

## Teacher Feature – January 2019

### Mandy Bellm

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*Ms. Bellm developed two lessons that are included in our [Cream of the Crop Lesson Booklet](#): [Minnesota Flowers for Pollinators](#) and [Minnesota Apples: Sweet Fruit, Bitter Controversies](#)*

#### **Why did you choose to become an educator?**

My mom is a special education teacher, so I grew up around educators and was pretty sure I wanted to be a teacher. My passion grew after student teaching at an environmental school in Minneapolis and interning at an eco-tourism school in Ecuador. I love getting to know kids, seeing new passions and skills emerge as they grow. Middle school in particular is really fun because they change so much even over a single year and they're not afraid to take risks.

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

The Ag in the Classroom program has really brought our [edible classroom](#) to the next level. Before working with Michele Melius to develop curriculum, my only experience in the garden was starting pepper seeds in my Spanish class. Afterward, I have been able to collaborate with Michele and several other teachers to use the garden for authentic learning experiences, bringing the curriculum alive and using it in a more interdisciplinary way. The lessons themselves were fun to write and try out, especially creating hyperdocs so students could work at their own pace.



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

Michele and I continue to teach a seasonal class with both the [Minnesota Flowers as Pollinators](#) and the [Minnesota Apples](#) lessons. It's really nice that we are so close to the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum where the 7th graders get hands-on experiences with our curriculum as they explore learning stations.



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

My advice would be to look into your existing curriculum for units that are feeling lack-luster and need some jazzing up. There is such a wide variety of curriculum, for so many different content areas and standards, that it can get overwhelming if you don't already know what kind of curriculum you are looking for. Once you've decided, don't be afraid to try some new technology! You don't have to be an expert to try a new program with students. There are usually a handful of students who have used it before or catch on quick that can help classmates that get stuck. We call it, "Ask three before me"; as in, ask three classmates before you ask a teacher.

