

FRESH from the Garden

New: 3rd Grade Virtual Lesson To-Go

Soils: Let's Dig In! is an interactive Google Slides presentation with video messages from Amy and Doug, drag and drop slides to reinforce vocabulary, and instructions for an at-home lab experiment to discover soil composition and texture. This lesson is designed to deliver 3rd grade NC standards.

For our virtual lessons, you will be prompted to "Save a copy" to your Google Drive. From that point, you can edit the presentation to customize to your needs, or share it with your students.



G.W. Carver Families Grow "Food Right Outside Your Door"



At George Washington Carver Elementary in Kannapolis, School Nurse Abraya Johnson teamed up with a first grade teacher to engage families in the garden, while maintaining health and safety guidelines.

Initially, four parent/child pairs joined the program, which was offered as a first-come sign-up through the class communication system. Families were instructed that mask-wearing and social distancing would be necessary for participation. Each pair was assigned to alternating sides of individual beds and spacing and directional arrows were marked on the grass. To kick things off, a speaker was invited to give a short talk on the basics of gardening during a virtual learning day.

The plants for each bed were placed by the beds when the families arrived. Each family pair was given gloves, a trowel, a bucket (for carrying soil) and a watering can. While planting, some basic garden tips were shared, such as depth of planting, spacing, square foot gardening, watering-in plants, etc. Not only were they able to plant five beds in about 30 minutes, the families learned how easy it is to grow food on their own. Only one participating family had any previous gardening experience. In addition to the one-day hands-on experience in the school garden, each family also assembled a small planter with a self-watering system to take home and care for. These were planted with lettuce and an herb of their choice. Abraya was able to share her experiences from past school years that support the research claims that children are much more likely to eat produce that they have grown on their own. Their natural curiosity and pride in being part of the process has healthy results.



Abraya hopes to be able to replicate this program for



many more families. Based on this pilot program, she has submitted a grant for future funding. No matter the grant outcome, GWC is in good hands for continued garden engagement to support healthy lifestyle choices. Abraya was recently recognized as North Carolina's School Nurse of the Year. The PHHI team has certainly been impressed with her innovative approach to health education, and naturally, we hope that other school nurses and school administrators will see the opportunity and benefits of utilizing the school garden for improving mind and body.



At Home or School, Students Learn from the Garden



In the spring, Kelly Rosales, 2nd grade teacher at W.R. Odell Primary, took her plants intended for the school garden to her yard and shared, via video, the establishment of her sweet potato slips and the growth of cole crops. Now that they are back on campus, students are in the garden weeding strawberries. In a video she shared with PHHI, she tells students that if they are done gardening for now, they can stop. The students reply, "We're not done gardening. We want to help the strawberries grow!"



"Together Gardens" Grow in Rowan County

The non-profit Happy Roots was gearing up

to expand their work with the Rowan-Salisbury School System in the spring. When schools closed, they offered students an opportunity to build their own raised bed and grow a garden at home. More than 100 families participated in the "Together Garden" project. Read more about Happy Roots in [Salisbury the Magazine](#), pgs 58-65.



Finding Safe Solutions at A.T. Allen Elementary



If you haven't seen an episode of WGRO News, you are missing out. The weekly news broadcast was Janet Childress's solution to making sure her remote learning students were kept up-to-date on the happenings in the gardens at A.T. Allen Elementary in Concord. Her tagline was "Bringing the gardens to you, when you can't come to the gardens," long, but catchy.

Cabarrus County Schools started back under Plan C in August, fully remote. During this time, the news videos bridged the students to the school garden,

literally and figuratively sowing seeds that would be ready to nurture further when students physically returned to school. Having transitioned to Plan B in late October, safety protocols and social distancing strategies have allowed students to return to the garden. But WGRO continues to be an integrated educational opportunity. Janet developed a learning path in the Virtual GROW Lab Choice Board where face-to-face students can audition for a guest reporter spot. Talk about making lemons out of lemonade!

Janet was also able to grow her garden support team during the pandemic. She reports, "We were very fortunate to have a bus driver, who is a certified Master Gardener, ask to be assigned to our school gardens during Plan C. She was able to assist with garden

maintenance, mulching, and even started up a new hydroponic project for us.”

Some of the safety protocols put in place were:

- Set up a triple-wash system for our tools so that multiple students can use them without cross-contamination.
- Last year, ATA converted large raised beds to 2 ft. x 2 ft. beds. These were the foundation for the Share-A-Square program where two students were assigned to one square foot. This year, the students cannot work in pairs, but the small beds were spaced far enough apart that one student can be assigned per square foot.
- New color-coded painting and signage help students visualize their assigned space and remain safely socially distanced.



The reassignment of the 2x2 beds led to a shortage of individual spaces for 4th and 5th graders, but in her usual fashion, Janet found solutions. Thanks to the hydroponic project, each 5th grader could grow their own hydroponic container and another set of larger beds could be rebuilt to allow appropriate distancing. As usual, solutions often come with challenges to be overcome; in this case, it was a lack of funds. She turned to crowdsourcing by hosting a Facebook Live, showing the community what they wanted to accomplish and simply asking for donations of miscellaneous containers and softscaping plants. Despite a most unusual year, the garden, and young minds, are growing!



Kale Kits for Virtual Students

The Plants for Human Health Institute worked with Cabarrus County Schools to gather supplies and develop educational resources for every 2nd grader to plant, grow, harvest and prepare kale. The “Kale Kit” included a nursery pot, a 1-gallon bag of soil, an envelope with 5 seeds, an [instruction sheet](#) (with a [supplemental video](#)) and [recipe](#).

Nothing makes us happier than when teachers share their student’s enthusiasm for learning. Amy received this text from a teacher, whose child happens to be a 2nd grader: “I came out this morning from exercising and found this. He was outside by himself, still in PJ’s with his kale. I love it!” What an independent fella! He’s got his laptop, watching the how-to-plant video, soil in the pot and seed packet in-hand. We can’t wait to get some photos of his harvest!



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Questions? Contact us!

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