



Alaina Pribis, Farm Educator, Queens County Farm, NY

March 2020 Participant – Teaching Food and Nutrition for All

I am relatively new to this field of study and wanted to better understand how kids are learning about nutrition in schools. I graduated last May with a degree in Art History, but quickly realized that I was truly passionate about sustainability and nutrition education. I got a job as an educator at the Queens County Farm soon after moving to New York, and fell in love with this way of informal teaching. Here, I lead kids on daily tours of the farm and teach them about how food is grown and what our animals do for us. Being a farm educator puts me in a rather unique position to talk about nutrition, because food production is happening right in front of students' eyes, and it can be a great tool to help them want to get involved.

I think that nutrition is often introduced to kids in a clinical way, they're taught how many nutrients they should have every day before being told why it's so vital to eat healthy. In teaching this way, students lose that connection to food and instead only focus on the nutrients. Especially in New York City, where many people are far removed from the labor that goes into growing fresh food, it is especially important to highlight the importance of the work that goes into growing the foods that keep us healthy. What I have loved about this course is that it puts such a great emphasis on whole foods and what they can do for our bodies. When you understand why it's important to eat healthy, and realize all the benefits it can have both physically and mentally, you become far more willing to actually stay away from the junk.

We get students from all different boroughs in New York on our farm. Each tour is different, and students always have varying levels of knowledge about farming and sustainability. Something that I have learned in this class, and that I will definitely be using in my next school tour, is how to incorporate different cultures into talking about nutrition. By making specific connections to something a student already knows, or is already passionate about, you can show them the importance of incorporating sustainability into it.

I have really enjoyed this course, and can't wait to get back to the farm so I can put what I've learned to use!