

Farms and Food



This learning expedition combined all major academic content areas with nutrition, health, service, and social justice. Students engaged in fieldwork at local farms and homeless shelters and planted a student garden.

Guiding Questions:

Where does our food come from?
How does our food come from the farm to the table? How do people ensure justice for workers in the production and distribution of food?

SUMMARY: The Farms and Food learning expedition brought first-grade students outside of the school to do research in their local community to better understand how food gets from the farm to the table. For the first part of the expedition, students addressed state life science standards through a class case study of an apple orchard and small-group case studies of various kinds of farms. Their fieldwork and expert visitors involved them in interviewing and data collection and their class farm book project honed their skills in nonfiction writing, reading, and illustrating. During the second part of the expedition, the class covered state standards in communities, economics, and nutrition with case studies on migrant farmworkers and healthy food access. A healthy food calendar project required students to practice their skills in word processing and standard English conventions. Throughout the expedition, teachers wove the arts, service learning, and social justice together with academic content to help these urban students understand and care about their environment and healthy eating.

Academic Skills and Standards

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- Life science
- Horticulture and nutrition
- Computers and word processing

ENGLISH

- Reading nonfiction and fiction
- Oral presentation
- Letter writing and expository writing
- Standard English conventions

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Geography
- Economics
- Communities and social justice

MATH

- Data collection
- Measurement
- Sorting and counting

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

- Illustration and labeling
- Drama

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Public health awareness
- Gardening

PERFORMANCE AND RELATIONAL CHARACTER

- Interviewing
- Critique and revision
- Group collaboration

Part One: Farms

CASE STUDY: THE APPLE ORCHARD

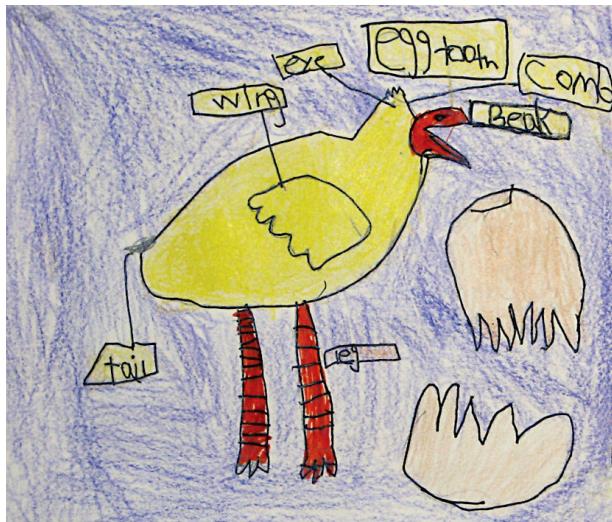
The kickoff to the Farms and Food learning expedition was a case study of an apple orchard. All students focused on this one fruit for four weeks before beginning to examine food production on a larger scale. Students visited a local apple orchard, where they learned about how apples are picked, the processes an apple goes through after it gets picked, the people who pick the fruit, and how the apple trees are cared for. After the visit, they recreated all aspects of the orchard and revisited the content through dramatic play, painting, construction with blocks, writing, and drawing. Literacy activities included writing about what they saw, labeling buildings and murals, and interactive writing. Students participated in making applesauce and apple crisp as well as careful observational sketches of apples and apple trees.

CASE STUDY: FARM STUDY GROUPS

Students broke into small study groups to conduct a case study of one of four kinds of farms—apiaries, vegetable farms, dairy farms, or poultry farms. Each group visited



ABOVE Students grew their own vegetables and learned the value of healthy eating.



ABOVE Each student contributed a page to the class farm book, with accurate headings, labels, and captions.

their farm and met with farmers to gain expertise. In the *apiary* group, students studied the life cycle of bees and built models with clay. They performed a dramatic play about the bees' jobs (worker bees, nurse bees, queen bee, etc.), sketched and labeled bee bodies, and dissected, sketched, and built models of flowers. The *vegetable farm group* sketched produce and seeds, ground flour from wheat, pressed apples into cider, and made dishes such as pumpkin pancakes and pretzels. The *dairy farm group* sketched and labeled cows, both inside and outside, and acted out how cows and other ruminants digest their food. They also milked cows, churned butter, and made yogurt and ice cream. The *poultry farm group* incubated eggs and hatched chicks. They candled eggs to view the embryos, dissected eggs, and sketched chickens and roosters. They cooked with store-bought and farm-fresh eggs to compare the tastes, and they performed a dramatic play about the life cycle of a chicken. Finally, each group planned and executed a blind taste test of different kinds of food produced on their farm and collected data about class preferences.

PROJECT: THE FARM BOOK

Following their intensive case studies, each study group created one chapter of the class farm book, and each student wrote and illustrated one page. They studied nonfiction text features, and each student crafted headlines and captions for each page. Each draft was followed by structured feedback from classmates and teachers. Students learned word processing and typed the text for their captions. The final farm book was presented at a culminating family presentation.

Part Two: Access to Healthy Food

CASE STUDY: MIGRANT FARMWORKERS

Because of the school's focus on social justice, students addressed the social and civic aspects of farms and food for the second part of the expedition. Students read a number of accounts of migrant farmworkers' lives. They reviewed the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in order to compare him with César Chávez and Dolores Huerta, who led the farmworker movement. Students learned about strikes, marches, and boycotts as tools of nonviolent protest, and contrasted living conditions of farm owners and farmworkers. They presented what they had learned at the school's annual social justice assembly.

CASE STUDY: ACCESS TO FOOD IN BOSTON

Students took their farm studies one step further by exploring what happens when people do not have access to food. This study began with a trip to ReVision House, a homeless shelter for women and children, which has organic gardens, greenhouses, beehives, and aquaculture tanks to raise tilapia. Prior to the trip, the class read several fictional books about homeless people and animals, discussed what people need to live, and made connections to the living conditions of migrant farmworkers. After the fieldwork at ReVision House, students worked in small groups to recreate the many components of the shelter. This included models of the aquaculture tanks, the shelter, and the greenhouses. Students then formed groups to interview someone at a community agency that helps people in the city get access to healthy food. Study groups practiced interviewing skills and developed questions to help them understand how to help people gain access to healthy food.

PROJECT: HEALTHY FOOD CALENDAR

Following their case studies, students brainstormed solutions to hunger. The twelve most important ideas became the twelve months of the calendar. Students studied exemplar calendars from previous years, created rubrics of what excellent work looks like, and gave each other feedback. Their final calendar illustrations were professionally printed and donated to the study group agencies and sold in the community.

Connections to the Community and Larger World

Fieldwork

- Carlson Orchards, Harvard, MA
- Drumlin Farm, Lincoln, MA
- Boston Pretzel, Jamaica Plain, MA
- Clark Cooper Community Gardens at the Boston Nature Center, Mattapan, MA
- The Food Project, Roxbury, MA
- Greater Boston Food Bank, Boston, MA
- Haley House soup kitchen and bakery, Boston, MA
- Women's Lunch Place soup kitchen, Boston, MA
- Beehives at Leland Community Garden, Dorchester, MA
- The Farm at Long Island Shelter, Boston Harbor Islands
- ReVision House Urban Farm (homeless shelter with an organic farm), Dorchester, MA
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Jamaica Plain, MA

Experts

- Visit from a local beekeeper
- A spring visit by a farmer and several adult chickens
- Second graders (former first graders) sharing the farm book drafting process

Service Learning

- Visiting and helping in community food agencies (i.e. helping to prepare and serve food at the Haley House soup kitchen)
- Donating calendars to food agencies
- Toiletry drive for the Long Island Shelter
- Collecting toys for the ReVision House daycare

Exhibitions

- Presentation of the farm book to families and friends
- Recitations of bilingual poetry about migrant farm-workers, explanations of the similarities between Dr. Martin Luther King and César Chávez, and recitations of quotes from Dr. King and César Chávez during the school's social justice assembly
- Video of students reading their healthy food calendar text at end-of-year assembly

Final Products

- Farm book
- Healthy food calendar

Expedition Authors: Nicole Weiner and Heidi Fessenden

EL Education
247 West 35th Street
Eighth Floor
New York, NY 10001
212-239-4455 tel
212-239-8287 fax
ELeducation.org