

# Farm-to-School Favorites

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This year we expanded our observance of Farm-to-School week, usually the first week of October, to celebrate Farm-to-School month. Recognizing the importance of local farms for the entire month of October made room for more visits from chickens, bees, and more discussions about our food system. Teachers organized the first Farm-to-School event of the month at Clark Elementary, a visit from local beekeepers, Karen and Ken Hall. Students learned about the importance of pollinators and observed a demonstration hive, tasted different kinds of honey, and learned how to use a honey extractor.

Farm-to-School month wrapped up at Clark with an entire day of activities and a visit from Urban Agriculture Collective (UAC) team members Michael James and Brianna Patten. Michael started out lessons by asking students what they might find on farms: “Chickens! Cows! Vegetables!” many students replied. Michael went on to say that the UAC garden primarily focuses on growing vegetables for community members.

Many of the students who attend Clark are residents of Friendship Court and were familiar with the UAC garden that was previously located behind their neighborhood. Before COVID-19, the garden was moved to the field next to 6th Street housing to prepare for redevelopment at Friendship Court. A number of Clark students have worked in the 6th Street garden as part of an afterschool garden club that started in the Spring of 2020 and has continued into this fall.

→ After the introduction, students went outside to participate in three different Farm-to-School activities: learning about compost and spreading it into the garden beds, observing two visiting chickens in the native garden, and a relay race to build scarecrows. Michael worked with students in the vegetable garden, talking about the fruit and vegetable scraps, paper, and garden refuse that can be added to make compost and the importance of adding compost to gardens. While working in the garden students found time to smell and taste different herbs and look for ripe cherry tomatoes.

Brianna introduced students to the chickens and talked about why people might keep chickens. We also talked about chickens that can lay pink, green, and blue eggs that we might not normally see at grocery stores. She went over the different parts of a chicken like the feet, waddle, and comb. Students then walked through the native garden area to observe them. The chickens were very active for most of the day, using their feet like little rakes to look for bugs, worms, and plants to snack on!

The scarecrow building station was a hit with students. This was a great opportunity for students to work as a team to build their own unique scarecrow, complete with pants, shirt, a bandana, and a hat! When each group was done, the scarecrows were taken apart so the next visiting group could build one. At the end of the day, all of the straw was added to the garden beds to start the process of putting the garden to bed for the winter.

We are so grateful for the Clark staff, Karen and Ken Hall, and the UAC farm crew who made Farm to School month so fun for students at Clark. We are excited to continue the conversations about where our food comes from for the rest of the school year!