

## FRESH from the Garden

### Video and Lesson Update

Check out these videos from Amy and Doug for a seeds lesson and a seed packet primer. Remember, you can check out the [STEM To-Go playlist](#) on our YouTube channel to find more videos. If you'd like to suggest a video topic, share your ideas with [Amy](#) or [Doug](#).

- [Square Food Seeds](#)
- [Seed Packets](#)



We've also released a new [lesson plan for Strawberry DNA Extraction](#). This lesson is a video investigation, not in the typical Google Slides format. Students are guided step-by-step through the process of extracting DNA from a strawberry, with scientific explanations for each step. Commonly available, low-cost supplies will allow students to follow along at home or school.

### Teacher Spotlight: Jennifer Brazee

Jennifer Brazee has been teaching for 14 years and is currently a K-5 “Connect” teacher at North Kannapolis Elementary in the Kannapolis City School System. While a veteran of the traditional classroom, she describes herself as a novice gardener and outdoor educator. It was only 2019, when she started teaching outdoors. Her focus had simply been letting students get some dirt under their nails and experimenting with different plants using the five senses. However, since COVID, her focus shifted to growing things the students can enjoy and take home. She says, “North Kannapolis Elementary is filled with students from hard working families who are serving on the front lines. I would love for our gardens to be a place where we can provide herbs and vegetables that can nourish their homes.”

North Kannapolis has multiple garden areas. One area that has proven to be multi-purpose are the waist-high raised planters where they grow herbs. Not only are they a wonderful source of butterfly life cycle observations, the herb boxes are also a favorite due to the cilantro and basil grown there, familiar herbs in favorite dishes. They have a strawberry bed and multiple beds used for kale, spinach, lettuce, sweet potatoes, kohlrabi, beets, etc. Outside the “box,” she has grown sunflowers in a spot of shallow soil, sweet potatoes in tires and tomatoes in hay bales. They are currently building an investigative gardening area.



Jennifer says, “At least once a week, weather permitting, I take a group of students outside. It has been a great learning experience for them and myself. Their excitement and natural

curiosity makes outdoor learning a fun and rambunctious time as we complete scavenger hunts, gardening activities and learning stations.”

This school year has been a time of great difficulty but also, huge successes. Our students have been through all three models of education this year; we started in Plan B, went to Plan A on November 2, Plan C on January 4 and back to Plan B on February 16. She describes how students have shown perseverance through the shifts between in-person and virtual. They’ve enjoyed nature walks, sensory scavenger hunts, and sweet potato digs. Gridding the beds was a useful tool in keeping students socially distant while enjoying the discoveries above and below the dirt. Since the beginning of 2021, they’ve been fully remote, so Jennifer is currently sharing weekly photos of plants growing in the greenhouse in preparation for what items will be available to share. She says students are already asking for cilantro plants to take home and are excited to turn kohlrabi into stamps as a PBL project with art.



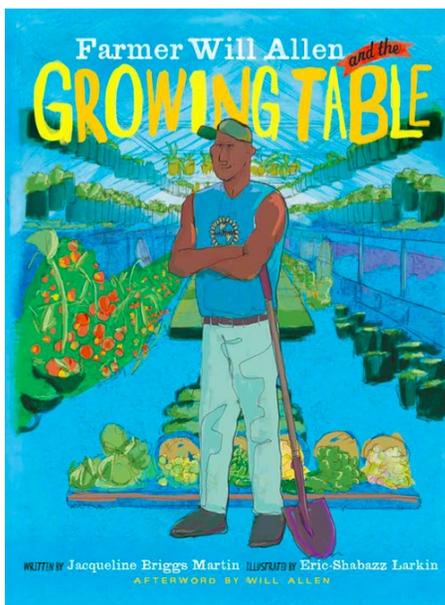
“I have the job of my dreams thanks to the wonderful administrative team of North Kannapolis Elementary School, Dr. Pelusi and Mrs. Keesee,” exclaims Jennifer. “Our goal for the school garden is to build a garden donation/sale stand that parents, students and community members can access at their leisure. I hope that one day the garden will be self-sustaining and can serve the entire community year round. It is a dream of mine for students to have the opportunity to grow crops on the school grounds for their families. I hope this dream can come true in the next five years.”

“I am fortunate to have a team of teachers and community support to aid me and my students in gardening and learning outdoors,” says Jennifer. Amy and Doug, and the NC State Plants for Human Health Institute website are a resource that she uses in creating lessons and developing best practices. “Some of my students’ favorite lessons have come from them, such as making smoothies with kale grown in the garden, exploring wiggly worms and growing, harvesting and eating sweet potatoes.” Her colleague, Meredith Katz, who teaches STEM in KCS, serves as a resource and collaboration partner also. “We want to give our students the best possible experiences outside.”

Jennifer reflects, “The garden is a place where students can explore openly and discover things from carrots to grubs. It is a place of endless questions, laughs and the occasional scream as students discover a spider lurking under plants. Not all students love gardening but they all love the reward of watching their labors grow into something they can try, whether they enjoy it or not. I love the smiles, patience and persistence gardening teaches students.”



## Lit Review: *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table*



Will Allen is a former basketball star who can hold a cabbage, or a basketball, in one hand. But what is most special about Farmer Will is that he can see solutions where others only see problems. Whether it was an abandoned city lot or poor soil, he knew there was a potential for something good; something great.

Share *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table*, by Jacqueline Briggs Martin, with your students using [this read-aloud](#) to help them make connections between problems and solutions.



## More Resources

The Wisconsin School Garden Network has an awesome, [easy-to-search library of online resources](#). Reserve some planning time and get lost exploring a collection of resources from around the country.



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**Questions? Contact us!**

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