

# Washington County Educator Receives Excellence in Teaching Award

Lynn Wallin

02/22/2017



Tiffany Porter, learning coach at Crimson View Elementary School in the Washington County School District, has been chosen to receive the Utah Agriculture in the Classroom (Utah AITC) Excellence in Teaching About Agriculture Award. Porter is being recognized for her efforts to increase agricultural literacy by creating a schoolwide program using a greenhouse, aquaponics system and weather station. The project, From Seed to Table, includes kindergarten through fifth grade students and furthers the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) focus of the school.

The greenhouse, aquaponics system and weather station were made possible through a STEMLink grant written by Porter and awarded by the Utah Department of Workforce Services in partnership with the STEM Action Center and the Utah State Board of Education. The greenhouse is heated and cooled using geothermal energy and the electricity used to power the lights and fans comes from solar energy. Students use information from the weather station to adjust conditions in the greenhouse to best grow their plants.

Each grade level chooses which plants they will grow. The students research the vegetables they are interested in growing to learn about the temperatures, humidity and fertilization required. The vegetables grown are then offered during school lunch in the salad bar. This fall the school enjoyed a Thanksgiving feast featuring crops grown by the students.

"We feel if students help grow the vegetables, they will be more interested in eating them at lunch," said Porter.

She said the objectives achieved through this project are many.

"Students explore agriculture and how to grow produce and are gaining a better understanding of where food comes from and the time and effort that goes into growing it," she said. "They learn responsibility in caring for the plants and are discovering more about the STEM process by taking care of them and using technology and math to keep track of the data. They record weather, wind and water data and discover how these elements affect plant growth in our area. Students are learning about the many careers they can pursue if they have an interest in horticulture. We are bringing teachers, students, parents, the university and businesses from our community together to sustain this project."

As part of her award, Porter will attend the 2017 National Agriculture in the Classroom conference this summer in Kansas City, Missouri. There she will be recognized along with other awardees from across the country.

"Tiffany has created an exciting STEM learning environment for the students at Crimson View," said Lynn Wallin, Utah AITC education specialist. "The students are not just being told about where their food comes from, they are getting their hands dirty and participating in the entire process from seed to table."

Utah Agriculture in the Classroom is a federally funded, non-profit program focused on increasing agricultural awareness through education. Utah AITC works closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop and distribute accurate educational resources that improve agricultural literacy and instill in students an appreciation for our food and fiber system.

Writer: Lynn Wallin, [lynn.wallin@usu.edu](mailto:lynn.wallin@usu.edu)