Morris Farm has the opportunity to provide local high school students with experiential place-based education. By integrating a sustainable farming program into the study of ecology and nutrition as well as history and economics, the students will come away with an even closer connection to their rural Maine community and its rich agricultural history.

FALL

Farm orientation: "Get to Know the Farm" guest:
• Students will investigate the garden, greenhouse, sheep pen, cowshed, milk room, and nearly-woodland with a stop at each place to learn about the area
• Reading the landscape
• What makes a farm organic?
• Biodiversity surveys

Fall harvesting:
• Give students worksheets and have them identify crop species in the garden
• Explain connection between plants harvested and the students’ daily lives:
  • What do we do with the foods we harvest?
  • Backwards recipe: explain what plants are used in what foods
  • Seedling health: What do different seedlings need to survive?
• Allow the kids to make their own soil in preparation for planting their own seedlings

Greenhouse uses: What plants will be put in the greenhouse?
• Give an overview of what a greenhouse does
• Let each student plant one seedling of their own choice that will be later transplanted into the greenhouse
• Plant winter oats, Austrian winter peas, sweet corn that will be strip-tilled as cover crops

LATE SPRING

Review of year’s lessons
• Students prove their knowledge by going on a scavenger hunt similar to the Fall "quest"
• Students are actively engaged in reviewing what they already know and working together in the form of a game

Harvesting
• Review of what the students learned about harvesting during the fall session
• An opportunity to understand new techniques
• These harvested vegetables could be used for a mini-market

Mini-Market: Focus not on profit but rather on the following:
• Understand the importance of farm responsibilities
• Learn about the inputs and outputs required to bring a product to market
• Engage in teamwork
• Use of problem-solving skills
• Use of the mini-market as a community gathering space
• The vegetables in the market could be sold back to the farm, to the parents as a year-end display of what their children have learned, or, if the quantity is large enough, to community organizations such as the local co-op, food pantries, soup kitchens, or any other not-for-profit programs.
• Continue transplanting greenhouse crops to garden

EARLY SPRING

Understanding spring seedlings
• What can be planted in early spring?
• Quality of the soil in early spring?

Harvesting
• Review of what the students learned about harvesting during the fall session
• An opportunity to understand new techniques
• These harvested vegetables could be used for a mini-market

Mini-Market: Focus not on profit but rather on the following:
• Understand the importance of farm responsibilities
• Learn about the inputs and outputs required to bring a product to market
• Engage in teamwork
• Use of problem-solving skills
• Use of the mini-market as a community gathering space
• The vegetables in the market could be sold back to the farm, to the parents as a year-end display of what their children have learned, or, if the quantity is large enough, to community organizations such as the local co-op, food pantries, soup kitchens, or any other not-for-profit programs.
• Continue transplanting greenhouse crops to garden

WINTER

Understanding importance of winter in annual planting cycle: finding life in winter
• Tour the grounds to find signs of life on and under the snow
• Talk about the ability of ice to insulate plants
• Why do we spray trees with mist before a big frost?
• Bonding structure of water molecules and chemical properties of ice
• Learn from previous experiences, brainstorm and reestablish goals: reflect on the past year
• Winter is time to plan for following spring planting season
• Discuss among small groups of students which planting practices worked and which did not
• Consider planting partnerships

Pruning trees: when to prune during the winter months
• Necessary temperatures for pruning
• Reasons for pruning and the process

Winter gardening and the greenhouse
• Grow Swiss chard, tomatoes and herbs in the greenhouse
• Learn about importance of winter cover crops
• What is nitrogen fixing, how does it work, and what is the importance of organic matter?
• Conserve soil in winter and spring

Work with the animals
• Milking cows, making cheese

SEED AS AN EGG: THE LIFE CYCLE

Important sources:
Morris Farm, Wiscasset Maine
Troy Howard Middle School, Belfast Maine
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

The plan is organized to enable students to make their own decisions in a structured environment in order to build confidence and independent thinking. The farm is the perfect place to grow strong and independent community-minded people. We feel that this curriculum plan enables the alternative education teachers to integrate the eight areas of the Maine State Learning Results into their work at Morris Farm as well as the four key areas of the common core of learning: Personal and Global Stewardship, Communication, Reason and problem solving, and The Human Record.