hollingsworth, *Jonathan Valley teacher*



"Our school wide seed sale was definitely our greatest success. We sold out of around 150 packets of seeds each morning for over a week. Even if only a portion of those seeds ever make it into the soil the children completely embraced the idea of growing their own fresh food."

- Wendy Underwood, *North Canton teacher*

Conclusions

These are just a few examples of the exciting activities going on throughout Haywood County.

Each school had a Farm to School team of 5 people, led by the cafeteria manager. All schools reported that this team effort led to many more activities and ideas than usual. Many schools have a handful of Farm to School Champions, but this model allowed them to lean on each other, share ideas and bring the effort to school wide recognition.

Bethel Elementary School Principal Jill Barker cites this grant and this work as one of the reasons they were recognized as a National Title I Distinguished school. The child nutrition staff, teachers, administrators and students have shared this information in hopes that other schools will be able to do similar work.

