

October is for Farm to School

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Although Virginia's Farm to School Week is recognized during the first full week of October, the national observance is designated for the whole month. Even though that time has come and gone, October was full of awesome engagements and events for Cultivate and the City Schoolyard Garden (CSG) program! From chicken visits to taste tests to garden tours—it has been a time full of excitement and positive new experiences.

In true farm-to-table fashion, we held taste tests for all of the CCS Public Elementary schools. The tastings consisted of apples and cherry tomatoes (which was the October Harvest of the Month) which were sourced locally! Students were asked to compare and contrast the differences between Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, and McIntosh apples and afterwards they shared their observations with one another. When asked, most students said that they preferred the sweeter varieties over the Granny Smith apples.

Yes, the children really enjoyed the taste tests. But the true highlights were the chicken visits! Hailing from the town-renowned chicken coop at Charlottesville High School, chickens traveled all across the city to visit all of the elementary schools. The students learned fun chicken facts and some of them even witnessed eggs being laid! When we asked the children if they liked the chicken visits they said that they had an "egg-cellent" time!



→ Meanwhile at Clark Elementary our newest Youth Engagement and Garden Coordinator Emma held lessons where she prepared a cucumber, yogurt and dill dip with classes. The students were encouraged to harvest fresh dill out of the school garden as it was a key ingredient. Afterwards they worked together to combine the rest of the recipe and delightfully ate it all up! Some children stated that they hoped to be able to recreate the dip at home with their families.

At Jackson-Via Elementary there were lessons on the importance of seed saving and a hands on tutorial as well! There, the children were able to gather huge okra and wilted marigolds. They were then instructed on how to open the seed pods and store them for future plantings. Students designed personal pouches to store the seeds and transport them home.

Then there was the pumpkin painting at City of Promise!! After all, what is October without some pumpkin decorating fun!?? One Friday after school, over half a dozen children joined us for snacks, light refreshments, face painting, and pumpkins! Thanks to a generous donation of free pumpkins from Whole Foods, we were able to provide all of the kiddos who were in attendance with 1 if not 2. The leftover pumpkins were then distributed door to door for households who had children inside of the Westhaven community.

Last but not least, Cultivate offered garden tours. We hosted a group of young ladies ranging in ages from 12 to 18 years old from the nonprofit I BELIEVE IN ME GIRLS at the UAC CATEC farm plot. Coming out of Baltimore, Maryland, our visitors shared glimpses of life in the bustling city. They also spoke of hope and the inspiration to sow and grow more inside of their communities. Together side by side we harvested herbs, shared knowledge, laughed, and embraced one another.

Whewww!! It's been an awesome fun-filled Farm to School month! It all came and went so quickly. But one thing for sure, two things for certain we can't wait until it comes around again next year! Cheers to a successful F2S calendar of events!! We're looking forward to seeing what 2023 will bring!