



ENVIRONMENTAL
LITERACY AND
SUSTAINABILITY
INITIATIVE
San Mateo County Office of Education

Sustainable and Climate Resilient Schools Challenge 2022-2023

Manuel F. Cunha Intermediate School

Cabrillo Unified School District



Food Systems and Land-Based Ecosystems

Level: Full

Pathway: Curriculum



Through the Agricultural Science elective, Cunha Intermediate School teacher Sonia Myers has helped create the Little Cunha Farm. Students can investigate what farming looks like and the role local farmers play in producing sustainable foods, all the while combating climate change. Students draw relationships between human populations, food production, and soil health. Students and staff have raised six chickens, tended to garden beds, acquired a commercial-sized hydroponic growing system, and had pathways built around the 15,000 square foot farm, making it accessible for all students. The Little Cunha Farm has opened up to other classes including Special Education, where students have used the space to relax and play with the chickens, and one of the ELD classes, who used the eggs from chickens to make breakfast sandwiches.

At the end of each term, students complete a solutionary project. Cunha's small farm is the result of a few students putting together a presentation explaining the importance of having a larger space in which to learn. A group of students also led the charge to get a tri-bin waste system on campus. One student petitioned for proper pathways after seeing his friend struggle to get around the farm in his wheelchair. Another group of students advocated for chicken therapy, where students can play with the chickens if they need a place to chill. Lastly, they ran a fundraiser selling t-shirts and sweatshirts in order to put money back into the program.

When this vision started, it was a 6th grade elective. In the 2023-2024 school year the program will be a full fledged program at Cunha Intermediate School with over 200+ students in 6th-8th grade having the opportunity to take the class and engage in the farm. The farm will be established by Fall, enabling all teachers to use the space for their classes. In the following school year, students will be working with the Coastside Farmers Market founder to learn about the business of agriculture. Finally, Cunha is also in the very beginning stages of transforming the lawns at the front of the school into community gardens.