

BOY: I found a rock!

LESLIE GUSSIN: Do you want to taste it, Ramon, the basil?

RAMON: No. I tried this bbe before.

LESLIE GUSSIN: Did you like basil? Basil you put in your spaghetti sauce or on a sandwich

RAMON: I like tomato soup.

LESLIE GUSSIN: Is there any-- I see a lot of green tomatoes over, there but I don't see any red ones.
We picked one red on this morning.

RAMON: Yeah. We were looking for one. Ooh!

LESLIE GUSSIN: Dig down and see if you can see worms.

Here at the children's center, we are fortunate that we had raised beds for the children. We have strawberries in one, we have pumpkins growing, we have artichokes and we have tomatoes growing. And I saw that there was a grant offered, so I applied for it and I received the grant to continue with nutrition education. So that required me to do food-- the children could actually eat fruit and vegetables.

And with that money I bought a composter so the children could learn about composting their waste. Or leaves that we rake up or find when we clean out our plants, we'll take the leaves and put them in the compost. And then we also have worms for composting our food that we don't eat. And then from the worms composting we take that dirt and we'll put it in our garden to help our garden grow.

But the children learn so much from gardening. One, we're doing the recycling, and a lot of children here in the valley don't have the opportunity to dig in dirt. They live in apartments, they live in student housing, and for them to see the plants grow is really big for them.

We learn math skills. We measure the plants growing. We count what we are growing. We count the tomatoes we pick. We cut them in half and then we can talk about halves and wholes. We also science with the worms and the bugs we find in the soil. And then nutrition on top of that.

One year we had an abundance of tomatoes, so we made catchup and made our own French fries and the children thought that was great. And we grew salad so then we could make a big salad and we had the children make their own dressing. And of course cooking is always a math experience with measuring and then the science of putting two things together. And the language of the children talking about the food and how it tastes.

So then we're also going into their five senses of taste and sight. And even we could crunch something and talk about how it sounds. And touching the different skins of the melons. Some are smooth, some are rough. So we're really enjoying that.

And the children now are so excited. We have peas growing right now, so all the children, even from other classes, are coming over and telling me, Leslie, come look at this. I've got five different kids today, Leslie, come look. They're showing me the same thing the last child did, showing me the peas growing. So they're all really excited to see how a pea, where it comes from.