

The Greenhouse at Crimson View Elementary



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Students learn STEM through school’s greenhouse

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Students at Crimson View Elementary are taking their science, technology, engineering and math education to a whole new level with a hands-on greenhouse on the school property.

The greenhouse, installed at the school in the spring of 2015, has enabled the students to help in the gardening process of fruits, vegetables and sprouts, which they will harvest to eat later in the year.

“The kids love coming out here and they’re able to study a lot of their science core with the greenhouse,” said Crimson View Elementary Principal Nate Esplin. “We hope to keep it going all the time.”

Each week students are responsible for going out to maintain the greenhouse before recording the progress of the plants in a journal. The school has also set up an aquaponics system with fish to fertilize the plants in a rock section.

According to Crimson View learning coach Tiffany Porter, students have also learned about the features of the greenhouse, including solar power and geo-thermal heat and cooling. Currently, the kindergarten classes are growing genetically-engineered carrots, which are being grown in a ball, to eat at the school’s Thanksgiving feast.

“The greenhouse has been good for them to see the whole process,” Kindergarten teacher Amy MacIntosh said. “We’ve only gone out a couple times because we just got our carrots in and school just started, but they get so excited.”

The greenhouse cost around \$25,000 with the money allocated from a grant written by Porter through the Department of Workforce Services and the state of Utah. The school ended up receiving about \$50,000, meaning educators were able to use the extra funds to purchase additional items such as the curriculum, STEM supplies and a weather station.

Porter noted the greenhouse has encouraged students to better understand STEM by giving them a real-life example of scientific processes while providing them with a platform to experiment with growing plants. The students learn whether plants grow better in aquaponics or regular dirt, what temperatures work best for gardening and how much humidity is needed for what they are working on.

“They can kind of see a timeline too,” Kindergarten teacher Julie Ybright said. “It’s not instant gratification, they get to see the process and how long it takes...the end product is always exciting for them.”

And while the kindergartners are working on growing carrots, the first grade students are growing vegetables like peas and beans that grow above the soil as well as those that grow below the soil, including potatoes and radishes. Students have a picture book that they use alongside this project. Both the second and fourth graders are growing herbs, and third graders are growing snapdragons; fifth graders are growing radishes and dwarf sunflowers. According to Porter, each grade level chose their individual projects in order to enhance their core curriculum.

“We hope to continue growing plants and giving students the opportunity to try new plants,” Porter wrote in an email. “We are planning on growing vegetables to be served in our lunchroom. We feel students who grow their own vegetables would be more willing to try new foods.”

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