

Holden Christian Academy Food for Life



Once upon a time there was a very nice school named Holden Christian Academy.



The principal and teachers wanted to help the students make healthy choices in their lives and be good stewards of all God's gifts, including their own bodies. Then they would be able to say

“yes”

to anything God has planned for them to do.

They came up with a
wonderful idea.
They said, “Let’s have a

Food for Life Program!

It would have three parts.”

1. Gardening



2. Nutrition



3. Fitness

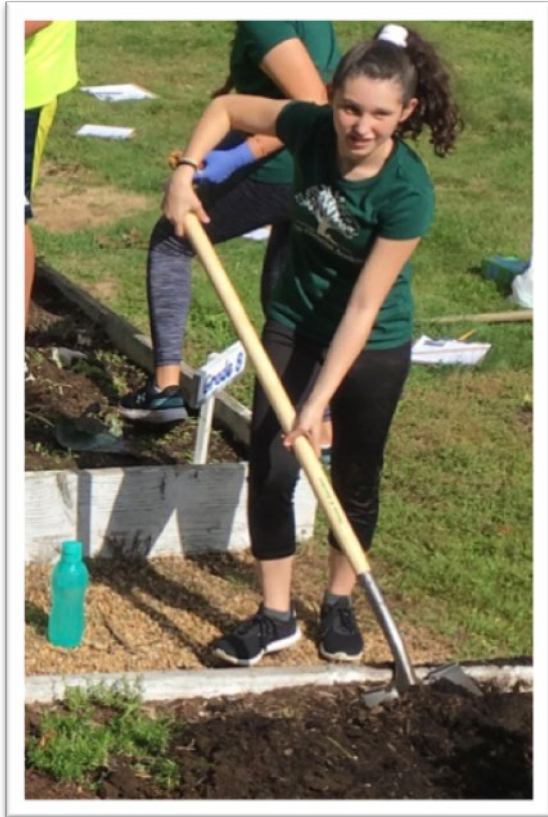


The Vision

We decided to start a school garden and learn how to grow our own food.



We wanted to learn about planting, tending, harvesting, preparing, and preserving our own food in the most nutritious ways possible!



Our Action Plan

First we met to determine the interest level of parents and ask for their help.

A local school garden manager spoke to all the parents. Everyone was excited to begin!



We began dreaming about a design
for our school garden.



The staff created our design on a giant
shower curtain.

The students presented all their best ideas at chapel.



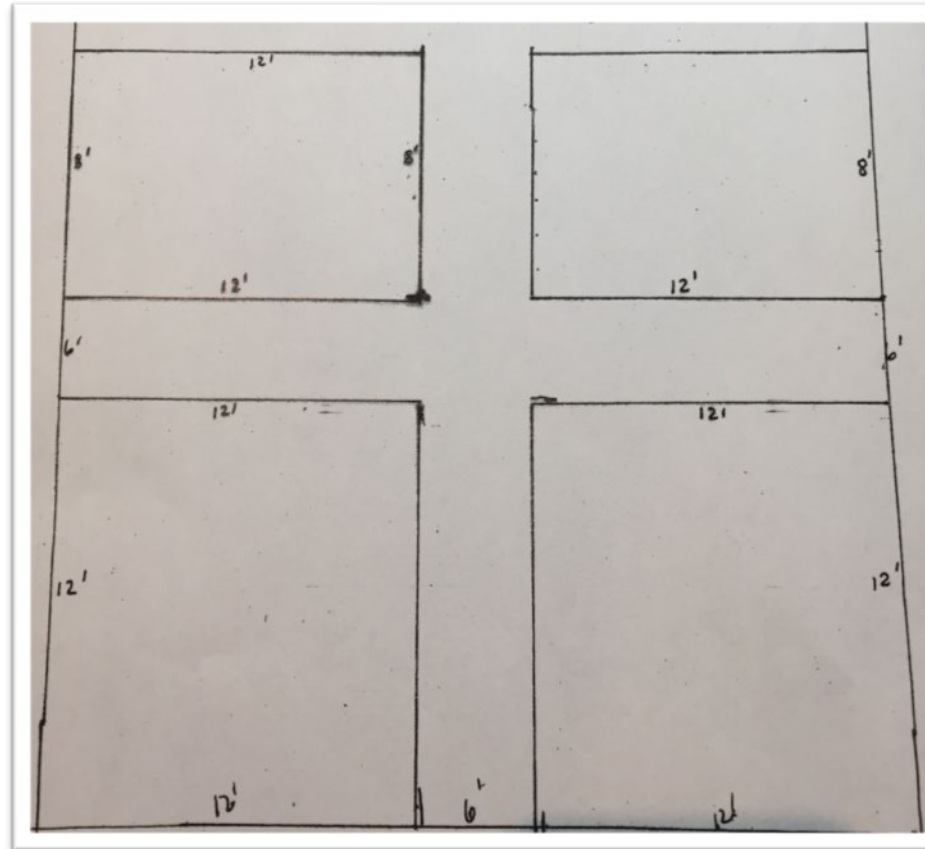
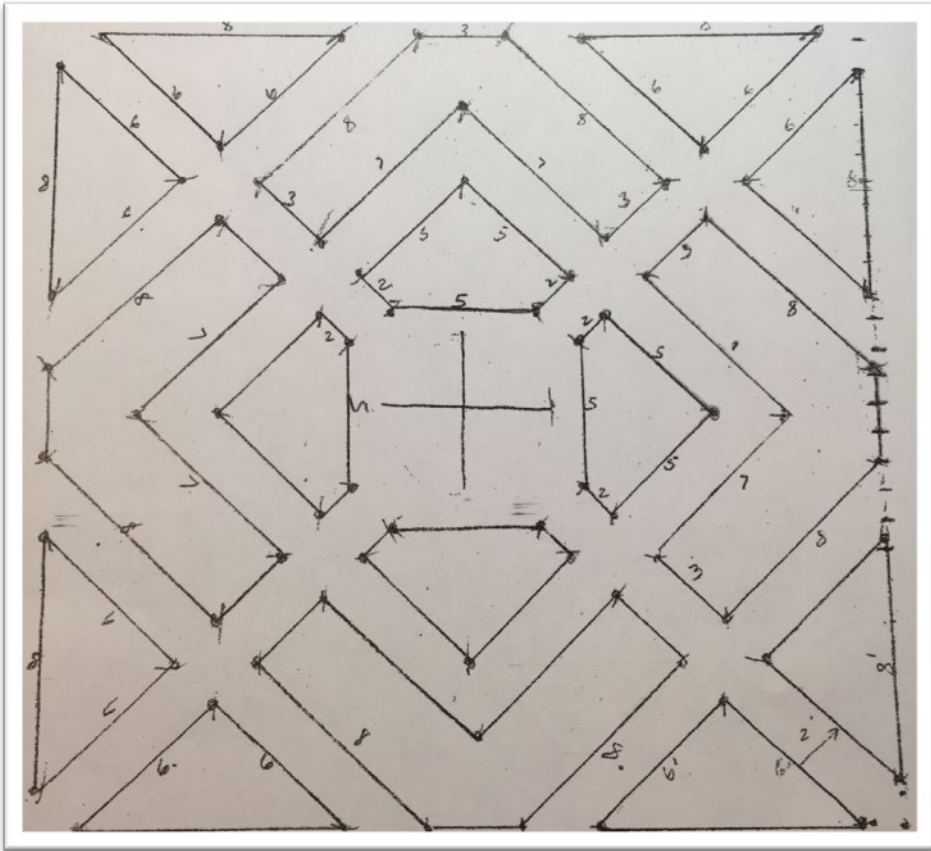
Together we decided on a plan that had
something for everyone!

We chose a mosaic design, made of 20 raised beds to provide space for each grade to have their own gardens and provide an



aesthetically
pleasing venue
for
contemplation,
inspiration,
and artistic
presentations.

Here are the original plans!



In May of 2010,

we picked the perfect spot and volunteers excavated it.



We built it on the edge of our playground so everyone could watch it grow and relax in the beautiful surroundings.



During school hours we cut and stained the lumber.
On a Saturday families & friends constructed the raised beds.



and put on the finishing touches.



When the beds were completed
the whole school filled
them with beautiful, rich compost.



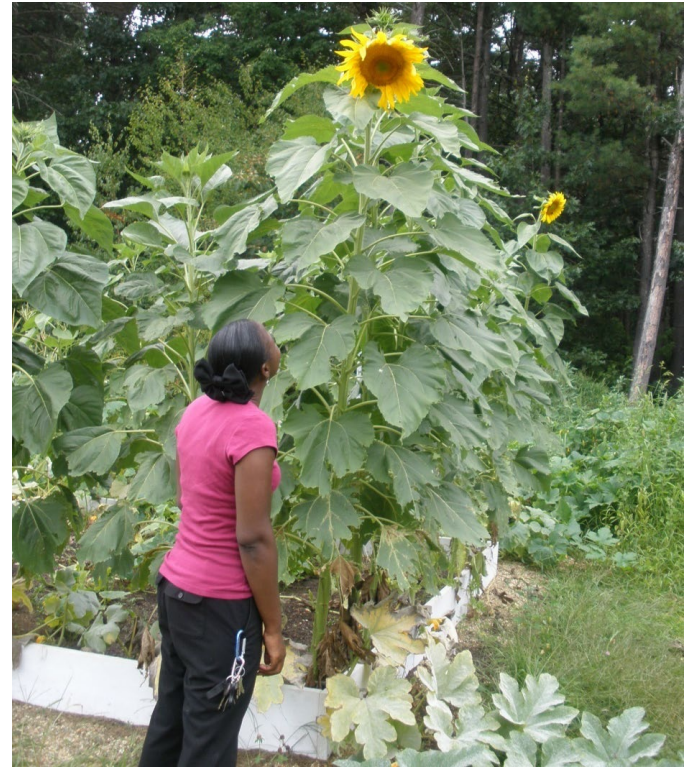
Each grade planted a variety of vegetables, herbs and flowers in their very own raised beds.





Our plants and seeds came from a variety of sources, donated as well as purchased.

The garden grew...and grew...and grew!!



So did our ideas
about creative ways
to use it.

About the same time, a friend named Olga was visiting from Belarus. She works with orphans and wanted to help them grow more vegetables for the winter. She asked us for help!



We took Olga to Heaven's Harvest Farm to get some advice from the farmers.



They had lots of good ideas. We decided to try them.

The students had a contest to find the best ways to:

1. prolong the growing season and
2. conserve heat without using electricity.

Some possibilities included:

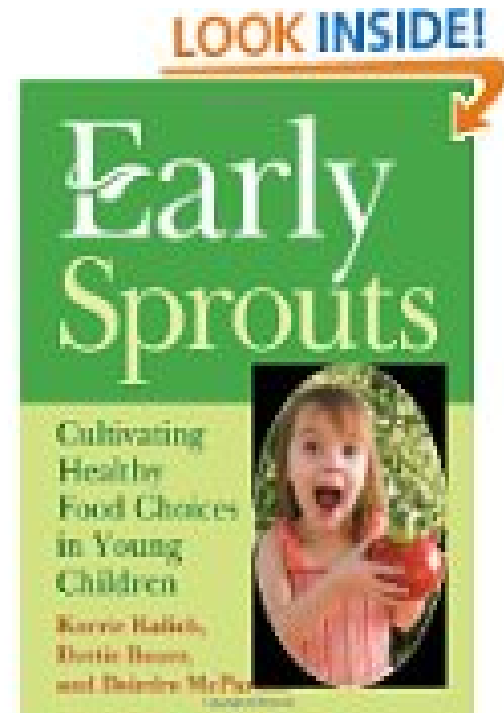
- a hoop house
- a cold frame
- a greenhouse

The hoop house won so they built one to try out.



We all continued to do research!

We visited local school gardens and spoke to the educators in charge.



We conducted in-service training for our teachers with Karrie Kalich, author of *Early Sprouts*.

We attended Mass. Agriculture in the Classroom's helpful conferences and fun summer graduate courses!



We read, and we read, and we continue to read!

Two of our favorite books were from two wonderful places in California.

Edible Schoolyard by Alice Waters

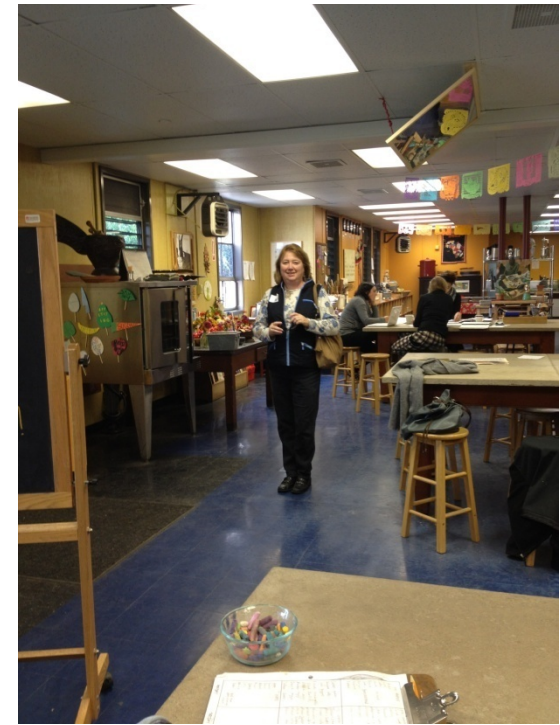
The Growing Classroom

by

Life Labs in Santa Cruz



Our principal and her husband were excited to visit them. First they went to the Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley, CA,



and then the Life Lab in Santa Cruz, CA.



Both venues had outdoor classroom space and great signage for on-the-spot learning. This gave us more ideas!



In the Spring of 2012
we added a little greenhouse.



During the fall of 2012 we built
an outdoor classroom.



Volunteers designed and
built it....

With a little help from our students...



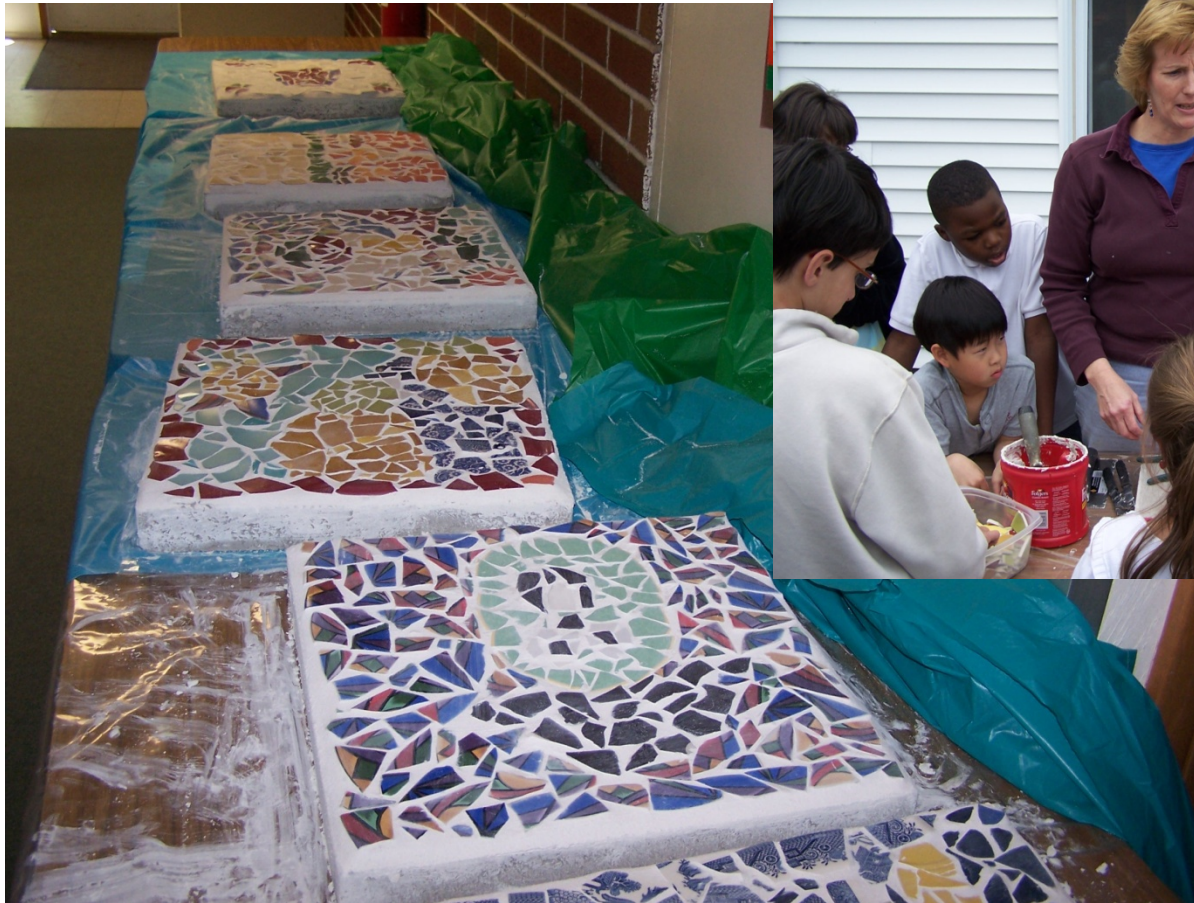
It's right next to the garden!



The awesome bench/desks were purchased with funds from a grant from Mass. Agriculture in the Classroom!



On Fine Arts Day we made
mosaic stepping stones for the garden.



We had a summer Garden Club,



and a cooking show called
HCA Gourmet.



Oh...no

Although the teachers were very excited about the program, sometimes they had a hard time fitting Food for Life activities into their busy schedules.

Bummer!

We decided that there must be a way to fit them more naturally into HCA's four year curriculum cycle.

We began with our biggest picture:
the themes and concepts of each year.



~Year One~ Our Heritage



as
Believers & Americans

Year Two

An unchanging God in a changing world.



We re-enacted the Chicago World's Fair
of 1893

Year Three ~ Civilizations

Ancient Greece



Ancient Rome

Medieval Times

Renaissance &
Reformation

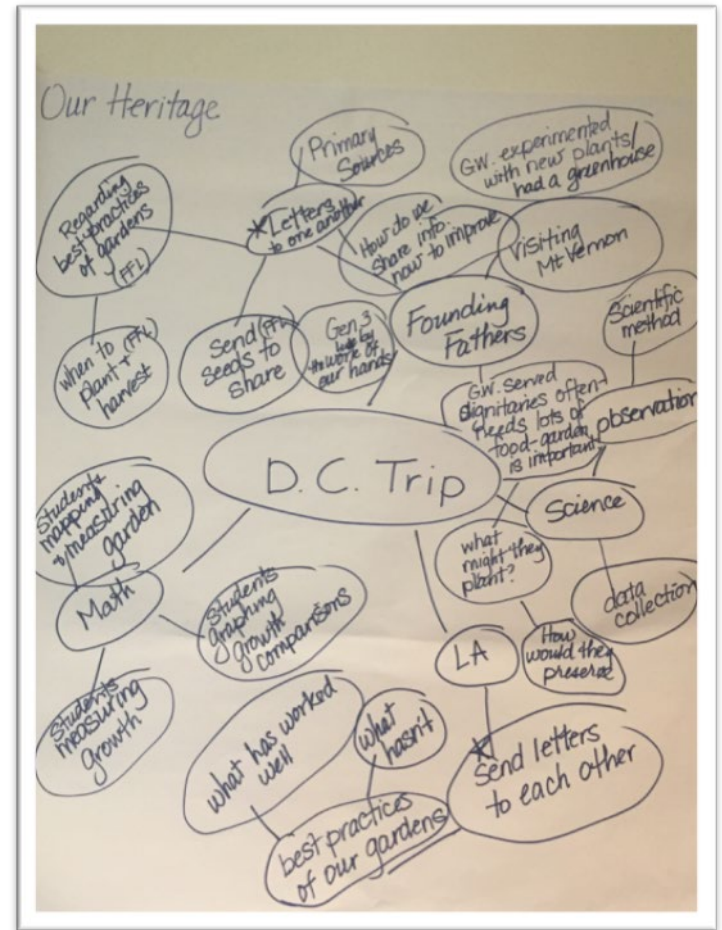


Year Four ~ Cultures

Asian, Middle Eastern, African, Latin American



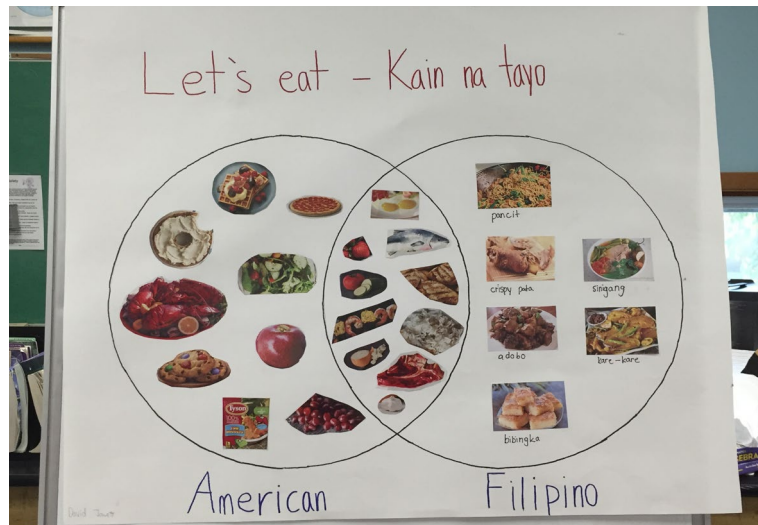
Our staff has learned to plan way ahead in order to integrate Food for Life into every subject,



and fieldtrips!

We've learned that integration first happens in the mind of the teacher.

We begin by considering the role of food and food systems in the lives, communities, and civilizations we are studying.



Everybody, everywhere, in all times has had to eat, every day, so food is always relevant and easily integrated across subjects.

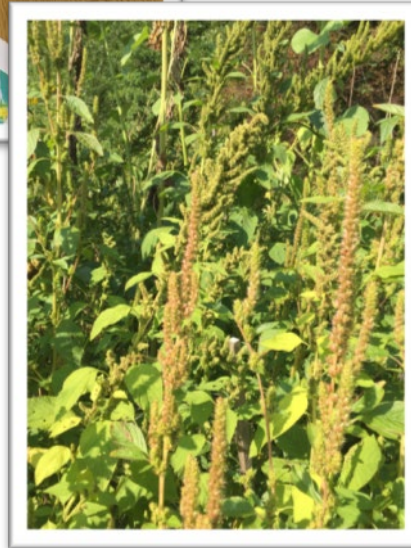
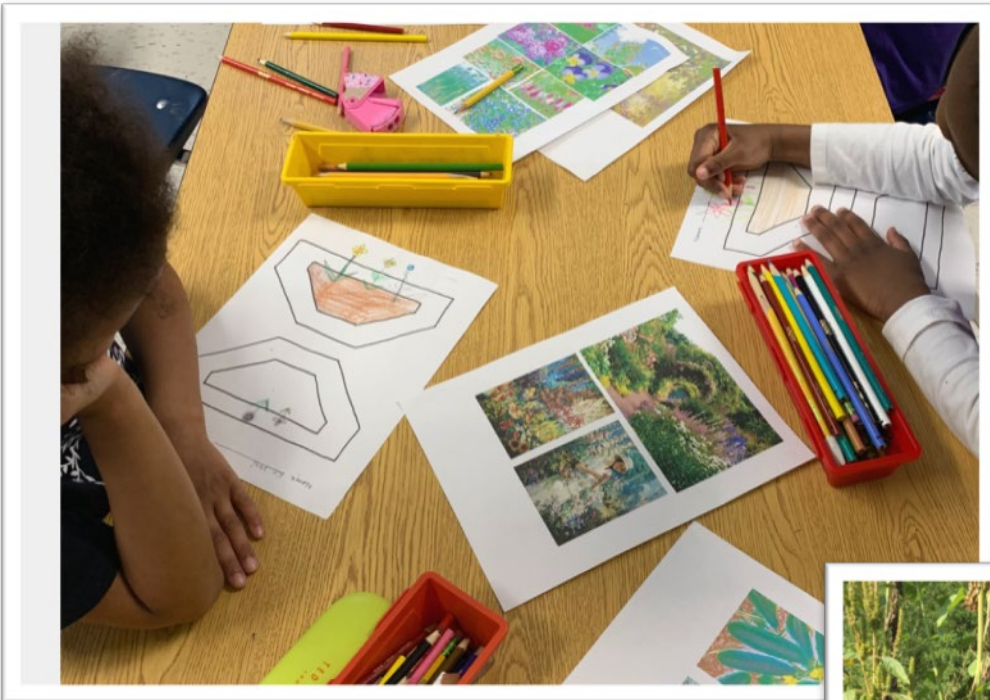
Science is the easiest subject in which to naturally integrate the FFL program.

We wanted to raise food inside in the winter. We heard about aeroponics and wanted to try a Tower Garden like they have at NASA.



We received funds through a grant from the generous ladies of the Holden Garden Club!
We all enjoyed their visit!

We now design and plant our gardens in the spring to use with our fall curriculum topics.



This is millet grown for our Civilizations year.



We observe and evaluate our results together as a class. We like to learn from our **mistakes** but still maintain the freedom to try new things and experiment.



Good thing Squanto didn't use fish emulsion...
too much kills all your plants!



No matter where we go, we are always spotting new ways to improve and learn from others. .



Great ideas
from our
sister schools!



We are now at the end of a five-year, school-wide accreditation project designed to integrate Food for Life into the very heart of HCA.

We have worked hard to document our journey of successes and failures, blessings and frustrations, and hopefully the implementation of natural integration of Food for Life into every subject.

Our prayer is that we will be able to share our published compilation with other schools and at conferences!

We will know we have succeeded when
the HCA staff, students, and families
make healthy choices in their lives
thus becoming good stewards of all God's gifts,
including their own bodies.

Then we will be able to say

“yes”

to anything God has planned
for us to do.

The End



is really just the beginning!