

Liz Alsworth
1st grade teacher
Martin County West Elementary School



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

I currently teach 1st grade at Martin County West, teaching in the same first grade classroom that I was taught in. When I was in high school, I enjoyed teaching swimming lessons and counseling 4-H camps where I discovered my love for children and education. As a senior I spent time as a Teacher's Assistant which helped solidify my decision to pursue a degree in education. From there I went on to study elementary education at MSU, Mankato.

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

Some of the most meaningful conversations we have in our classroom are centered around agriculture and science. It's amazing the kinds of connections students can make when they are given the opportunity to participate in hands on activities and talk about their experiences. One of the most common answers when you ask kids what their favorite subject in school is, is science. I am amazed by how much information they retain when they get the opportunity to talk about something they are interested in. I love hearing from parents that their student came home and was excited to share what they learned about in school that day!

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

Life cycles is a Minnesota State Standard for first grade. We have begun our life cycle study by incubating chicken eggs. Through this process students are able to have a hands on experience in learning about chickens, their life cycle and making the farm to food connection. The kids have been so excited about it, it has become more of a whole school project with classes stopping in and a hallway display that keeps everyone updated on what is happening inside the egg through the incubation process. As we learn about life cycles we are learning about the different ways chickens are raised and the various uses for eggs. A HUGE thanks to Wanda Paschke for hooking our class up with the fertilized eggs that are currently in our incubator. The goal is that once the chickens hatch, I will be able to bring them home and raise them on my farm to continue this project next year with eggs laid by the hens.



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

There are tons of resources out there to bring all kinds of great projects into your classroom. Ag isn't just for the "big kids"! We have really enjoyed times where the high school Ag classes come in and work with us. Not only is it educational and engaging, it is also an empowering experience for the high school students to share their knowledge and love of agriculture.

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

Bringing Ag into the classroom helps expose students to things that they may not get to experience at home. I feel that conversations had in the classroom help instill an inquisitive nature in kids that they carry with them when the school day ends. I want students to get curious about things that they see when they are out in the community and notice that agriculture is all around them! Whether they are driving around rural Martin County, or in the Twin Cities, knowing where things come from is a life-long resource.