



Austin Jewish Academy + New Farm Institute at Green Gate Farms
Service Learning
March-May 2015
Draft 1

Our sustainable, organic farm is a complicated web of interdependent systems. To better understand the importance of these connections, we've created five farm stations for students to experience the whole system.

For the first five weeks, we recommend that a group of four students spend at least an hour in the morning working at each of the following stations. This will help students develop an expertise that will be applied to other farm projects. After this, students can choose to work at their favorite station or on a farm project. Given that students will conclude their course of study by creating a cooking show, special efforts will be made this session to support the students' interest in sourcing locally and cooking techniques.

1. **Fertility:** As an organic farm, we do not purchase synthetic nitrogen, but rely upon our horse/chickens for the highest quality inputs. At this station, we will gather manures from livestock areas for the compost piles.
2. **Compost:** Compost piles need to be fed with a mix of water, manure, food waste and leaves to create a high quality amendment. At this station, students will help with turning, watering and temperature monitoring.
3. **Planting:** Most of our vegetable plants get started in our greenhouse during January and February so we can plant in the fields in March. At this station, students will help with making soil, using compost, seeding and transplanting.
4. **Community Supported Agriculture support:** Our farm is funded primarily through CSA memberships so this station is where we harvest and prep vegetables for our customers. Students will assist the Farm Manager and staff with all aspects of food prep/delivery.
5. **Sales/Marketing:** The goal for our community farm is that it is an attractive, safe, and informative place for visitors of all ages. It's important that CSA, events and camp information is readily available. At this station, students will help create and update signs/flyers as well as ensure the farm is tidy and safe using light carpentry and art skills.

Each farm visit begins with an update on the farm itself (e.g., what needs fixing, who has been born, etc.) followed by a Farmer-led discussion about farm and/or sustainability issues. Here are some topics and farm projects to consider:



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March 13/Session 1 Introduction, overview of farm systems/organic issues

- In-depth tour, farm rules, how students will contribute to the farm
- Take pre-farm survey

March 20/Session 2 - No show/rain predicted

March 27/Session 3

Discussion:

- What is a farm enterprise?
- Launch rabbit enterprise with Farmer Fidel Camarena, witness rabbit breeding
- Learn about 5 Farm stations

Projects

- Farm stations, plant tomatoes, seed in greenhouse, weed/feed

April 10/Friday, Session 4

Discussion:

- Elements of a farm enterprise: Why is Community Supported Agriculture critically important to small family farms? Review meat/veggie/flower shares and other farmer income streams.

Projects:

- Help prep CSA shares, set up farm stand, farm stations, make Rabbit Center, create bunny berry collection system

April 14/Tuesday, Session 5

Discussion:

- Food and Hunger: Feeding a Food Desert
- Learn about gleaning, food security, demographics of farm neighborhood, food policy, FARFA, WIC/SNAP, City of Austin's Sustainable Food Policy Board

Projects:

- Harvest for CSA shares, weed, farm stations, greenhouse seeding/planting, make benches

April 17/Friday, Session 6



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Discussion:

- Advancing Biodiversity: Learn about Slow Food, Livestock Breeds Conservancy, seed saving, etc.

Projects:

- Farm stations, set up farm stand, weeding, prep CSA shares, make seed bombs

April 21/Tuesday, Session 7

***Guest Speaker: Julia Poplowski, master butcher at Dai Due restaurant**

Discussion:

- Protein, from Pigs to Crickets. Learn about food choices (e.g., Paleo, Pescatarian, etc.) and alternative sources of nutrition. Students will sample crickets.

Projects:

- Tour, farm stations, ensure Momma rabbit's cage is ready for kits

April 24/Friday, Session 8

***Help guide 125 second graders from Meridan School. Explain stations and how they are interdependent**

Discussion:

- Service Learning: Innovative Ways that Farms Support Their Communities

Projects:

- Tour, farm stations, ensure Momma rabbit's cage is ready for kits

May 1, Friday, Session 9

***Guest speaker to teach canning**

Discussion:

- How do Farmer's Add Income? Value Added Products
Learn ways to preserve excess vegetables, market bunny berries

Projects:

- Farm stations, take care of new kits, use sun oven to make lunch using harvested vegetables, can Mother's Day gifts (e.g., pickled squash, etc.)

May 7, Thursday, Session 10

Visit Green Gate Farms' River Farm



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- Tour production areas, hoop house
- Help as needed with weeding, planting
- Learn about Colorado River, water policy for agriculture
- Understand relationship between rural and periurban areas
- Compare and contrast rural vs urban farm
- Picnic beside the river
- Take Post-Survey
- Discuss their farm experience, how to improve

May 8 - Green Gate Farms staff attends AJA Portfolio Day at AJA