

From Farm to Table

In creating the “From Farm to Table” project was designed as a cross-curriculum project that would enable students with autism to learn, create, and earn money through-out the year. “Wildcat Farms” was created as a business to achieve these goals. With four raised garden beds the students planted organic vegetables that were harvested, priced and sold to our Wesley Chapel High Staff.

In developing the concept and curriculum for the project, a combination of content from our Preparation for Entrepreneurship/Self-Employment curriculum along with content and advice from our Agriculture Teacher, Mrs. Farquhar. Working with Mrs. Farquhar’s class also created mentor/mentee opportunities with her students. The Agriculture students often advised and worked alongside our students to help create a productive, organic garden. Students first researched what seed to plant. They learned to take into account soil conditions, weather patterns in our area and how to organically feed the plant nutrients, protect the plants from pest and disease. After research each student submitted their recommendation for what vegetable we should grow. Through majority vote the list was narrowed down to radishes, collard greens, onions and yellow squash. After the selection of seeds, the students filled plant liners with organic potting soil and seeds. Making sure to label and number each seed cup. This allowed the students to easily keep of log of each plant. The fall rotation of crops was radishes, collard greens, and onions with a spring crop of yellow squash. Students maintained a log on each plant, recording watering schedule, growth, and production. Once the seedlings reached two inches high, the students transplanted them from liner to raised bed located outside the classroom. The raised beds are made from recycled plastic and measures 4 ft X 8 ft X 8 in. In the classroom students researched gardening tips and pest control, designed a logo, learned how to create and maintain a plant log and inventory list, and reviewed the stages of plant growth from previous science lessons. While the plants were growing students researched local markets to gauge prices and bundling of vegetables. A watering rotation was developed and a biweekly weeding of the gardens conducted by the class. Vegetables were harvested, priced, and then sold to staff.

Radishes was the biggest seller, with onions and collards coming in second. The majority of yellow squash developed water rot, so they produced very little. The project earned close to \$200 with the profits being used for an annual end of the year banquet. The Farm to Table project is being carried over to the 2018-19 school year on a smaller scale. This year the students decided to create a coffee /beverage service for WCHS staff and it is going very well.