

### *~ Chicago Park School Garden ~ Garden #3*

During the 2022-23 school year, the Chicago Park Farm and School Garden was established with the help of parent donations, the Master Gardener Program, local businesses and a one-time Covid funding of \$100,000. The 1/2 acre garden grows primarily vegetables and herbs, using about 70% at the school and selling 30% to students' families. With the help of "Farmer Gabby," a school parent and paid employee for the school garden, approximately 175 students, TK through 8th grade, work two days a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, in their "Garden Class." With two Giant Flemish bunnies on hand, Elsa and Cinnamon, students are also taught about the breeding of bunnies. With the 12 chickens in the adjacent coop, second graders have a "Life Cycle" class, learning about the development from egg to the hatching of chicks.

The garden is plentiful with lettuce, tomatoes, cabbage, onions, garlic and pumpkins, which become very popular with students in October, as well as an assortment of berries, including strawberries and thornless blackberries. A greenhouse, complete with solar panels and an automatic venting system, houses starter plants and vegetables. Irrigation of the garden is all on automatic timers.

The Cattle Panel Trellis "tunnels," were purchased by families and are used to separate vegetable rows and space efficiency, making the row crops easier to harvest. Flowers are also grown as insect repellent as well as bouquets that students pick for their classrooms. There's an herb garden which 7th graders work, tying into their Medieval Studies curriculum, using the herbs for medieval teas.

According to Superintendent and Principal Katie Kohler, a Master Gardener herself, future plans include developing a small pond to teach Aquaponics as well as planting a small orchard behind the school. The hope one day, she says, would be to sell a good variety of the school's harvest to Nevada County's local Community Roots program, whose mission is to ensure that every student in Nevada County has access to nutritious, scratch-made meals prepared with fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

Most importantly, what Principal Kohler would like the community to know about the garden, "is that we get to show off the kids' hard work and effort," she says.

"They're doing cool things here . . . and it's not perfection! They're gonna make mistakes, which is also how they learn."