

V is for Vegetable

By Julie Ginder

Suggested Grade Level(s): Kindergarten Lesson (could be modified for 1st or 2nd grade)

Background

In the American Farm Bureau's "Agricultural Literacy" brochure it is clearly stated that "Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through twelfth grade, all students should receive some systematic instruction about agriculture." What is agricultural literacy and how do we achieve it? According to the Research Council agricultural literacy means education and some understanding of agriculture.

In the primary grades children have the opportunity to participate in "hands-on" activities, field trips, stories, and real life situations to learn this information. Maybe the teacher is not familiar with the idea of agriculture in the classroom, has not visited a farmers market, or picked fresh vegetables; hopefully, some of the following activities will introduce the teacher and students to agriculture in Alaska. I focused on vegetables, but you could certainly include berries, dairy, or other Alaska grown products.

Materials used are those that are often found in kindergarten classrooms: kitchen equipment and plastic vegetables, magazines for cutting, pictures of foods, paper plates, writing tools, chart paper, and journals. You will need a large map of Alaska and small maps for children to use.

Alaska Content Standards: Language Arts B-1, C-1; Science D-2; Skills for a Healthy Life D-2.

The children will

- understand that many vegetables are grown in Alaska.
- try different vegetables.
- identify healthy and less healthy foods.
- work together to make healthy snacks.

Visiting a farm would be a great opportunity for children to see where/how vegetables are grown. If that isn't possible, try to visit a farmers market or a neighborhood garden. This activity will provide your class with many crunchy vegetables for salads, soups and tasty snacks. One day you may decide to design a school or neighborhood garden.

Stories: Tops and Bottoms, The Carrot Seed, What's for Lunch, Pea; Farmers Market; Harvest Year; Growing Vegetable Soup; Stone Soup; A Book of Vegetables.

Snack: Raw Vegetables (Alaska Grown)

No cooking necessary for this healthy and delicious Alaska Grown snack. Your biggest decision will be which crunchy vegetables to try. Don't forget sugar snap peas, purple cauliflower, and rainbow color carrots. Just wash and enjoy.



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Snack: Vegetable Soup (Alaska Grown)

This is a lovely way for children to share vegetables from home; or they could be gathered during a field trip to the farmers market or grocery store. (Remember to thank those who invite you into their gardens or farms.) Building community and providing opportunities for sharing, cooperation, and communication help children develop these necessary skills. Ask children to bring in a vegetable for a soup that will be prepared later in the week. While the soup is simmering the children work on "The Color of Vegetables" class book and complete the graph: "My Favorite Vegetable."

Activities

Show children several Alaska Grown vegetables. Also have pictures of the vegetables and labels from canned vegetables and frozen food packages. Talk with the children about the colors, shapes, and textures of the vegetables.

On a large, simple map of Alaska (with boundary only) work with the children to glue pictures of Alaska Grown crops and other products inside the map. This will lead to a discussion of how we get other foods, where they come from, etc.

Children can individually glue a small map of Alaska on a paper plate. Children choose pictures of products that are Alaska Grown and glue them on their map.

Children provide the teacher with information about vegetables. Write the name of the vegetable (with pictures) on a large chart titled "Alaska Grown."

Discuss the parts of plants that are eaten; do we eat the roots, seeds, the leaves, stems, or other? Place this information on a chart labeled "The Parts We Eat." Read the story: [Tops and Bottoms](#).

Make vegetables prints — using potatoes, carrots. Make collages using leaves, stems and other items the children want to include.

Put pictures of 8-10 foods in several small lunch bags. Children work in pairs to sort pictures. Ideas for categories: AK grown/not grown in AK; and Healthy/Less Healthy; or children can make their own categories. If appropriate for your class, children can explain why/how they made their decision.

Provide materials to create a grocery store or a farmers market — a scale, baskets, bags and boxes, shelves, papers, grocery ads., plastic vegetables, and cans of vegetables (opened at the bottom); frozen food packages will look full if they are stuffed with paper and taped carefully. Advertise Alaska Grown vegetables.

In writing center have pre-written papers available, such as: "I Like ____;" "My Favorite Vegetable is _____;" "Our Rainbow Book of Vegetables;" Add new pages as appropriate. Use charts to help children with spelling, word choices and writing.

Make a classroom chart with color words across the top of the paper. Children glue pictures of vegetables under the appropriate color. (lettuce under green, etc.)



Draw one life size body map. The task is to draw or glue pictures of healthy foods inside the map and less healthy foods outside the body map. Or you could use picture cards with Velcro. This is a good time to introduce and use the food pyramid.

Display a chart with headings “Healthy” and “Less Healthy” at the top of the chart. Paste pictures under the correct heading. This activity can be worked on during center time and whole group activities.

In a large group, display a chart with a picture of one Alaska Grown vegetable. (Have real vegetables and/or plastic models available.) The activity is to fill the chart with descriptive words about the vegetable(s). The 5 categories are: Taste, Feel, Look, Smell, and Parts we Eat. Children suggest words and the teacher writes the word under the heading. Put the chart in writing area to use during writing and daily activities.

Give each child a large outline of an adult-size hand. Children glue a picture of one vegetable on each finger. Encourage children to find five different vegetables—each a different color. Children can also write the name of each vegetable on the hand. (Idea is to have children think about eating 5 a day.)

Stories: Two Old Potatoes and Me; The Vegetables We Eat; What’s For Lunch, Potatoes.

Snack: Mashed or Baked Potatoes (Alaska Grown)

Activities: Kindergarten children can plant seed potatoes in the spring and dig potatoes in the fall. If this project wouldn’t work for your class, try planting a potato in a large container and grow potatoes in the classroom.

Graph: “My Favorite Way to Eat Potatoes” See www.agclassroom.org/ok for information and activities regarding the “Powerful Potato.”

Other Activities

- Display a selection of AK Grown veggies. Show the weight of the vegetable and the weight of the Alaska Grown world record veggies. Record the information in journals.
- Grow bean and alfalfa sprouts in a large jar. Follow directions on seed packages purchased at the store.
- Put carrot and turnip tops in a small amount of water in shallow pan and watch and record changes. Stick 3 toothpicks in a sweet potato and place it in a jar of water. Record the data as leaves and roots begin to grow.
- Place seeds in water, soil or on a sponge. Vary the growing conditions: light, moisture, food, and the soil; observe and record changes. Children keep data in journals.

Helpful Resources

Alaska Food and Farm Products Directory

Websites

www.ageducate.org
www.eatsmart.org
www.agclassroom.org
www.agclassroom.org/ak

www.MyPyramid.gov

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

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Krauss, Ruth, The Carrot Seed. Harper Collins, 1945
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Rendon, Marcie R. and Cheryl Bellville. Farmer's Market, Carolrhoda Books, 2001
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This series of lessons and activities presented by Julie Ginder, a teacher from the Anchorage area.