



*Connecting our farming heritage with our growing future.*

**2014**

**What a big year!**

**Gardens in 3 school districts**

**1600+ Students Reached**

**12,000+ Education Hours**

**4000+ lbs. of Produce Grown**

**USDA Farm to School Grant**

**Installation of Production Area**

**Heritage Orchard Installation**

**High Tunnel Installation**

**Youth Farmer's Market**

## OUR VISION

Imagine a world where we all know the source of our food and value the farmers and ranchers that grow it for us. Where we all are familiar with innovative water and soil conservation methods that grow our crops and protect our natural resources. Drip systems, mulching, composting, drought-tolerant plant and tree varieties, watershed knowledge and best agricultural practices become like knowing your last name - obvious and easily conveyed. And where every child, family and community member has access to fresh, affordable, local food. Welcome to the Montezuma School to Farm Project's vision for the future of our region.



## OUR MISSION

The Montezuma School to Farm Project unites our local agricultural heritage with our growing future by engaging students at the crossroads of sustainable agriculture, resource conservation, health and economics through educational experiences in outdoor garden classes, on field trips and summer farm camps.



## HOW WE STARTED

Since 2009, the Montezuma School to Farm Project (MSTFP), a program of the Mancos and Dolores Conservation Districts in southwestern Colorado, has focused on providing integrated, hand-on school garden classes in Montezuma County. It began with a farm field trip for 40 Mancos students initiated by an AmeriCorps member in 2009. In the five years since those barn doors first opened to local kids, the program has grown to incorporate three school garden programs, professional School Garden Coordinators, expanded farm field trips, summer farm camps, a 2 acre School Production Area and cutting-edge curriculum for more than 1600 students on a weekly basis.



## WHAT WE DO

The school garden classrooms provide accessible living laboratories where diet/nutrition, active lifestyle, water and soil conservation, and core curriculum lessons intersect. Whether it's writing a poem about a plant's lifecycle, actively learning the science behind seed germination, studying the history of drought in the Southwest, cooking with fresh vegetables, or translating seed packet instructions into Spanish or Navajo, the garden is easily woven into every subject. Classes are an integral part of the school day so that learning in the school garden coincides with important science and math core lessons. Students integrate their learning in a meaningful way because they are an active participant in their learning experiences.

## WHY IT WORKS

Professional School Garden Coordinators placed in each school district are a key ingredient to the program's foundational success. Anyone that has worked a field or planted a garden knows the value of an experienced eye that works the same plot of land year after year, building relationships in the school district with students and staff and throughout the community with businesses, organizations and volunteers alike. School Garden Coordinators provide the stability that allows the programs to thrive. Each coordinator works with a team of AmeriCorps staff to maintain and expand the school gardens, track and implement planting schedules, plan classes with teachers and implement weekly lessons that utilize the Common Core Standards. This type of expert planning provides classes that are integral to the school day, not just an extracurricular activity – a key component to MSTFP's overwhelming success in the region.



## WHERE WE'RE HEADED

### Youth Farmer's Market & Farm Apprentice Program

Youth Farmer's Markets were successfully piloted in 2014 at each of the three school districts. The program will be expanded in 2015 and the Cortez Middle School Production Area will be the site for our Farm Apprentice Program, where students will learn the basics of running their own farmer's market stand. Classes will cover Seed to Market concepts including crop selection, wholesale/retail pricing, marketing techniques, and produce harvesting and preparation.

## Kemper Elementary School

The Kemper Elementary School garden was established in 2012 by two teachers. The Montezuma School to Farm Project recently partnered with the school to provide a part-time garden coordinator and funding for supplies to expand the current program and outdoor classroom. Students and teachers will play a key role in the planning of the school garden and will have access to MSTFP curriculum through weekly classes. Projects for the first year will include adding perennial berry crops, benches for seating and storage, a shade ramada and a tool shed.





## Cortez Middle School Production Area

The Cortez Middle School Production Area was established in 2014. Students grafted and planted out 50 heritage fruit trees on school grounds and also planted and harvested over 2,000 lbs. of annual row crops. Students of the Industrial Tech class designed and built a garden shed and benches. A high tunnel was also installed.

In 2015, there are plans to add more heritage fruit trees and an additional perennial fruit and berry area. The area of row crops is expected to double. All of the food that is produced through the CMS Production Area is harvested by students and used for cooking classes, taste testings, school cafeteria lunches and the Youth Farmer's Markets on and off campus.

## Mancos & Dolores Garden Expansions

As both schools enter their fourth growing season, they find innovative ways to maximize space, minimize water consumption and increase student participation. The Mancos garden is growing up! The students will help install vertical garden beds on the baseball backstop as a part of a community art installation that celebrates our local pollinators: bees, bats, birds and butterflies. The vertical beds will showcase food-producing plants that love to climb, like grapes, or love to spread, like strawberries.

The Dolores garden is installing a 200 gallon aquaponics system in the middle school. An indoor aquaponics lab will allow for more educational opportunities and winter production. The woodshop class is busy constructing the grow bed frames and the 7th grade students are beginning to study the minimal water needs of such a system.



## Drought Lab Curriculum Manual

Having received support from the Colorado State Conservation Board, MSTFP is publishing a Drought Lab Curriculum Manual for grades 6 - 8. This manual will provide teachers and school garden programs across the region with step by step, proven, integrated lessons that educate students through experiential garden education lessons that build in complexity through each grade. This manual will integrate Common Core Standards into each lesson, offering teachers the opportunity to utilize the living systems garden classroom to teach drought resilience concepts that are vital to the future of our region.

## Staff

**Sarah Syverson**, Program Director

**Erin Bohm**, Mancos School Garden Coordinator & Education Manager

**Megan Tallmadge**, Dolores School Garden Coordinator & Production Manager

**Tyler Hoyt**, Cortez Middle School Garden Coordinator

**Danyel Mezzanatto**, Cortez Production Area Coordinator & Cortez Elementary School Gardens Coordinator

**Stacy Armbruster**, Direct Service AmeriCorps

**Kelli Meeker**, Direct Service AmeriCorps

**Christine Foote**, AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA

### Thank you to the following local support:

- City of Cortez
- Town of Mancos
- Tierra Madre Herbs
- Cliffrose Garden Center and Gifts
- First Southwest Bank
- Mancos Valley Resources
- Kiwanis Club of Mesa Verde
- Dolores Rotary Club
- Dolores Conservation District
- Coutts & Clark Western Foundation
- Mancos, Dolores and Cortez School Districts

## Board Members

### Mancos Conservation District Governing Board:

Eldon Simmons, President

Bob Becker, Vice President

Terry Moores, Secretary/Treasurer

Ben Wolcott, Board Member

Nancy Babbs, Board Member

Travis Custer, Board Member

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Kim Lindgren, Producer

Shirley Tourjee, Teacher

Brett LeCompt, Builder/Business Owner

Carol Mehesy, School District Administrator

Bob Becker, MCD Liaison

## Contact Us!

For more information, contact:  
**Sarah Syverson, MSTFP Director**

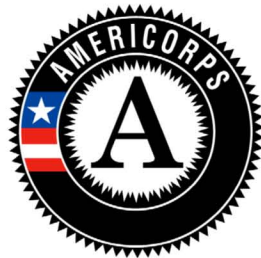
Phone: 970-903-8831

Email: [syversonsarah@yahoo.com](mailto:syversonsarah@yahoo.com)

Mailing address: PO Box #694 Mancos, CO 81328

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