

Teacher Feature – September 2018

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Where and what level do you currently teach and why did you choose to become an educator?

I am the Media Specialist at Rogers Elementary STEM and I work with grades K-5. My love of life-long learning and helping others discover new things are two reasons I chose to be in education. I also really enjoyed my teachers throughout school and they have been an inspiration to me becoming a Media Specialist.

How has agriculture and the Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom Program impacted your students and instruction?

I have attended two Southern Minnesota Teacher Tours for this program. Each tour showed many different faces of agriculture and how the impact of these reach people all around the world. I like to share with my students the notion of how lucky we are to live in such a bountiful state. I'm excited to share about my experience from this summer and to work with students on at least 2 agriculture themed lessons at the beginning of the school year. I've worked with the colleagues in my building to share the wealth of information that the Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom has to offer. We are discovering information and ways to share it together for our students.

Describe any agriculture based projects you have been involved in lately.

At the end of last school year, students learned more about composting through literature and a digital activity. We had a whole group read aloud of *Compost Stew* by Mary McKenna Siddals and illustrated by Ashley Wolff. Then students showed their new knowledge of how composting takes place using technology available in our media center. Each student used one iPad app of their choice to create a digital compost stew. Many students used a combination of multiple apps to show the many elements (food scraps, plant debris, grass clippings, insects, worms, water etc.) involved in composting. My students



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Figure 1 Example of student work from *Compost Stew* lesson

and I were having so much fun learning about composting that I ended up teaching this lesson in some form to all grades!

A goal for the new school year is to continue working with the Rogers Elementary School Garden Committee to offer resources and supporting lessons. For example, I am really interested in [The Rotten Truth](#) and [The Case of the Missing Pumpkin](#) lessons. These will be great additions to what everyone learned about composting last year.

What advice do you have for other teachers on implementing agriculture into their classroom/program?

Read aloud a book that has an agriculture concept or theme. There are numerous picture books available that are wonderful to read aloud. Check out the [Matrix](#) on the Agriculture in the Classroom website for recommendations on picture books to pair with activities. The matrix does a great job of using literacy for many topics.

Why do you believe it is important for our students to be agriculturally literate and aware in today's society?

Agriculture is everywhere! How many of us take the time to consider how important agriculture is and how much it impacts our day-to-day needs? We take so much for granted so I am passionate about getting students to think critically about how agriculture fits into their world. Another important task is helping students understand how the abundance of agriculture in Minnesota helps the entire world. Using agriculture in the classroom is a fantastic way for students to make world connections!