

PLANTS, POLLINATORS, AND PRODUCE: A HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR KIDS

Sophia Stromberg, Extension Intern, FHSN
Nicole Natter, Extension Intern, MIP
Chris Crouse, Clear Creek County Extension Director, 4-H
 Agent and COVID Public Information Officer
Elizabeth P. Ryan, CSU Associate Professor, Dept of
 Environmental and Radiological Science, Advisor

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Today's children are growing up in a society burdened with many environmental, physiological, and psychological challenges, many of which are already starting to affect the younger generations. Childhood obesity has been steadily on the rise, with the most recent CDC report citing 14.4 million children and adolescents are currently obese in the US. Mental health concerns, including depression, anxiety, and behavioral disturbances are also on the rise, and it is estimated that 1 in 6 children are afflicted with these conditions. Apart from health issues, environmental concerns loom over the younger generations, threatening severe weather changes and natural disasters. Preserving the health of our children and our world is critical, and it begins with encouraging wholesome practices from an early age. Towards this effort, we engaged with following institutions throughout this internship:

4-H Youth Development

4-H is a nationwide program that seeks to educate kids through community engagement, hands-on learning, and peer collaboration. The topics covered in 4-H curricula typically focus on promoting health and wellness, engaging with the outdoors, and inclusion/diversity.

Clear Creek County Kidz Korner Summer Camp

Each year, the Clear Creek County Recreation Center organizes a summer-long program for school-aged children. Every week, the kids engage in interactive, fun, and educational activities. In partnership with 4-H, the kids participate in creating a community garden, which they are responsible for taking care of throughout the summer.



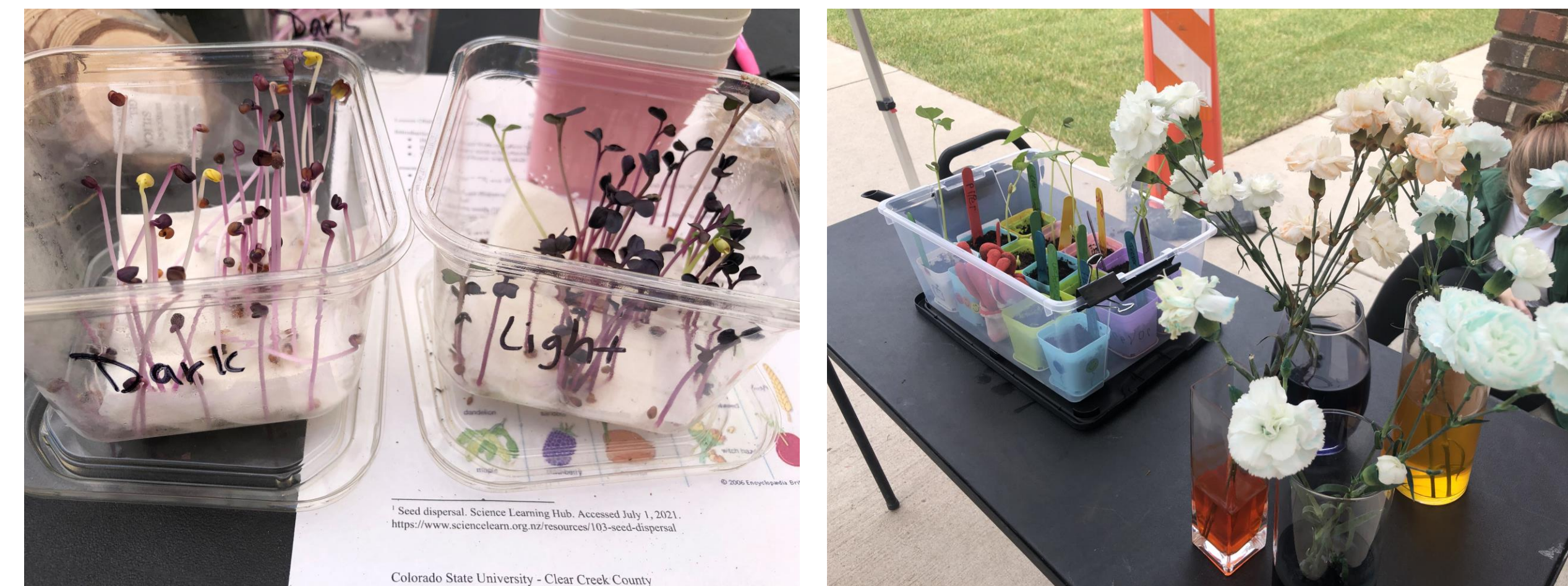
INTERNSHIP GOALS

1. To encourage healthy and sustainable living practices in children. Towards this effort, children will engage in creating a community garden and will learn about the environmental conditions necessary for plant growth.
2. To develop cooperation and creativity. Children will engage in weekly hands-on crafts and peer discussions.

INTERNSHIP ACTIVITIES

Lesson Plans and Learning Activities

- Created short lessons about plant growth, optimal plant environments, ecosystems, pollination, and the health benefits of eating fruits/vegetables.
- Engaged in hands-on crafts and activities that were tied to the lesson to help deepen the understanding of the topics discussed.
- Encouraged curiosity and scientific reasoning through developing the skills of making predictions and drawing conclusions.



Gardening

- Planted a variety of fruits/vegetables and pollinator plants to teach kids about the responsibilities involved in creating a successful garden.
- Discussed the importance of vegetation in cultivating life on Earth.
- Cultivated an appreciation for the unique mountainous ecosystem and the challenges of gardening at high altitudes.



NEXT STEPS

In preparation for future extension projects with Kidz Korner and 4-H, the lesson plans created during this summer will be shared with Chris Crouse. We hope these lesson plans will provide a starting point for further refinement of the education objectives of this program. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the development of healthier and more sustainable living practices in future attendees of the Kidz Korner program.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Sophia: I am so grateful to have participated in the Kidz Korner program this summer. Preparing the lesson plans each week highlighted the importance of gearing health information to the specific literacy needs of the target population. As an aspiring healthcare professional, this experience clarified the importance of delivering education in a manner that is engaging, relevant, and personable.

Nicole: Working with kids and on the videos has also helped me learn how to convey complex and important topics within the public health sphere to a broader range of people, which I think is vital to anyone who wants to pursue a career in science.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, we would like to thank the children of Kidz Korner for their participation in creating a community garden and for their engagement in the weekly lessons. We so enjoyed hearing their thoughts and questions. Additionally, we would like to thank our mentors for their guidance. Finally, we would like to thank the Clear Creek County Recreation Center and the staff at Kidz Korner for allowing us to participate in their program.

REFERENCES

1. Childhood obesity facts | overweight & obesity | CDC. Published April 5, 2021. Accessed September 20, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html>
2. CDC. Data and statistics on children's mental health | CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Published June 15, 2020. Accessed September 20, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>
3. US EPA O. U. S. Will dramatically cut climate-damaging greenhouse gases with new program aimed at chemicals used in air conditioning, refrigeration. Published September 23, 2021. Accessed September 23, 2021. <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/us-will-dramatically-cut-climate-damaging-greenhouse-gases-new-program-aimed-chemicals>
4. What is 4-H? 4-H. Accessed September 23, 2021. <https://4-h.org/about/what-is-4-h/>
5. Kidz korner summer camp. Accessed September 23, 2021. <http://www.clearcreekrecreation.com/ccrecd/kk-summer-camp.html>