

THE EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD PROJECT

FARMING AND FAMILY

Summary: In this lesson, students reflect on their personal relationship and their family's relationships with farming. Students will interview a family member and conduct research into their family's history with growing food. Finally, they will use their answers to develop a creative project.

Time: 30-60 minutes

Materials:

- Art supplies of choice
- Device for research

Teacher Notes:

- This lesson is a great opportunity to prompt a larger discussion about how students' experiences are situated in the greater context of farming in the United States. Consider extending this lesson by designing a discussion or lesson around the following guiding question:
 - How are your own experiences and your family's experiences with farming connected to (or impacted by) laws, patterns, and systems of farming in the United States?
- This lesson asks students to develop a creative project (poem, story, video, art project, collage, etc.) based on research. Different students will have varying levels of comfort with engaging in creative work. For some, it may be useful to emphasize that they will not be assessed based on their artistic skill. Instead, this is an opportunity for them to explore the topic of agriculture and farming through a creative lens. Just like having conversations with multiple people about the same topic is bound to yield unique results, so too can investigating an idea or topic through multiple avenues. Encourage them to be curious about how engaging with the topic creatively might shift their perspective or make them aware of ways of looking at it that they hadn't previously considered.
- This lesson was developed for Edible Schoolyard Project's [Understanding Organic](#) curriculum and is part of the extension inquiries.



FARMING AND FAMILY

READ: Each of us has some connection to farming. Whether we work on farms ourselves, have a family history of farming, or eat food grown on farms, we are all connected in some way to the land and the processes of growing food. The following activities ask you to explore your personal relationship and your family’s relationships to farming, working the land, and/or gardening.

If you are unsure if you and your family have a relationship to farming, think about the following questions. You may want to write down your answers.

- Do you garden or work on a farm?
- Do you know the names of any of the farms that grow your food?
- Does someone in your family garden or work on a farm?
- Did any of your ancestors farm? If you don’t know, consider asking a family member or elder in your life.
- Do you have any interesting memories of farms or farming?
- If the answer to all these questions is “no”, why do you think that is?
 - How far back in your family history do you think you would need to go in order for one of your ancestors to answer “yes” to the questions above?
 - What do you think has changed between their lifetime and yours?
 - What would you want to ask them?

RESEARCH: When you have considered what your and your family’s relationship to farming might be, do some research to learn more. Each person’s answer is unique, so choose the research method(s) that work(s) best for you. Check off which form(s) of research you will be conducting.

WRITE: Conduct research and write down notes from your research onto a piece of paper.

- **Talk to your family members.** Ask your family members for more information. Do they work on a farm? If so, ask them to talk about their experience. Did any of your ancestors farm? What details and stories can you find out about? What questions do you and your family members have for your ancestors?



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WRITE CONTINUED:

- **Look online.** Check out the produce (fresh fruits and vegetables) in your home. Look for stickers or tags and look online to see where they come from and how they were farmed. Try learning about the farming methods that are used to grow the different fruits, vegetables, and grains that you eat. If you or someone in your family works in farming, learn more about the crops, methods, tools, and histories of the farms that they are connected to.
- **Observe.** If you have a direct relationship with farming, observe the process. Notice the environment, the people, and your thoughts and feelings during the experience.

CREATE: Make a creative piece (poem, story, video, art project, collage, etc.) that represents or responds to your research. Use one or more of the following questions as the inspiration for your piece.

- What was a moment in your research process that brought you energy? Maybe it was a new idea, an inspiring image, a big or small feeling, a conversation, an unanswered question, or a moment of connection. Transport yourself to that moment. What emotions, thoughts, and reactions does it bring up for you?
- Imagine you are having a conversation with the *past* you. What have you learned through this research process that you didn't know before? What would you want to tell your past self about what you have learned?
- What questions did your research bring up for you? What questions *didn't* your research answer? Make a piece that reflects and responds to all the things you don't know.
- Create a real vs. imagined reality. What is your real relationship to farming? What *could* your relationship to farming be? What would need to be different for the alternate reality(s) to be true?
- Create a prompt of your own! Anything goes.

ANSWER: Reflect on your experience after completing your creative piece. Respond to the following questions:

1. How was conducting this research for you? What kinds of emotions and thoughts came up for you?
2. Was there anything surprising that you learned?
3. How was developing your creative project? What kinds of emotions and thoughts came up for you?
4. Did anything surprise you about the process of developing your creative project?
5. If you could complete this project again, is there anything about your process that you would change? Do you have any questions that you would still like to research? How could you do that?

REFLECT ON CONNECTIONS:

Using your [Circles of Connections](#) worksheet, answer the following questions:

- How does finding your personal connection to farming connect to the topic of organic?
- How does farming impact you, your community, and beyond your community?