



Connecting our farming heritage with our growing future

2015

What a Year!

26,000+

Education Hours

2000+

Students Reached

**4,100+ lbs of
Produce Grown**

Kemper School
Garden Installation

Aquaponics
System Installaton

Observational
Beehive Classes

Drought Resilient
Curriculum Manual
for grades 6 - 8

Youth Farmers
Apprenticeship
Program

Honored by Colorado Association
of Conservation Districts as

**“Conservation
Education Program
of the Year”**

OUR VISION

Imagine a world where we all know the source of our food and value the farmers and ranchers that grow it for us. Where we are all familiar with innovative water and soil conservation methods that grow our crops and protect our natural resources. Drip systems, mulching, composting, drought tolerant plant and tree varietals, watershed knowledge and best agricultural practices become like knowing your last name - obvious and easily conveyed. And where every child, family, and community member has access to fresh, affordable, local food. Welcome to Montezuma School to Farm Project’s vision for the future of our region.



OUR MISSION

The Montezuma School to Farm Project unites our local agricultural heritage with our growing future by engaging students at the crossroads of sustainable agriculture, resource conservation, health, and economics through educational experiences in outdoor garden classes, on field trips, and in summer farm camps.



HOW WE STARTED

Since 2009, the **Montezuma School to Farm Project** (MSTFP), a program of the Mancos Conservation District in southwestern Colorado, **has focused on providing integrated, hands-on, school garden classes in Montezuma County.** It began with a farm field trip for 40 Mancos students initiated by an AmeriCorps member in 2009. In the six years since those barn doors first opened to local kids, the program has grown to incorporate four school garden programs, professional School Garden Coordinators, expanded farm field trips summer farm camps, a 2 acre School Production Area, and a cutting edge curriculum for more than 2000 students on a weekly basis.



WHAT WE DO

The school garden classrooms provide **accessible living laboratories** where diet/nutrition, active lifestyle, water and soil conservation, and core curriculum lessons intersect. Whether it's writing a poem about a plant's life cycle, actively learning the science behind seed germination studying the history of drought in the Southwest, cooking with fresh vegetables, or translating seed packet instructions into Spanish or Navajo, the garden is easily woven into every subject. **Classes are an integral part of the school day** so that learning in the school garden coincides with important science and math core lessons. Students integrate their learning in a meaningful way because they are an active participant in their learning experiences.

WHY IT WORKS

Professional School Garden Coordinators placed in each school district are a **key ingredient** to the programs foundational success. Anyone that has worked a field or planted a garden knows the value of an experienced eye that works the same plot of land year after year, building relationships in the school district with students and staff, and throughout the community with businesses, organizations, and volunteers alike. School Garden Coordinators provide the stability that allows the programs to thrive. Each coordinator works with a team of AmeriCorps staff to maintain and expand the school gardens, track and implement planning schedules, plan classes with teachers, and implement weekly lessons that utilize the Common Core Standards. This type of **expert planning provides classes that are integral to the school day, not just an extracurricular activity - a key component to MSTFP's overwhelming success in the region.**



WHERE WE'RE HEADED

Collaborative, Cohesive Curriculum

In 2016, MSTFP will focus internally on capturing and sharing curriculum. This topic continually surfaced in our reflections, needs, and aspirations during our strategic planning retreat, so we agreed to address it immediately. While our team has systems in place that allow us to quickly reach out to the community, install new infrastructure, and pilot new programs, our curriculum related systems demand attention. We collectively feel that **our program will benefit from investing time to fully develop this critical piece of our foundation.**

Mesa School Garden & Wild Lands Trail

MSTFP will collaborate with Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) to install garden infrastructure, a heritage fruit orchard, and an educational wildlands trail at Mesa Elementary School in Cortez. **Participants in the region's first SCC Farm Corps will build this foundational infrastructure, ultimately providing 400+ students in grades k-5 with the opportunity to receive an edible education in these spaces.** For students and youth corps members alike, this installation encourages a connection between the outdoors, a sense of stewardship, local food security, growing methods, and conservation service learning.



Extended Growing Seasons

MSTFP utilizes cold hardy crop varieties and innovative infrastructure to expose students to the growing process during the majority of the school year. Food harvested from the gardens is tasted in class and served in cafeterias. It's paramount that our program can provide this food during the school year, when classes consistently visit the space.

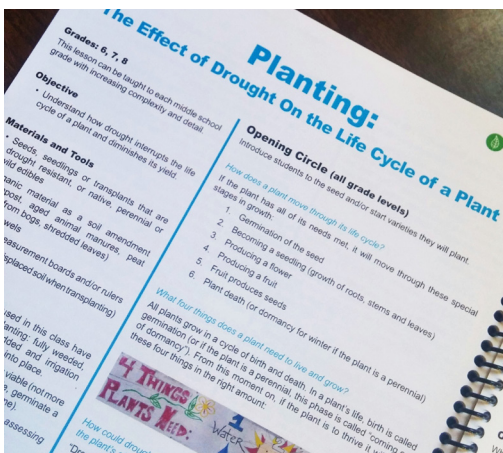
The Mancos School Garden Program will soon install coldframes and a 720 square foot hoophouse. These insulating structures increase off-season growing capabilities and simultaneously serve as an incredibly versatile teaching tool for applications of math and science. Used hoophouses and coldframes built with 100% local, repurposed materials helps our students recognize the availability and accessibility of resources in our community.



A Biothermal Heating System at the Cortez Middle School Garden will extend the site's growing season by piping heated water below the soil's surface. In this closed-loop system, the water gains heat while circulating through a massive, decomposing compost pile and out into the growing beds. Not only does this low cost method of generating heat avoid dependence on traditional fuel sources; it closes gaps in preexisting community systems by providing a use for otherwise discarded local byproducts. Once up and running, the heat source is self-sustaining. After the inputs fully decompose and no longer provide heat, they become a convenient source of fertilizer and remain a part of our growing system.

Observational Beehive Classes

With the support of the Mancos Conservation District board, MSTFP's outdoor learning labs have a new feature: the observational beehive. With this new teaching tool, **the 2000+ MSTFP serves have the opportunity to view the inner workings of a hive from just inches away.** We're expanding our students' perspectives by allowing them to see the interconnectedness of the colony with their own eyes, and setting the foundation for students to understand the innumerable connections between a hive and the health of its environment.



3rd-5th Grade Drought Curriculum Manual

With support from the Colorado State Conservation Board, MSTFP released it's first drought curriculum manual in the fall of 2015. Now, **our educators will collaborate to publish another book of drought curriculum, for grades 3 through 5.** These manuals provide teachers and school garden programs across the region with step-by-step, integrated, experiential garden education lessons that build in complexity through each grade. The lessons integrate Colorado Academic Standards and easily offer teachers the opportunity to utilize the living systems garden classroom to teach drought resilience concepts vital to the future of our region.

MSTFP Staff

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Thank you to the following local support:

- Mancos, Dolores and Cortez School Districts
- City of Cortez
- Town of Mancos
- Mancos and High Desert Conservation Districts
- Mancos Valley Resources
- Tierra Madre Herbs
- Cliffrose Garden Center and Gifts
- Kiwanis Club of Mesa Verde
- Dolores Rotary Club
- Coutts & Clark Western Foundation
- Ricky King State Farm
- Sophia's Retreat & Event Center

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