

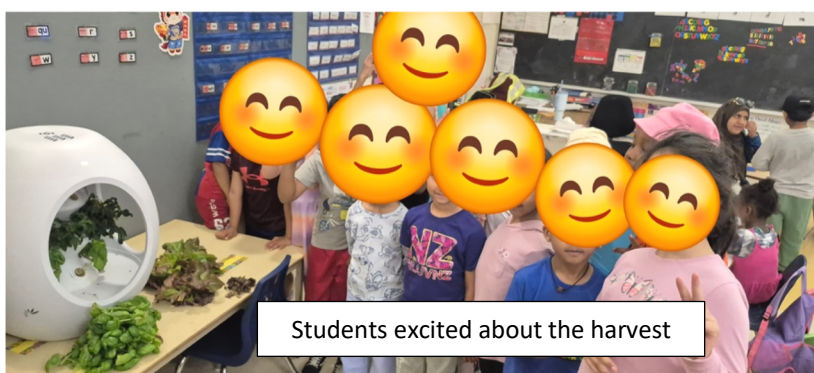


Stories of Climate Change Education

Toronto District School Board - Climate Literacy & Leadership Program 2026

We Only Take Care of What We Connect With: Food Connects Us

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Grade 1/2



Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Use their five senses to explore and describe different foods (how they look, smell, taste, feel, and sound).
- Explain that many of our foods come from plants and identify what plants need to grow (sunlight, air, and water).
- Recognize that different communities and cultures eat different kinds of foods and describe some examples.
- Identify and learn about the four sacred medicines (tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweetgrass) and understand that they are used with respect in Indigenous traditions.
- Describe the Three Sisters (corn, beans, and squash) and explain how they grow together and support each other.
- Explore food and nature through outdoor learning experiences (e.g., observing plants, gardening, or identifying edible plants in the environment).

Climate Concepts:

Relationships and Interconnection: Food connects us to the land, to each other, and to all living things; caring for these relationships helps sustain life.

Food, Choice, and Climate Action: The food we eat comes from nature, and our choices (growing, sharing, reducing waste) can help protect the Earth and support our communities.

Respect, Responsibility, and Indigenous Knowledge: Indigenous teachings and diverse cultural practices show us how to respect, thank, and care for the land and food systems.

Care for Living Systems: All living things have value; we can restore, conserve, and protect nature by acting with empathy, responsibility, and cooperation.

Learning Activities:

Collaborative Inquiry Question: *How might I help students understand that food is much more than filling our tummy and making us happy? How can they begin to see that food is a feeling, an expression, a gift from the land, and also that food is connected to the climate and the health of our Earth?*

Lesson 1: The Five Senses and the Gifts of Mother Earth

Book: "Smudging in the Classroom" by Sandra Samatte

Students explored a cedar sprig using their five senses and learned about its role as a Sacred Medicine. They were introduced to the Four Sacred Medicines and created a Medicine Wheel to show their meanings and connections to the four directions. Students then participated in a mindful cedar tea tasting, focusing on smell, taste, and warmth while reflecting on gratitude for the land. The lesson ended with a discussion about reciprocity and ways to care for and give back to the Earth.

In this lesson, students deepened their understanding of how their five senses can be used to explore and make personal connections to the plants known as the Four Sacred Medicines in Anishinaabe culture. Learning about the traditional teachings and respectful practices surrounding the medicines helped students reflect on the importance of mindfulness, gratitude, and respect for nature. Throughout this lesson, students were encouraged to practice self-awareness, appreciation of cultural knowledge and care for the world around them.

Lesson 2: Food Is More Than Eating

Books: "Fry Bread" by Kevin Noble Maillard; "Soup's On! Around the World" by Denyse Waissbluth

Students began by sharing their favourite foods and discussing how food makes people feel. Through stories, they explored Indigenous perspectives of food as a gift connected to land, family, and culture. Students learned where food comes from and why caring for the Earth matters. They then created a drawing and sentence to express what food means to them and shared their thinking in a circle.

By exploring our relationships to food and food systems students recognized that food is connected to our identities, feelings, relationships, culture, and the natural environment. Learning about Indigenous food practices of gratitude, and respect for the land, gave students opportunities to consider how might we care for the sources of our food to support sustainability and reconciliation.

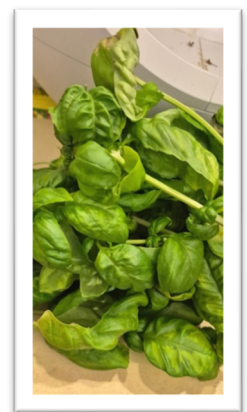
Lesson 3: The Three Sisters: Food as a Gift from the Land

Students explored corn, beans, and squash and identified other foods that come from plants. They listened to the story of the Three Sisters and learned how these plants support one another. Students discussed how food connects to relationships, the land, and environmental care, then created a drawing of a Three Sisters garden and shared their ideas in a circle. Students will be participating in planting a garden in mid-June.

This lesson allowed students to consider and reflect on the interconnectedness of plants, people, and the land from the story of the Three Sisters and how these teachings inspire us to practice cooperation, gratitude, and environmental stewardship.



Students used playdoh to make their favourite foods



Our 1st harvest (basil leaves and lettuce) from our classroom indoor planter.

Lessons Learned:

- I learnt how to help young students connect climate change to everyday life by showing how clean air, water, and healthy soil directly support the food they eat and the plants that grow.
- I developed strategies to teach that caring for the Earth is a form of climate action, using simple ideas like reducing pollution, respecting the land, and protecting natural resources.
- I saw how Indigenous teachings about reciprocity and the Three Sisters can frame climate education through relationships, cooperation, and balance in nature.
- I learnt that hands-on, story-based learning helps students build early awareness of environmental stewardship and understand that their choices can support or harm the planet.

Key Resources:

- Smudging in the Classroom, by Sandra Samatte
- Soups on, Around the World by Denyse Waissbluth
- Fry Bread by Kevin Noble Maillard
- Moving Reconciliation Forward In the Classroom- Lesson Plans from the Downie & Wenjack Fund e.g., The Four Sacred Medicines, Indigenous Food, Identity and Sustainability| <https://downiewenjack.ca/our-work/lesson-plans/>