

Parent Feedback of Former 5th Graders:

“As parents, we could not have been more impressed or amazed by the structure, thoughtfulness, complexity and connectivity of our son Nathan's experience in Karen Hidalgo's fifth grade class. The service learning project conducted in collaboration with Green Gate Farms was definitely the highlight. Nathan took great pride in learning about and participating in the business of the farm, from the science of farming, to the economic of agriculture, to the bio-ethics of GMOs and organic production. This connection with food extended past the physical work on the farm itself, as we as a family began to discuss local and organic produce and Nathan took on a serious interest in cooking. A keystone project during this part of the curriculum involved planning a menu using local ingredients and a cooking show style video production of cooking the menu, complete with descriptions of the origins of the food, the decisions made related to local vs. organic ingredients, and the seasonal modifications to be used during other times of the year. The class also split into teams and interviewed chefs and managers of farm-to-table restaurants in Austin, truly understanding how that kind of project could be scaled into a full business model.”

Two years later (same student):

“Nathan is now in seventh grade at the Austin Jewish Academy and the impacts of this curriculum and his experiences in Mrs. Hidalgo's class are still visible. Nathan returned to Green Gate Farms the past two summers to serve as a junior counselor for their summer programming and has chosen to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah on the farm this coming April. Nathan deepened his love for cooking, maintaining a mentorship with the chef he interviewed during the Farm-to-Table module, and submitting an application for a kids national cooking show under his guidance. His enthusiasm for food has been contagious, and his siblings have eagerly joined him in the kitchen and have joined Nathan during the summer programming at the farm. The experience also created an appreciation and deeper understanding of the business of food and the challenge many face to have access to fresh and local food. He and we know how privileged he has been to have had this experience and we can't wait for his brother, Levi, to get that experience next year when he starts 5th grade at AJA.”

“My son had an amazing experience in his 5th grade class with Karen Hidalgo. He was taught all about organic farming and had the opportunity to work on a local farm with the class. They had lessons on Bees, Organic Foods and Growing, Animal Care, Non-GMOs, Sustainability, Use of a Greenhouse and a whole lot more. These are things that are not traditionally taught in a classroom. He is now making healthier choices in the foods he eats and strives to teach others as well. This would not have been possible without the hands-on experience at Green Gate Farms with Mrs. Hidalgo.”