

## **TORTILLA FACTORY (LIFE CYCLE OF CORN)**

*Curriculum for 4th and 5th Grade*

### **OVERVIEW**

Tortilla Factory is a curriculum that explores the life cycle of corn through a collaborative lesson between Health/Spanish/Consumer Science. This program is a hands-on exploration of corn, its cultural history and connections, importance in food and product production, and its life cycle. Cross-curricular experiences in social studies, science, math, Spanish, language arts and health, create an exciting program for students as they discuss those topics and explore the use of simple machines. The culminating experience brings students together to work collaboratively to plant and harvest corn and then, back in the classroom, make tortillas or Johnny cakes, bringing this experience full circle.

### **MASSACHUSETTS EDUCATION FRAMEWORKS**

(please see attached)

### **LESSON OVERVIEW**

In the spring of the fourth grade school year, students will learn about corn, its origins, cultural connections, importance in food and product production, and its life cycle. Group discussions surrounding these topics help to engage children as they participate in hands-on lessons that support these topics. Students will then plant corn in the school garden, working in close collaboration with one another in small groups.

Students write observations and reflections of their experience in journals. In Spanish class, a study of Gary Paulsen's book, "La Tortilleria," supports the concept of the life cycle of corn, from farm to table. Farm vocabulary will be reviewed in Spanish, as well.

In the fall of the fifth grade school year, students will harvest their corn from the school garden, shuck, shell and grind it, as well as, learn about simple machines used in these processes. Close collaboration enables students to see the value of working together to achieve a common goal.

In the classroom, students focus on the process of food production as related to environmental and personal health while reviewing concepts acquired in fourth grade about the study of corn and foods made with corn. Healthy choices for snacks, as well as, safety and personal hygiene when preparing foods are covered. Children then make tortillas or Johnny cakes from the ground corn, with discussion about the nutritional value of products made from corn and other grains.

### **SKILLS AND CONCEPTS**

- \*What is corn?
- \*Origins of corn
- \*Cultural importance/impact of corn
- \*Benefits of corn and grains
- \*Healthy foods/good nutrition
- \*Collaboration/teamwork
- \*Reading and translating Spanish Literature
- \*Writing
- \*Cooking
- \*Satisfaction of physical work
- \*Connection between farming and school/home

**OPTIONAL:** Farm Visit(s) to local farms to assist in further connecting students to the work