

# Collaboration with Flying Pig Farm

## Manitou Springs School District 14

### Manitou Springs, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Manitou Springs School District 14 (MSSD14) prides itself in its ability to create and foster many community partnerships that have positive outcomes for students and families. One such partnership that has really grown during the 2022-2023 school year is a relationship with The Flying Pig Farm. MSSD14 has had an ongoing relationship with Flying Pig Farm as one of the main caretakers, Barak, was an educator in MSSD14 for several years. Barak used the farm as an alternative learning space for his middle school English Language Arts students. Students spent a couple days a week at Flying Pig



Farm for two blocks with the goal of engaging in reading and writing activities as well as carrying out tasks on the farm such as planting and gardening. Now, Barak works on the farm full-time and with this added time more students from MSSD14 have been able to interact with the farm's learning space and make a deep connection to the sourcing of food. Another way MSSD14 has leveraged this partnership is with the mental health team as they are able to take small groups of students and utilize the farm as a regulation space.

The planning and implementation of this practice began with Barak and district leadership. This has since expanded to include educators within all schools in the district. During the 2022-2023 school year, middle school students engaged in field trips and interdisciplinary lessons around the sourcing of food at the Flying Pig Farm. In addition, this natural environment was also used for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) groups to help facilitate student connections. Additional opportunities are offered to families as an extension of the school day through Connect 14 services in MSSD14, an after-school enrichment program.



At the middle school level, quarterly academic assessments are administered to help evaluate the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary practices between the school and the farm. This is an on-going process that allows for collaborative practices to evolve according to the needs of all stakeholders. This collaboration has been gradually building since 2016 and has become a more intentional process with interdisciplinary lessons and curriculum building between district staff, students, and the farm.

For those who would like to utilize a similar collaboration, consider using a phased approach when planning for a community collaboration. In MSSD14, this began with a small class of middle school students and occasional field trips for other students in the district. This has now grown to a more involved process for a variety of middle school students as they engage in on-going interdisciplinary lessons and SEL groups. In addition, the connections within the district have grown to include the Mental Health Team, curriculum building with high school teachers, and more field trips for students at a variety of grade levels.

