Lessons Learned at Spring Brook Farm
An Evaluation of the Farms For City Kids Program

Presented to:
The Farms for City Kids
Board and Staff

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Introduction

The Farms for City Kids Program

Farms for City Kids is a hands-on experiential educational program for urban students that focuses on imparting life skills and practical learning as students live and work together on an operating dairy farm in southern Vermont. The farm conducts week long residential programs for urban students and day programs for local students.

This evaluation focused on the week-long, residential program. In this program, a group of students lives and eats together for a week in an on-farm dormitory. During the week they are responsible for numerous farm chores, including cleaning barns, feeding and caring for large and small animals, working in the garden, and many other activities. The students also have opportunities to participate in physical activities such as hiking. Dynamic academic lessons are interspersed throughout the experience.

According to farm literature, the intent is “…to reward these children with such lasting values as responsibility, self-confidence and the satisfaction of facing and overcoming challenges. By educating city kids about agriculture, something that is so different from their everyday lives, we hope to make an impression that will last a lifetime.”

Evaluation of Farms for City Kids

In spring 2005, the Farms for City Kids staff approached PEER Associates, Inc. with a request to conduct a program evaluation. PEER began the evaluation process by facilitating a workshop with staff and board members to discuss the purposes of evaluation, design an overall framework for the evaluation, and begin the development of a logic model for the program. This process of logic modeling helped to clarify what the intended outcomes of the program were and how the staff hoped to achieve them. The logic model was later refined with ongoing input from the farm staff. Though the logic model is an evolving tool, a working draft of the Farms for City Kids logic model can be found in Appendix A.

The evaluation was designed based on the ideas organized in the logic model and ongoing conversations with board and staff (see Appendix B for the Evaluation Overview). In order to capture and present a wide variety of data, the evaluation took multiple approaches. The first approach was to analyze existing evaluation data that had been collected by the farm from 2002-2005. The second was to conduct a case study of a single week at the farm. Third, evaluators planned to conduct interviews with a range of teachers and students who had been to the farm. As the evaluation process progressed, staff, board, and evaluators decided to modify the approach, choosing to use surveys rather than interviews in order to contact greater numbers of students and

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1 A logic model is “map” of a program’s theory of change. It articulates the program’s hypothesis, and demonstrates which inputs and activities are used to achieve a series of outcomes. It helps a program identify key areas of strength and weakness, and can help to isolate the most suitable areas for focusing evaluation activities.
teachers. The analysis of these data sources and recommendations derived from that analysis are presented in this Evaluation Portfolio.

**The Evaluation Portfolio**

In order to maximize the flexible utilization of the evaluation findings they are offered here in a portfolio format. Depending on the reader or intended use, sections may be used independently or as a whole. A brief description of the six distinct sections follows:

I. **Executive Summary** – A summary and integrated analysis of the results of the different evaluation activities, including overall conclusions. This section is designed to stand alone from the larger report for dissemination to interested stakeholders.

II. **Case Study of PS 233** – A brief, data-driven narrative tracking the experience of one group of students during their week at the farm.

III. **Pre-Existing Data** – Systematic analysis of previously collected teacher and student surveys, as well as video interviews conducted for promotional materials.

IV. **Teacher And Student Survey Results** – Description and analysis of data from teacher and student surveys administered during 2006.

V. **Recommendations** – Recommendations for program improvements and future or ongoing evaluation efforts.

VI. **Appendices** – Logic model, evaluation overview, survey instruments, and interview guides.
Section One:

Farms for City Kids Evaluation Portfolio
Executive Summary
Introduction

Farms for City Kids is a hands-on experiential educational program for urban students that focuses on imparting life skills and practical learning as students live and work together on an operating dairy farm. The farm conducts week long residential programs for urban students, as well as day programs for local students.

This evaluation focused on the week-long, residential program. In this program, a group of students lives and eats together for a week in an on-farm dormitory. During the week they are responsible for numerous farm chores, including cleaning barns, feeding and caring for large and small animals, working in the garden, and many other activities. The students also have opportunities to participate in physical activities such as hiking. Dynamic academic lessons are interspersed throughout the experience.

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Evaluation Process and Methods

In spring 2005, the Farms for City Kids staff approached PEER Associates, Inc. with a request to conduct a program evaluation. PEER began the evaluation process by facilitating a workshop with staff and board members to discuss the purposes of evaluation, design an overall framework for the evaluation, and begin the development of a logic model\(^2\) for the program. This process of logic modeling helped to clarify what the intended outcomes of the program were and how the staff hoped to achieve them. The logic model was later refined with ongoing input from the farm staff. Though the logic model is an evolving tool, a working draft of the Farms for City Kids logic model can be found in Appendix A.

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2002-2005. The second was to conduct a case study of a single week at the farm. Third, evaluators planned to conduct interviews with a range of teachers and students who had been to the farm. As the evaluation process progressed, staff, board, and evaluators decided to modify the approach, choosing to use surveys rather than interviews in order to contact greater numbers of students and teachers. The analysis of these data sources and recommendations derived from that analysis are presented in this Evaluation Portfolio.

This summary report provides a broad overview and synthesis of the findings from the following sources:

- Interviews with 8 staff members, 17 students, and 2 teachers at the farm;
- 17 Pre- and post-surveys of one group of students;
- 125 teacher surveys collected at the farm from 2002-2005;
- 669 student surveys collected at the farm from 2003-2004;
- Student and teacher video interviews collected as part of a fundraising campaign;
- 35 teacher surveys from 2006; and
- 162 student surveys from 2006.

Findings and Discussion

The intention of the week-long farm program is to provide the students with a powerful hands-on experience that offers them numerous opportunities to develop personally, socially, and intellectually. The farm creates a safe environment where students work cooperatively and succeed repeatedly in authentic agricultural endeavors that yield tangible and skill-building results. The evaluation data gathered from a wide variety of sources detailed above demonstrate that the program is succeeding in many ways at achieving the following outcomes:

- increased self-confidence and self-esteem;
- improved cooperation, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills;
- appreciation and respect for farm animals;
- respect for each other and their teachers;
- understanding and appreciation of agriculture and the natural environment; and
- appreciation of a healthy lifestyle.

A succinct summary of the findings from each source is presented, followed by brief discussion synthesizing the findings.

Case study

The case study followed one group of students through their experience at the farm, collecting data at various times and through various methods. For the reader unfamiliar with the program, the case study provides a concrete, story-like context for understanding the program outcomes described in the pre-existing and current survey data sets. Furthermore, the teacher, staff, and evaluator observations as well as student voices presented in the case study offer multiple perspectives for the overall evaluation findings.
The case study was designed to focus on three areas: changes in students’ personal and social skills, changes in their attitudes about food and health choices, and changes in their views on the environment. Students completed a survey prior to their arrival, participated in group interviews on their first and final nights at the farm, and completed a survey on their final full day at the farm. Teachers and staff were also interviewed, and filled out observation forms throughout the week. Data were also gleaned from student journals. Seven months later, the case study students and teachers completed surveys as part of a larger evaluation effort.

Evaluators, teachers, and staff observed students adapting to and thriving in the farm environment, overcoming initial fears, and quickly gaining confidence in their daily duties. The teachers offered many insights into the benefits of the program for their students, including improvements to behavior and attitudes. PS 233 students appeared to make more meaningful gains in their personal and social outcomes than in their attitudes and behaviors about healthy choices (such as diet and exercise) and the environment.

Pre-existing student and teacher surveys
As part of an ongoing, internal evaluation effort over numerous years, the Farms for City Kids staff has collected surveys from teachers and students at the end of their farm week. This pre-existing data offered an opportunity to create a preliminary analysis of program impacts before designing new surveys for the evaluation. Although the format and content of these surveys varied over the years, some questions had been consistently asked.

On the teacher surveys, the question most relevant to ongoing outcome evaluation was, ‘What noticeable influence did Spring Brook Farm have on your students, if any?’ 116 teacher responses were coded and refined into the major themes depicted in the pie chart at left and described briefly below:

- 41% of responses indicated that students’ social skills were improved (improved relationships, teamwork, volunteerism, etc.)
- 28% referenced changes to students’ personal skills (self-confidence, self-esteem, responsibility, etc.)
- 21% mentioned that students’ appreciation for agriculture improved (farm knowledge, affinity for animals, rural lifestyles, etc.)
- 5% indicated that students’ appreciation for the environment was enhanced
- 5% of responses included other types of influences on students
On the student surveys, the most relevant question that was available on all of the different survey formats was, “What did you learn about yourself?” 669 student responses were analyzed. The broadness of the question yielded a very wide variety of responses, which were coded, refined, and simplified into the following themes:

- 41% of responses reported **improvements in students’ self-confidence** (statements about abilities to accomplish things such as “I can milk a cow.”)
- 18% noted **increases in self-esteem** (assessments of self-worth such as “I learned I am a really great farmer.”)
- 18% reported an **improved appreciation for agriculture** (farm knowledge, affinity for animals, rural lifestyles, etc.)
- 16% referenced **other personal and social skills** (responsibility, respect, teamwork, perseverance, etc.)
- 7% listed other responses

Although asking different questions, the themes of the responses to the student and teacher surveys are quite comparable and confirm that personal and social development are the most prominent outcomes of the program. Appreciation for and understanding of farming, farm work, and, especially, farm animals clearly emerged as the second most important outcome.

**Video interviews**

In 2005, students and teachers were interviewed (not as part of this evaluation) to capture testimonials for a fundraising video. In order to extract further value from the interviews and to provide additional data for triangulation of overall evaluation findings, student responses to the following relevant questions were analyzed by grouping the responses thematically:

- What do you think is the most important lesson you learned on the farm?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- Why is a program like Farms for City Kids important?
- What is one thing that you do (or feel) differently since you have returned home from the Farm?
- What is something that you or your class can do now to continue using the new behaviors and knowledge that you learned on the Farm?

Analysis of the students’ responses suggests that caring for the farm animals left a strong impression on the students, as it was the most common response to three of the above questions (the most
important lesson learned at the farm—28% of responses; why the program itself is important—44% of responses; and something they felt differently about since returning—37% of responses).

Practicing teamwork also appeared prominently as an important lesson (19% of responses) as well as a lesson learned at the farm that could be transferred back to life in the city (37% of responses).

The responses to “What did you learn about yourself?” were dominated by reflections on self-confidence (79% of responses) and self-esteem (13% of responses).

Cleaning up or protecting the environment was a theme across student responses to multiple questions, but was less prominent than those discussed above.

**Student and teacher surveys**

A new set of written surveys was developed to gather greater detail about the themes that evolved from the analysis of the pre-existing data. Surveys were collected and analyzed from 35 teachers and 162 students.

The first section of the teacher survey consisted of 18 scaled items asking teachers to rate their level of agreement with statements about the impacts they observed on students. Analysis of the responses suggests the following ranking of program impacts on students (note that these responses are presented from greatest to weakest):

1. Improved cooperation and teamwork
2. Increased self-esteem and self-confidence
3. Improved relationships between students
4. Improved student-teacher relationships
5. Improved conflict resolution skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important lesson learned</th>
<th>Percent reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm knowledge</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of animals</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first question on the student survey asked, “What was the most important lesson you learned on the farm?” Distilled into themes (see table at right) it is evident that students are divided between the practical specifics of working on a farm (knowledge, animal care, hard work) and the underlying behaviors they practiced to get the job done (teamwork, responsibility). To clarify the meaning of the table, “22% reporting” means that twenty two percent of the total number of “most important lessons learned” by students pertained to farm knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New abilities and personal qualities discovered at the farm</th>
<th>Percent reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm skills, hard work</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of animals</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills (leadership, teamwork, etc)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked “While you were at the farm, did you discover new abilities or personal qualities?” 90% of students responded that they had. The abilities and qualities they discovered (see table at left) reflect similar themes to those in the question above. A greater percentage of students offered new abilities than personal qualities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal changes from week at Spring Brook Farm</th>
<th>Percent reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changed relationship to animals</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved personal relationships</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater sense of responsibility</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New farm knowledge</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence &amp; self-esteem</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harder worker</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded outlook</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student responses to the question “Do you think your week at Spring Brook Farm changed you in any way?” were less easily synthesized into larger categories (see table at right). The program clearly made an impression on students, as eighty-three percent of students indicated they had changed. Again, the themes are familiar, although this question led some students to remark on improvements in their relationships with their peers.

The recurrence of the same themes across three similar yet differently worded questions (important lessons, new abilities, and personal changes) reinforces the legitimacy of the program impacts apparent in the students.

The details of students’ responses to all of the above questions, combined with the responses to open-ended questions on the teacher surveys provided a rich data set out of which many major themes and sub-themes emerged as program impacts. It should be noted that the following outline does not represent any ranked order.

• **Improved social dynamics**
  - Improved relationships between students (increased individual friendships, group bonding, social mixing and greater acceptance of others, greater teamwork and cooperation, and greater respect for each other)
  - Improved conflict resolution skills
  - Improved student-teacher relationships

• **Students’ personal development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Survey Questions</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think the experience of working in teams at the farm has helped you cooperate or work together more effectively with other kids since the trip?</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that your trip to the farm affected the way you and your classmates get/got along socially?</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think the experience of working in teams at the farm has helped you resolve conflicts more effectively with other kids since the trip?</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your trip to the farm affected the way you get/got along with the teacher you went with?</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increases to students’ self-confidence and self-esteem
Greater willingness to try new things
Greater compassion for animals and others

- **Success for students who struggle academically**

- **Other influences**
  - Broadening of horizons
  - Lesser outcomes (agricultural and environmental awareness, increased personal responsibility, and behavioral improvements)

- **Lasting value of the farm program**

It is evident that the weeklong experience at Spring Brook Farm had numerous positive impacts on the students who participated. Themes emerging from both student and teacher surveys demonstrate that the program is achieving many of its stated goals.

**Synthesis of findings**

Data from the many sources paint a compelling and coherent picture of what is happening at Spring Brook Farm. Similar themes emerged in all of the data sets described above. There is substantial conceptual overlap in the themes, although they are kept separate to help create a more intricate understanding and analysis of the program outcomes. For example, one student stated “I learned how to milk a cow,” which simply suggests that he acquired farm skills. Answering the same question, another student reflected that “I never thought I could milk a cow but I did, and it was cool.” In addition to providing evidence about farm skills, this statement suggests that the student made gains in their self-confidence and felt greater appreciation for farming.

Despite the subtleties of thematically arranging the many observations offered by students and teachers, it is clear that the program is having a number of very important impacts on the students who participate, and on the teachers as well.

Students were experiencing personal growth in a myriad of ways. The most prominent changes appear to be to students’ perceptions of their own abilities, potential, and personal worth. Data also indicated that students develop greater personal responsibility, compassion, and work ethics.

In addition to these personal skills, students were developing socially on a number of fronts. Development of cooperation and teamwork skills was the primary theme in this realm. Other related skills and values that students developed include conflict resolution, respect for others, improved personal friendships, getting closer with their teachers, and bonding as a group.
The farm itself, and especially the animals, made a lasting impression on the program participants. Even when asked how they changed personally, many students offered examples of farm knowledge, and expressed their deep connection with the animals they worked with over the week. Indeed, it was their daily work with animals that provided for many of the gains in self-confidence and self-esteem.

Finally, less prominent outcomes emerged in the realms of environmental stewardship and appreciation for healthy lifestyles. As the evaluation did not focus great attention on these themes, it is unclear how deep or widespread the impacts are in these areas.

Conclusions

Spring Brook Farm is a crucible for change for the students who spend a week there. According to student and teacher accounts, many factors contribute to making the farm week a unique experience that is surprisingly powerful for the students and effective at imparting important life skills. Taken away from home, often for the first time, and put into a challenging yet completely safe environment, students are given the opportunity to assume personal responsibility for difficult, meaningful, real-world tasks at which they can succeed. Guided by their teachers and a supportive farm staff, students try new things and discover that they are capable of accomplishing many things they did not imagine possible. The cooperative atmosphere established through teamwork, and the shared goal of achieving purposeful tasks creates the conditions for each student to feel needed and valued, and to recognize the potential of fellow students.

Healthy self-confidence and self-esteem should develop in the context of the community, not just the individual. By helping the animals, the farm staff, and each other, students feel capable and good about themselves. Their personal successes and strengths benefit the larger whole, and they are recognized for their individual contributions. Becoming valued team and social group members further contributes to feelings of self-worth. For many students this is their first opportunity to make such a significant contribution.

The evaluation data suggests that as the program is currently operating, Spring Brook Farm is making an important difference in the lives of the students who visit there. Great potential may exist to further strengthen and broaden program outcomes. It will be up to the farm staff and board to best determine if changes or additions to the program are warranted.

Selected recommendations

Recommendations are divided into two categories: program recommendations that
stem from teacher comments and evaluator observations, and evaluation recommendations that offer ideas about how to continue to work toward understanding the program and making it as effective as possible. A more detailed and extensive set of recommendations is available in the evaluation portfolio.

**Program recommendations**

Program recommendations are offered with the intention of fostering conversation among the farm staff and board about outcomes of the farm program and how to improve them. In addition to the recommendations the evaluation team generated when analyzing the complete data set, specific recommendations made by teachers who completed surveys are also included. Any quotes used in this section are drawn from the teacher surveys.

**Provide more opportunity for reflection**

By giving the students more time to reflect on their farm experiences, and guiding them through it in an engaging way, students may be able to more explicitly understand the values and skills they are learning at the farm. It was evident in the student evaluations that some students were able to describe what they understood about teamwork, conflict resolution, leadership, and other skills developed through the chores, but that other students did not have either the language or the understanding to explain it well.

**Do more skill building exercises**

Teachers indicated a desire to have more skill building activities and exercises. Teachers clearly felt that time at the farm is valuable, and should be used to maximum effect. The students are evidently in a very receptive state while at the farm, making it a good time to reinforce the lessons they are learning to the strongest degree possible. Teachers suggested team building activities, social skill building evening activities, and problem-solving role playing games.

**Expand the reach of the program with follow up activities**

“My hope has always been that we could somehow expand the experience and follow up with the students who have gone through the program. We need a way for them to reconnect with the experience and reinforce the values and skills they have learned.” This teacher’s comment summarizes the difficulty of instilling lasting values in just five days.

Developing ways to help students keep in touch with the farm and the important lessons, values, and behaviors learned there is perhaps the most important and effective way for the program to make a more lasting impact. A number of possibilities exist for doing this, including:

- compiling ideas from teachers who already do this;
- developing appropriate farm-themed academic lessons and units for teachers;
- offering a professional development workshop that could train teachers in how to effectively translate the farm lessons and experiential learning styles back to their classrooms;
- developing an interactive website useful and interesting enough that students visit it regularly; and
- offering ideas to teachers and parents about providing students with structured chores.
Evaluation recommendations

Evaluation is a reflective practice. With an eye on desired outcomes, program staff can always be asking, “Is what we are doing the best way to meet our goals?” Evaluation recommendations are offered to suggest means by which evaluation can become a part of the organization’s culture, fostering a mindset of continuous program improvement.

Refine the program logic model based on evaluation findings

At the outset of the evaluation, an ambitious and thorough logic model was developed. Given the findings of the evaluation, the logic model should be revisited by program staff and updated to reflect new understanding of program outcomes. The logic model can then be used as a tool to consider where program activity changes might be warranted and where future program evaluation would be most useful.

Continue collecting surveys from students and teachers at the farm

Teacher and student surveys should be revised based on ongoing evaluation needs determined by the farm staff and board. The surveys should be collected regularly at the farm and entered into a database so that farm staff can easily refer to the data and analyze it systematically to inform ongoing program improvements. (Evaluators can assist in developing new surveys and analysis techniques.) In the immediate future, new emphasis should be placed on gathering information useful to fulfilling any of the program recommendations that are deemed worthy of pursuing. Ongoing data analysis could be conducted internally by program staff or by an external evaluator.

Use process evaluation as a tool for new program development

Process evaluation involves examining program planning and delivery activities, and considers how these activities compare with what was intended. Critical to the success of new farm programs will be engaging many stakeholders (including teachers, community partners, school administrators, and program alumni) in the development process. Development of program-specific logic models can also be helpful to clarify the desired inputs, activities, and outcomes of the new programs.
Section Two:

A Week at the Farm
with PS 233
A Case Study
Prelude

A cool October wind blowing across the hilltops at Spring Brook Farm welcomed the bus with seventeen 5th grade students and two teachers from Brooklyn’s PS 233. The students excitedly piled off the bus, exclaimed at their new surroundings, and gathered to meet the farm staff. After a brief introduction to their new home for the week, students loaded their suitcases onto a waiting pickup truck and began the first of many trips on foot from the dairy barn to the dormitory.

Comments overheard by the evaluator reflected the students’ unfamiliarity—and in some cases discomfort—with this new natural environment. Sheltered from the wind at the corner of the barn, a butterfly flitted in and landed on grass. The students were excited to see it, and one asked, “Is it real?” Another student, while rolling her suitcase from the bus to a waiting pickup truck asked, “Why can’t this be paved?”

Through the woods on the way to the dormitory, a student remarked, “If anything comes out of these bushes, I’m running back to the bus!” Other students expressed fears about snakes and wolves.

“Are we gonna milk the cow?” asked one girl. “That’s nasty!” she declared.

So began a typical week with a new batch of urban students at Spring Brook Farm.

Introduction to the Case Study Process

The case study followed one group of students through their experience at the farm, collecting data at various times and through various methods. For the reader unfamiliar with the program, the case study provides a concrete, story-like context for understanding the program outcomes described in the pre-existing and current survey data sets. Furthermore, the teacher, staff, and evaluator observations as well as student voices presented in the case study offer a further point of triangulation for the overall evaluation findings.

The case study was designed to focus on three areas: changes in students’ personal and social skills, changes in their attitudes about food and health choices, and changes in their views on the environment. Students completed a survey prior to their arrival, participated in group interviews on their first and final nights at the farm, and completed a survey on their final full day at the farm. Teachers and staff were also interviewed, and filled out observation forms throughout the week. Data were also gleaned from student journals, and the evaluator observed students participating in a variety of farm activities. Seven months later, the case study students and teachers completed surveys as part of a larger evaluation effort.

Discussion of Findings

Three primary areas of change in students were investigated:
What areas of students’ personal and social skills are being affected, and in what ways? (self-esteem, self-confidence, leadership, cooperative teamwork, conflict resolution)

How have students’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about food and health choices changed?

How have students’ knowledge and attitudes about agriculture, farm animals, and the environment changed?

The discussion of changes to students’ personal and social skills has been left in a chronological format, to preserve the feeling of following the students through their week at the farm. Discussion of key findings about food and health choices, and the environment and agriculture follow the chronological description. A brief summary of data gathered months after the farm trip is also provided.

**Personal growth during a week at the Farm**

Following the students’ week at the farm through interviews, observations, and their journals gives some of the flavor of their personal journey. It is a different experience for each student, but they all seem to take away something positive.

When asked what she thought was the most important thing that the farm experience does for her students, one of the teachers responded that it was “…social development and self-growth. A lot of the students become independent in ways that they weren’t. A lot of them become more confident and their self-esteem is built up.” She added that “the chores and conquering their fears” were big contributing factors for this growth, and explained,

I think they develop a sense of self-worth. They’re doing things and they know they are responsible not only for themselves, but for the animals, and for the plants…they actually change places with the animals. At home, they’re the “animal in the barn” with parents and teachers doing things for them. Here, they’re the adult, because now the animals are depending on them.

The teacher also described how the farm provides a good environment for students to work on their conflict resolution skills:

In their own environment they seem always, unfortunately, to be quicker to use their hands to handle their problems. They also have more children telling them to do the wrong things. Here, they know that there are strong and strict consequences for their actions, and in a smaller group, it’s easier to encourage them to talk it out, to work it out.

**First impressions, concerns, and goals for the week**

Insights into the students’ first impressions of the farm were gathered from their journals and during interviews the night of their arrival. Their comments reflected a mix of excitement, trepidation, and openness to the new experience.

In their journals a few students wrote of their excitement and enthusiasm about arriving at the farm. About his arrival at the farm, a particularly upbeat student wrote, “I was very excited, and joy just
came to my heart. I was cold but happy. I know we are going to have a good and hard working
time.”

One student found some prior concerns about the farm to be unfounded:

I thought there would be animals running around with no control, but the animals and
people are really friendly. Even if you have no clue who they are, you just wave at each other.
Really friendly. You can’t find people like that in New York. They would look at you like you
are a mad person.

Most of the students had never been to a farm before, or seen or touched any of the farm animals,
and there was some nervousness about this. One student wrote, “I totally freaked out! The cows
frightened me the most.” Though not as strongly, a number of students echoed this type of
sentiment. “A lot of them come with fears,” their teacher remarked. When asked the first night what
they thought they would miss while at the farm, most students mentioned family, television, and
video games. Some were worried about the darkness, the sounds of animals, and the food.

The students’ first journal entries reflect many positive aspirations for the week. While some
students hoped to overcome farm-specific fears such as “…to touch a full grown cow,” many
enumerated goals related to positive social behaviors, such as teamwork, cooperation, hard work,
and respect. Examples of these aspirations included:

“Work as a team, go for the job you think is hard, never quit.”
“I want to be the girl that helps everybody on the farm.”
“Work hard on every chore, never quit, stay healthy and have fun.”
“Be brave, behave, be nice, cooperate, open up.”

Getting into the swing of things

By the second and third days, most of the students seemed to be getting the hang of the chores,
getting comfortable with their rural surrounding, getting to know each other, and settling into the
farm routines.

Overcoming fears and getting comfortable

Many students overcame their initial fears the first time they got into the barn for chores. As one
student wrote, “I was nervous about cows and bulls…but when I did those chores and experienced
those things I never got nervous anymore.” A staff member reported that “[Student] said she had
overcome her fear of chickens by coming to the farm.”

During their first day on the farm, students were observed shrieking and shouting when they first
encountered fresh cow manure. According to observations made later by the farm staff, many
students overcame their anxiety about manure:

One night following chores, I had a group of kids walking behind the dairy barn, where it is
wet, muddy, and full of manure. One boy decided to walk right through the deepest, worst
part of the mud, and [student] followed him. Her boot got stuck in the mud and she got
mud and manure all over her foot. When I asked her how her foot was, she said, ‘Fine.’ I was
shocked that kids who were timid about manure at the beginning of the week had no
problem walking through probably the grossest part of the farm and enjoying it. That was their way of saying, ‘Hey, look at me, I’m not afraid to get dirty!’

Another staff member told of a student falling into heaps of manure in the heifer barn and still finishing the job.

Enjoying the farm and gaining skills
In their journals on the second day, students wrote about how they had enjoyed their chores, including feeding the calves, milking the cows, harvesting zucchini, onions, and potatoes in the garden, and making cookies in the kitchen. On the third day students described other new experiences like cleaning out pumpkin seeds, making salsa from fresh garden ingredients, picking flowers, and collecting eggs.

Prompted to write about what they had learned during the day, students related basic farm knowledge such as, “Pigs don’t like orange peels,” “Cows eat with their tongues, but they don’t eat your hand,” and deeper lessons like, “I learned to be gentle with farm animals because they have feelings too.”

Some students reflected on their roles as farmhands that day, writing, “If there are no kids or a lot of farmers around, the animals won’t get the love, care, and respect that they need,” and, “It is good to work hard, finish chores, and follow directions.” One student was overheard saying, “Being a farmer is hard, but fun.” Two other students agreed.

A staff member observed students getting comfortable and confident with the work, noting that “Every time they feed bull calves out of the bottle I’ve told kids they were doing a great job and they say, ‘Yeah, I know,’ or ‘I thought it would be harder.’”

The PS 233 group was lucky enough to witness the birth of a new calf. The students were full of questions like, “How do you know when a cow is ready to have a baby?” and “What is all that other stuff coming out of the mom and what is it for?” One asked, “Can we sleep here with Frances (the new calf) tonight to make sure he’s OK?” Other students remarked, “I can’t believe he can stand up so soon,” and, “I didn’t know that a mom licks her baby to clean it.” This dramatic and novel experience clearly prompted awe, wonder, and reflection, and left a lasting impression.

Making friends, working together
Teamwork is an integral part of the farm experience, and the staff observed numerous instances of the students working well together. As a chronicle of this type of cooperation, staff recorded the following student quotes:

“It’s easier if we work together.”
“Here, [student], let me help you.”
“Hey [student], it’s easier if you do it like this.”
“I’ll push the wheelbarrow if you keep making a pile while I’m gone.”

Another staff member noticed students helping each other with physically demanding chores, writing, “Many kids tried to pick up a hay bale by themselves but couldn’t lift it over the bar to throw it down the hole. Once others saw their teammate struggling, they rushed to lend a hand.” Similarly, one of the teachers related a story about two students working together (pseudonyms have been used for confidentiality):
I was looking at T today at the table where they were doing their work, and M—he's in Special Ed.—he's a little slower. T just decided, 'I'm going to help this kid.' And I didn't get involved, I just listened. And I heard him, he's like, 'No, no, no, no, watch, watch. You gotta do this. Okay, here…no, no, no, don't stop, you're doing it right. You're doing right.' So M kept going, and finally when he finished whatever it was that T showed him, T turns around to him, and says, 'Okay, now the next thing you have to do is this.' And he was just taking it very calmly, and whispering like he didn't want anyone to know, but he took it upon himself. M didn’t ask him. T just took it upon himself to help M get the job done.

When asked if that was a dynamic the teacher had seen before, she responded,

No, no, not at all, not at all. And unlike M even, to be responsive to it, because he's usually the child who, when you help him, he's like, 'I know, I know. I got it, I got it.' And it was great just to see these two completely different personalities. They just meshed. T decided to help. M knew he needed this help, and he accepted it. And together they got it done.

According to the teacher, working and living together on the farm establishes new friendships among students, and improves and deepens relationships between students and teachers, as illustrated in the following comments:

When they come here, there is no clique. Everybody is friends and they go back to school, and they continue their family tie, that brotherhood and sisterhood that they establish here…Children who don’t even know each other's name, because they’re not in the same class, they are interacting as if they’ve been friends forever.

It really gives them a chance to see the teachers outside…not acting like a teacher. They still respect you as a teacher, but they can see you as more of a friend than they did at school. And it just lets us let our hair down and enjoy the kids on a different level. I think they open up to us more, in a more private and personal way…. I find that the ones who come here, they always feel so much closer to the teacher.

The farm staff also observed examples of students expressing appreciation for each other:

In the kitchen a couple of the boys were talking about a game they played. One of the boys and another girl tied and both got a prize. Two of the boys were saying how much she ‘really deserved’ her prize and how good she had done at the game. They were really praising her, without any prompting.

As the week progressed, the students developed a constructive community, working together, looking out for each other, and persevering to get their jobs done.

**Looking back on the week**

On the eve of their departure from the farm, the students were clearly comfortable, well adjusted and thriving at the farm. Many students had come to favor certain chores, and it seemed that all had bonded with a specific calf. Many knew the names and traits of all the calves. All the students were deeply impressed with witnessing the birth of the new calf, and one student remarked that “The
most important thing I saw was the birth of a calf. It was good, kind of shocking. That was my first time seeing anything being born.”

During the end-of-the-week interviews, students were reminded of what they had said they would miss during the beginning-of-the-week interviews, and were asked how that went for them. One student said that he was ready to see their parents, but that he felt good about being away from home for so long. Another student said she was ready to go home because “I am missing my show right now.” For the most part, however, students did not seem to care that they had missed any of their favorite shows. “I would rather do stuff on the farm than watch TV,” one student said.

This sentiment was echoed by the majority of the students, who expressed great interest in staying longer at the farm. When asked how much longer, enthusiastic responses included: “A year!” “Two years!” “I’ll say five months,” and “Nine months.” One student felt sure that she “…could handle missing my family if I stayed a long time. I’d talk to my mom on the phone.”

One student expressed hopes of returning, remarking, “I hope that other grades get to do this. I’d like to come back again. I’ll be even stronger.” When asked what had been the hardest activity of the week, students spoke confidently about their physical efforts. “Nothing was hard!,” exclaimed one student. Many students remarked about the dirty and challenging task of shoveling manure out of the heifer barn. Completion of these tasks left the students satisfied with their accomplishments. “At the end you felt good about yourself,” said one student. Another added, “I know I can hike. It feels good knowing that.”

Asked to reflect on whether the farm experience had changed them at all, or what they had learned about themselves, the students had a variety of answers, including:

“I changed my selfishness. I share more.” (friends expressed agreement)
“I changed how I work in a team. It felt funnier before, not as comfortable.”
“I think I got stronger and faster.”
“I got to know people and make new friends.”
“At first I was afraid of big animals, and afraid to look at a cow, but I did it.”

For many of the students, the farm week was an unfamiliar and demanding, but skill-building and rewarding experience. Faced with new challenges but guided toward success by their teachers and the farm staff, the students seemed to grow personally in many ways, ranging from how brave they felt around animals to how much stronger they felt they had become.

Healthy choices: food and exercise

Another theme that evaluators explored during the PS 233 week was the students’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about food and health choices such as exercise. Several survey questions and the student interviews briefly explored these topics with the students.

Between the question on the written survey and what students reported during interviews, the group seemed to generally be enjoying a healthy diet prior to the farm experience. While fried foods were mentioned by some, when asked about their favorite foods and foods they would enjoy eating, the majority of students offered such things as “curry chicken and white rice,” “veggie burger, mashed potato and Sprite,” and, “a nice creamy clam chowder with a little bit of spiciness.” Asked the same question at the end of the week, answers were similar.
While it does not appear that the farm experience changed students’ attitudes about food choices, a number of positive things were observed during the week by the farm staff:

- Students tried new foods and reported being more willing to try new foods.
- Students appreciated eating fresh foods directly out of the garden, such as tomatoes with basil, and sunflower seeds right from the flower.
- Students better understand how much work it takes to make food.
- Students were eating fruit during meals.

Farm staff also overheard the following remarks from students:

- “This is the best food I’ve ever had.”
- “This is so much better than school food.”
- “It’s great! [the pizza] And the vegetables are from the garden.”
- “Farm food is good. I wish school lunches were this good.”
- “My mom never lets me in the kitchen. I’m really enjoying getting to cook.”

All of the students reported that it was fine not having any junk food during the week, but most were looking forward to particular treats such as potato chips, sugar cereal, and pizza. As one student summarized, “We have to eat fast food and unhealthy food once in a while!”

When asked how they felt about all the exercise they had experienced during the week, all the students felt that it had been a positive experience. Some were ready for a break, saying that they had “…enough hiking this week,” but others appeared to be energized by the vigorous activity:

- “In high school if they have track and field I might join.”
- “The racing was fun.”
- “I’d like to have a big hill at school to run down.”
- “When I was younger I used to run fast, but then I lost my will to run. Now I got it back.”
- “I feel stronger and faster.”

There is little doubt that the students physically benefit from a week of ample exercise, healthy meals, plenty of sleep, and fresh air. Indeed, many students expressed appreciation for these healthful elements of the farm trip. The data, however, do not suggest that the experience had significant impact on the students’ attitudes and behaviors about food, and students seemed to be about evenly split with regard to their feelings about exercise.

**Agriculture and the environment**

The pre-post survey indicated that students had made only small increases in their ability to list foods that come from a farm, foods that come from milk, and phases of the life cycle of a dairy cow. Students made greater strides in their understanding of the steps that take milk “from the cow to the cereal bowl.”

In the pre-post interviews, as one measure of their attitudes toward the environment, students were asked how they felt about insects and what they thought the value of the forest might be. Predictably, the students had a generally negative view of insects upon arrival to the farm, with comments such as “hate ‘em,” “despise ‘em,” and “nasty.” During the later interviews, the students
had a more moderate view of insects, calmly commenting that they had observed many insects at the farm, and describing how they had learned more about the benefits of bees.

The students demonstrated impressive knowledge of forests during the arrival interviews, listing what they knew about renewable and non-renewable resources, and the ecological and economic values of forests. One student expressed concerns about the possibility of wild animals in the forest. Another optimistically hoped that “Even though on the farm there is a lot of cow manure, maybe the trees will give us a fresh scent.” In the later interview, students demonstrated new knowledge about the production of maple syrup, and the uses of timber in the local economy.

Though not a typical entry, one student wrote in her journal, “I learned that nature is important because without it you won’t get the smell and sound of forests.” Another was overheard remarking that, “…people should come here to the farm to see all the rocks – they are beautiful.”

Overall, this group of students made relatively small gains in their knowledge of agriculture and the environment. Some students seemed more disposed than others to appreciate the natural setting of the farm.

**Back in Brooklyn**

When asked how the farm experience had translated back to the classroom for the numerous groups she has accompanied in the past, the PS 233 teacher explained,

> It does, a lot of them become more positive…children who were afraid to answer in class, all of a sudden their hands are up. It carries over in their attitude. We had a little boy last year, who was a bit of a behavior problem, consistently, from Kindergarten up. And after being here, this little boy was just a whole new person. Once in a while when he kind of slid, I said “remember the farm.” And that was all I had to tell him. It was like, “Okay.” And he stopped.

She added that,

> …other teachers have noticed a difference in their students when they come back from the farm. It’s not just the teacher that they bonded with here, they carry over the new personality and attitude back into the school and the teachers really see a difference.

As asked again seven months later on the written survey specifically about the case study group, the same teacher wrote “Some who lacked confidence in their academic abilities seem to be trying harder and seeing themselves make positive strides.”

The pre-post student surveys administered before arrival at the farm and the night before leaving did not demonstrate statistically significant changes in most areas of the students’ personal and social skills, but these quantitative data do suggest that students felt they had improved in their teamwork and conflict resolution abilities.

The PS 233 students also completed a survey seven months after their farm trip as part of a larger effort surveying all the students that came to the farm in 2005. Their responses are incorporated into the analysis of those surveys, and a brief snapshot is offered here to give a sense of what their impressions were months later.
Almost all of the students described working with the animals as the most important lesson they had learned on the farm, and most listed various animal husbandry skills as new talents they had discovered at the farm. Students listed overcoming fears, helping more with chores at home, and the new found ability to survive without electronic entertainment among the ways the farm experience changed them. Overall the group did not observe much change in their relationships to each other or their teacher, but most remarked that everyone got along well before the trip and had a positive view of their teacher. The students uniformly expressed pride in what they had accomplished during the week, and the majority reported that they had increased their teamwork, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills. The following are some representative quotes from the survey:

“The simple life is really fun.”
“I learned how to take care of animals and not to be scared and try new things.”
“Farming covers a lot of school stuff like social studies, math, and more.”
“At the farm nobody was better than anybody else because we all did the same things for the week.”
“I feel good because I got a special chance that many may not get.”
“We all learned to help out when someone is in need of it.”
“Yes, [resolving conflicts] is easier because we know how to act and work together.”

**Case study summary**

The experience of the PS 233 students is likely to be typical of a week at the farm. While the students appreciated the healthy lifestyle they practiced at the farm, it did not immediately appear that they planned on making changes to their own habits after the experience. However, the PS 233 students reported having a very successful experience at Spring Brook Farm overall. Data from teachers, farm staff, students, and the evaluator's observations suggests they were impacted in many ways, including:

- Gains in self-confidence and self-esteem
- Respect for farm animals and knowledge of their care
- Teamwork and conflict resolution skills
- Greater understanding of agriculture
- Improved attitudes back at school

Evaluators, teachers, and staff observed students adapting to and thriving in the farm environment, overcoming initial fears, and quickly gaining confidence in their daily duties. Given the strength of students’ impressions seven months after their farm visit, it is not difficult to imagine that lessons learned at the farm may persist in students for many years to come.
Section Three:

Pre-Existing Data
Overview of Pre-Existing Data Sources

Farms for City Kids program staff have been actively collecting data from both students and educators for a number of years. In 2003, a summary of the 2003 survey data was presented to the board, but otherwise no systematic examination of the body of pre-existing data has been conducted prior to the current formal evaluation process.

The evaluation team chose to examine the pre-existing data for four reasons. First, the analysis provided preliminary insight into reported program outcomes. Second, the analysis informed the creation of a data-based platform for designing current evaluation instruments. Third, it allowed tailoring of current evaluation instruments toward outcomes of primary interest and usefulness to the staff and board. Finally, the pre-existing data further enriched the overall data set for this evaluation process. The evaluators obtained the written student and educator surveys from 2002-2005 and systematically analyzed the most relevant questions. It is important to note that the format and content of the surveys has evolved over the years, so the same questions have not necessarily been asked year after year. The questions that were analyzed were asked consistently in all the surveys.

In addition to the pre-existing survey data, the evaluators also reviewed and systematically analyzed selected elements of previously conducted video interviews which were intended for use in a fundraising and promotional video. Findings from this investigation are also reported in this section.
Pre-existing teacher surveys

From 2002-2005, 125 educator surveys were gathered, some of which were repeats from teachers who attended the farm more than once during that period. Much of the information on these surveys is focused on logistics, staff performance, activity preferences, and other topics that do not fall into the scope of this evaluation.

The question that was asked most consistently and appeared most likely to yield useful data was: “What noticeable influence did Spring Brook Farm have on your students, if any?” Of the 125 surveys, 116 contained teacher responses to this question. The teachers’ responses were coded according to themes, and the number of times each theme occurred was tallied. The complete results for this question are depicted in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>% of total responses (n=116)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved relationships between students</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased ability to work in a team</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced self-confidence</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation/awareness of rural &amp; agricultural lifestyle</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of physical work</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation/awareness of nature</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased sense of responsibility</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced self-esteem</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased respect for animals</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater willingness to try new things</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in academic skills</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in maturity</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration of greater self control</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving without electronics</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in listening skills</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased sense of independence</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased perseverance</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These themes can be refined into five overarching themes:

- Social skills (improved relationships, teamwork, volunteerism, etc.);
- Personal skills (self-confidence, self-esteem, responsibility, etc.);
- Appreciation for agriculture (farm knowledge, affinity for animals, rural lifestyles, etc.);
- Appreciation for the environment; and
- Other (everything else).

This yields a simpler and clearer overall picture, depicted in the following chart:

**Table: What noticeable influence did Spring Brook Farm have on your students, if any?** (Teacher survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater self-reflection</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater appreciation of teacher for students</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased volunteerism</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger leadership skills</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved outlook on future</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pie Chart: Pre-Existing Teacher Surveys 2002-2005**

- Social Skills: 41%
- Personal Skills: 28%
- Agricultural appreciation: 5%
- Environmental appreciation: 5%
- Other: 21%
Pre-existing student surveys

Although there have been a variety of formats of the student survey, all of the surveys from 2003-2004 asked the question, “What did you learn about yourself?” 669 responses to this question were analyzed in a similar fashion to the question analyzed in the teacher survey.

Given the greater number of surveys and the broadness of the question, a wide scope of themes and sub-themes emerged. A simplified summary of these themes appears below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“What did you learn about yourself?” (Student survey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of or increases to self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of or increases to self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of changes to personal behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings about animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of farming and country life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirming value of teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survival without electronic entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of natural environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to try new things</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To clarify the two top categories, we defined self-esteem as one’s assessment of his or her worth as a person, and self-confidence as belief in one’s ability to accomplish things.

These themes can be refined into five overarching themes:

- Self-confidence (statements about abilities to accomplish things, e.g. “I can milk a cow.”);
- Self-esteem (assessments of self-worth, e.g. “I learned I am a really great farmer.”);
- Appreciation for agriculture (farm knowledge, affinity for animals, rural lifestyles, etc.);
- Other personal and social skills (responsibility, respect, teamwork, perseverance, etc.); and
- Other (everything else).
The chart on the following page depicts the distribution of these themes.

Increase in self-confidence was such an overwhelmingly prominent theme that it is of interest to report the sub-themes within that particular category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>% of total responses (n=275)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can farm, accomplish chores, work hard</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General statements of self-confidence</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I overcame my fear of animals</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can tolerate, handle, work with manure</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can milk a cow</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can wake up or go to sleep early</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am brave</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can be helpful</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can be more responsible</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can hike</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get along with others</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can be a good student</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Video interviews

In 2005, students and teachers were interviewed (not by PEER Associates) in order to capture testimony for a promotional/fundraising video. Given that the large quantity of data collected would be reduced to the most photogenic six minutes, the evaluators decided to extract greater value from the videos by conducting a systematic analysis of the most relevant questions. The rationale for reviewing the raw footage and gathering this data is that it might be useful for providing a further point of triangulation for overall evaluation findings.

The questions most useful to this evaluation were:

- “What do you think is the most important lesson you learned on the farm?”
- “What did you learn about yourself?”
- “Why is a program like Farms for City Kids important?”
- “What is one thing that you do (or feel) differently since you have returned home from the Farm?”
- “What is something that you or your class can do now to continue using the new behaviors and knowledge that you learned on the Farm?”

Thematic summaries of the responses to these questions are offered below. The numbers of responses to each question vary because not all interviewees were asked or responded to the same questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“What do you think is the most important lesson you learned on the farm?” (Student video interview)</th>
<th>% of total responses (n=26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care for animals</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork, hard work</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try hard, be confident</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect the environment</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm lessons are transferable to life</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“What did you learn about yourself?” (Student video interview)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of total responses (n=24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements reflecting enhanced self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements reflecting enhanced self-esteem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Why is a program like Farms for City Kids important?”
(Student video interview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>% of total responses (n=23)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give kids a chance to care for animals</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help city kids appreciate agricultural lifestyle</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give kids a chance to care for the environment</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn values</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“What is one thing that you do (or feel) differently since you have returned home from the Farm?” (Student video interview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>% of total responses (n=19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciate/care more for animals</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do chores/help the family</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't litter/respect the env't</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat differently</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect parents</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“What is something that you or your class can do now to continue using the new behaviors and knowledge that you learned on the Farm?” (Student video interview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>% of total responses (n=22)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help each other more/practice teamwork</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean up the environment</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for animals</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other | 8%
The video interview data suggest that caring for the farm animals left a strong impression on the students. This was students’ most frequent response to three of the interview questions: the most important lesson they learned at the farm, why they think the program itself is important, and something they feel differently about since returning home after the farm visit.

Practicing teamwork also appeared prominently in response to two of the interview questions: the most important lesson they learned at the farm, and something they learned at the farm that could be transferred back to life in the city. Cleaning up or protecting the environment is another theme that appeared across multiple questions. In the realm of personal growth, and increase to self-confidence was the overwhelmingly dominant theme.

As teachers were not interviewed as systematically as the students, their commentaries did not lend themselves well to thematic analysis. There were numerous teacher comments that support the findings of the student interviews, including:

“They really come away with much more than a respect for the animals and respect for themselves. It is a level of self-confidence that they built being at the farm…it gives them a jolt of what they really are capable of doing.”

“My ‘farmers’ are more respectful than everybody else.” (referring to the students who visited the farm vs. those who did not)

“They are gentler, kinder, and more curious, especially about anything that can be related to the farm.”

“Kids give up easily in school but not on farm. They bring this back with them.”

“There is individual empowerment because the group succeeds based on the individuals.”

“Students are different when they came back: better communicators in difficult situations; patience with animals translates to patience with classmates. They are more analytical, and slow down; they are not so quick to react.”

“Any time they can show farm knowledge, they do.”

**Summary of pre-existing data**

Analysis of the pre-existing data provided a clear starting point for understanding the impacts of participants in the Farms for City Kids program. Although a variety of types of questions were examined, many similar themes appeared across the data. Many students’ comments reflected knowledge, respect, and understanding of farm animals, indicating that this aspect of the farm experience perhaps left the most profound impression. The next most prominent themes were increases in personal skills—primarily self-confidence and self-esteem—and increases in social skills, as demonstrated in improved social interaction among students, and increased teamwork abilities.
Section Four:

Student and Teacher Surveys
Teacher and Student Survey Process

To capture the greatest breadth of opinion from students and teachers, written surveys were developed. The focus of these surveys was based on the analysis of selected questions from surveys collected from teachers and students in past years. The analysis of this pre-existing data indicated that the farm program impacted students primarily in two main areas. The realm of social skills included interpersonal relationships, teamwork and cooperation, and conflict resolution. The realm of personal skills included self-confidence and self-esteem. The findings from these previous surveys and Farms for City Kids’ program theories (see Logic Model in Appendix A) jointly informed the development of the new surveys.

The teacher survey consisted of open-ended questions and scaled-answer questions. See Appendix C for the complete surveys. The questions were designed to gather more specific data about the impacts of the farm visit on students. The teacher survey was made available in an online format, and teachers unavailable via email were sent paper copies. Non-respondents received paper surveys by mail, email reminders, and in some cases phone messages reminding them of the survey process. A total of 60 teachers representing 35 urban schools were solicited. This sample represents teachers from all the urban schools who have attended the week-long farm program since 2002. A total of 35 teachers responded, representing a 58% return rate.

The student survey consisted only of open-ended questions, and asked students what they learned on the farm, how the experience affected them, and how they felt about it. Packets of student surveys were sent to all of the 18 urban schools that came to the farm for the week-long program in 2005. The teachers administered the surveys to students and returned them to the evaluators. A total of 161 surveys were returned from 14 schools, thus 78% of attending schools are represented. All data, including quotes, presented in this section are from these current surveys.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The substantial data set provided by the surveys offered a wealth of ideas about the impacts of the farm program. The survey responses were systematically analyzed and organized around the major themes that evolved.

The following five broad themes and their sub-themes are discussed in detail in this section:

- Improved social dynamics
- Students’ personal development
- Success for students who struggle academically
- Other influences
- Lasting value of the farm program
A summary of these findings is presented at the end of this section.³

**Improved social dynamics**

Both teachers and students made a strong case that spending an intensive week working and living together with a common purpose resulted in many changes to the social dynamics among students, and between students and teachers. Improvements to the social dynamic amongst students included deepening existing friendships, making new friends, bonding as a group, mixing social groups, becoming more accepting of each other’s differences, and treating each other with more respect.

By working together in teams, students learned how to cooperate more harmoniously and effectively with each other to achieve common goals, while developing useful teamwork skills and a genuine appreciation for the value of working together. In addition to teamwork, students also appeared to be learning and practicing conflict resolution skills while at the farm.

Teachers reported feeling a greater appreciation for their students after the trip, as well as receiving more respect and cooperation from their students. The students reported having a greater affinity for, deeper personal connections with, and an improved sense of respect for their teachers.

This section is divided into the three themes:

- Improved relationships between students (including friendship, bonding, teamwork, respect);
- Improved conflict resolution skills; and
- Improved student-teacher relationships.

**Improved relationships between students**

“I think that living, working, eating and learning together fosters stability in children’s relationships with one another.” This teacher’s observation summarizes the positive effect that spending a week at the farm can have on students. Improved interpersonal relationships between students can help promote important pro-social skills such as respect for self and others, compassion, problem solving, and positive conflict resolution. The farm experience created an environment where students were both obliged to get to know each other through teamwork, as well as giving them the opportunity to discover each other on their own terms, during free times and as roommates.

³ This report is only intended to comment on findings from surveys conducted with teachers and students, and does not make claims about those findings in connection to the literature on school climate and pro-social behaviors (such as academic achievement, dropout rate, school crime, etc.) There is ample literature, however, that demonstrates connections between these broader conditions and behaviors and the survey findings. It may be warranted to structure future research and evaluation efforts around better understanding the significance of farm outcomes with respect to these important items.
As seen in Survey Question 2 (see graph below) “My students got along with each other better after the farm program than they did before they went”, most teachers agreed that the farm experience had a positive effect on relationships between students.

This finding was consistent with students’ comments. When asked, “Do you think that your trip to the farm affected the way you and your classmates get/got along socially?” 75% of students reported positive changes. Less than 1% reported a negative impact, and of the 25% that reported no change, about 1 in 3 said it was because they already got along well before the trip.

A number of themes emerged related to relationships between students, including:

- Increased individual friendships
- Group bonding
- Social mixing and greater acceptance of others
- Greater teamwork and cooperation
- Greater respect for each other

Notably, teachers and students reported that these improvements in social dynamics often outlived the farm experience itself, helping to improve relationships and classroom environment back home in their school community.

**Increased individual friendships**

Making friends is an essential part of a child’s social development. Friends can help protect a child from social traumas such as teasing and rejection and help a child build a positive self-image. As one student wrote, “I feel like a better person because I made more friends.” The week at Spring Brook Farm offers students a unique environment for making friends with their peers.

A teacher explained that, “When students first arrive at the farm they tend to fall into their ‘school roles.’ Some are outgoing, some are quiet, some are leaders while others don’t take leadership roles, and some are stronger in academics than others. And a short time after being on the farm, they see that their school roles don’t matter.” Taking away the pressures and roles of the school environment creates a safer and more comfortable atmosphere for the students to get to know each other.

Many students reported making new friends and deepening existing friendships while at the farm:
“I met new kids in class and made friends with them while we were at the farm working.”
“I got along with more kids. I got along better with my old friends.”
“I was shy at first then I started talking and I made many friends.”
“Now some of the quiet people in my class are more social and broken out of their shell.”
“It changed how I acted toward some of the girls. I made friends with the girls who were new to my school thanks to Spring Brook Farm.”
“Before I went to the farm I wasn’t outspoken and I didn’t really talk to anybody so it has helped.”

Since the farm trip, one teacher noticed “many terrific changes in these children” with regard to their social development, and a number of teachers mentioned students who came to the farm shy and introverted, and left more open and able to make and maintain friendships. One teacher noticed that “before the trip there were quite a few kids that didn't have many friends in the school and stayed to themselves. Since the trip I see these same kids in the hallway and schoolyard laughing and joking with many new friends.” Another teacher told of “one particular girl who was very shy in school and immediately took on that role at the farm. After spending a short time at the farm, however, she became so comfortable and confident in herself that she was one of the more outgoing students on the trip.” A student wrote that she “made friends with a girl who used to be shy and now isn't anymore.”

A fifth grade teacher recounted the story of a student who made a remarkable turnaround during his week at the farm. He had been

…a depressed, brooding, withdrawn fifth grader without friends at school. In no time at all he connected with the animals, letting the calves suck dry formula from his thumb. He started to open up, come out of his brooding world, and smile. It wasn't long before he started to radiate warmth not only for the farm animals but for his peers and teachers also.

While development of friendships may not on the surface appear to be a major behavioral finding, it is clearly a factor in many of the important changes noted in students such as improved teamwork, conflict resolution, and self-concept.

Group bonding

“I feel that the farm experience really helped them to bond together as a group; they are more cohesive as a result of our week on the farm.”
-Teacher

“We learned how to be a family…We have learned how to take care of each other and love each other.”
-Student

In addition to making friends, another important part of a healthy social development is for children to have a feeling of belonging in their class. As exemplified in the quotes above, many groups do become closer and more inclusive at the farm. Many students wrote about how they felt their school group had bonded together. Typical student comments included, “It brought us together as one class. We got to know each other better,” and, “We all got really close and are really good friends.”
Moreover, teachers reported that the bonds formed at the farm lasted long afterwards. Upon returning to school after the farm trip, reported one teacher, “...the children behaved differently, they were able to relate to each other much better.”

The following two teacher accounts illustrate the lasting value of the group experience:

“...The students all felt they had participated in something very special with each other. During the following years in school, the diverse group of students I took to the farm all maintained their friendship and all distinguished themselves in the willing development of their personal responsibility. They all felt, as well as I did, that we shared a special relationship for having worked together as a team at the farm. It had a marvelous effect.”

“I now teach eighth grade math to the class I brought to the farm 2 years ago. They still talk about it and I’ve had observers of my classroom mention that it’s a really safe, comfortable, cooperative environment, which I attribute in part to the farm trip.”

Social mixing and greater acceptance of others

Often a group at the farm is comprised of different classes, and as in most every student group there are social strata within classes. The cooperative environment promoted at the farm supersedes the competitive environment that often exists socially and academically at school. “Many of the students worked in groups together that normally would not have. These children found a common bond in the activities they had to do,” wrote one teacher. “I think a lot of them realized that kids who they overlooked can often be talented and interesting, and again that's in part a farm-learned lesson,” said another.

Students echoed these sentiments with comments such as these:

“I was not really that close with a lot of kids in my class and I never hung out with them, but since my other friend was not there I started talking to them.”

“We learned how to get along with other kids from different classes.”

“My classmates and I never used to talk to him but now I get along with that person well.”

“Some people in my class I never really talked to, and getting out of school showed me their personality.”

Perhaps this greater exposure to students they would not normally spend time with helped students become more open to each other. “When I had to live under the same roof with them I learned more about them and we forgot about our differences,” wrote one student. Another stated, “We all realized we have something in common.”

Teachers reported that their students’ acceptance of each other had improved too, as seen in their response to Survey Question 9, “The farm program helped my students become more accepting of their classmates’ differences.”

Further supporting the outcome suggested by Survey Question 9 (graph at left), a teacher wrote that,
Our farm trip is open to all fourth and fifth graders, regular education and special education, in our building. The special education population tends to be somewhat marginalized due to their specific needs and/or behaviors. The most dramatic outcome of this farm trip is an outstanding increase in acceptance among the students as well as some wonderful bonds and friendships that are born on the farm.

With many socially unconventional ways to prove themselves, such as shoveling manure, some students found themselves able to improve their standing amongst their peers, as related in this teacher's anecdote:

I loved watching some students who were not previously seen as 'cool' complete some difficult tasks and really earn the respect of some tougher classmates. I had one student who excelled at the hard, tedious task of filling wheelbarrows with manure and transporting it while some other students had a hard time and it really helped them work through conflicts and other bullying type experiences.

While it seems that many students made friends at the farm, there will always be students who are not likely to get along. In a case like this, one teacher described how the farm chores helped some students learn to work together toward common goals despite their differences:

I found that my students were more tolerant of each other and their differences after going to the farm. They also developed a better understanding of the fact that groups usually get more done than individuals. Students focused more on the outcome than on the actual process which may not have been the most agreeable circumstance (for example working with someone they did not like to clean the heifer barn.) They knew that it was a task that had to be done to help the animals and they were able to focus on that instead of who they were working with. This also translated into our class projects. They were able to focus on completing the project and made the most of the positive aspects and strengths of their group members.

The reports of group bonding and greater acceptance of each other suggest that the farm experience helps the students to transcend some of their pre-conceived notions about each other and come together in a way that benefited them as individuals and as a group as well.

Greater teamwork and cooperation

"The students seemed to form a comradeship with each other and a greater confidence not only in themselves, but in their peers. The farm experience helped them to realize that they all have strengths they were never before aware of. The students learned that they and their peers are capable of accomplishing great tasks when they work together as a team."

-Teacher
It comes as no surprise that teamwork is one of the most consistently and frequently mentioned themes across the data. Very few if any of the students that attend the farm program have likely had such an intensive experience of working in teams to tackle unfamiliar, often uncomfortable, and physically demanding tasks. Accomplishment of these tasks would simply not be possible without teamwork, and this appears to leave quite an impression on the students.

94% of teachers “strongly agreed” with the statement “The farm program helped my students learn how to cooperate more with each other.” and 94% “strongly agreed” with the statement “My students learned the value of teamwork at the farm program.” These questions on the teacher survey had the most uniformly positive response of all the survey items.

In addition, when students were asked, “What was the most important lesson you learned at the farm?”, 20% of the answers related to teamwork, making it the one of the most frequently occurring themes of the responses. Typical responses included:

“I learned that if we worked as a team every project that we did went a lot faster.”
“I learned that teamwork is important if you want to get stuff done!”
“It helped me realize you need help in your life and it is better if you have good teamwork skills.”
“It taught me that if you work together and cooperate you can get the job done.”
“I learned that it is more fun when you work together.”

The number of responses similar to this was noteworthy because the question was open-ended and students commented on a very wide variety of lessons ranging from “Don’t step in cow poop,” to “Wake up on time.”

Later in the survey students were specifically asked about teamwork, and 78% of students responded affirmatively to the question, “Do you think the experience of working in teams at the farm has helped you cooperate or work together more effectively with other kids since the trip?”

It seems that the farm experience helped to establish a positive feedback loop: the students formed friendships through working together, and then as friends they were better able to continue working together. “We had to help each other and that builds friendship and character,” wrote one student, and another stated that, “We worked together and that made me better friends with my classmates.” Other students cited these new friendships as a reason for improved cooperation. “A lot of us got to know each other better so we are able to work together more effectively,” wrote one student. “Now I know more people in my school and can talk to them and work better with them,” said another.

Other outcomes that students thought practicing teamwork had helped them with included improved communication skills, better understanding of their fellow students, better self-control, less conflict, and more sharing. These did not emerge as major themes, but were mentioned by a few students each.

A few teachers commented on how the teamwork and cooperation skills their students developed at the farm translated back to the classroom:

“Teamwork was enhanced. Students drew on experiences at the farm and were able to translate them into school projects such as supporting each other, and referring to things that happened on farm, such as ‘Remember what we did at the farm when…? We’ll do that now.’”
“The cooperation factor plays out at school. Many of the children will work together to solve problems and help each other.”

“Students were able to manage tasks without teacher intervention. They were more confident in planning and executing tasks. ‘OK, you get the books, you get the materials, and I’ll read the directions.’”

Greater respect for each other
The experience of working in teams also resulted in students developing greater respect for each other. “We learned to work together, and rely on each other. We also learned to respect each other,” wrote one student. Another student very specifically linked teamwork to greater mutual respect, saying, “I definitely think that working in teams has helped me cooperate and work together more effectively with other kids. We learned to give each other our attention during a lesson in class and to listen to other opinions, not only our own.”

Other students echoed this sentiment, writing that, “Working in teams has affected me and my classmates because we learned how to listen to each others’ ideas and try not to hurt their feelings,” “When they need to say something I let them say it,” and, “Now it is fun being with them because you get to hear different points of view about each other.”

For one student, working together gave a clear insight into differences: “I figured out that not everyone can work as fast or think as fast as other people. I have learned to respect that.”

Teachers also noticed greater respect between students, as evidenced by their agreement with Survey Question 8 (graph above), “My students showed more respect for each other after the farm program than they did before.” 63% of respondents “strongly agreed” and 34% “tended to agree”.

Summary of improved relationships among students
Many students appear to come back from the farm with many new social bonds amongst their peers, and improvements to many essential life skills for living and working with each other individually and in groups.

When asked how the farm experience translated to the classroom, approximately 70% of teachers commented in some way about improvements to the classroom climate as a result of changes to the social dynamic. They referred specifically to better teamwork and a safer, more comfortable and cooperative learning environment in the classroom.
The shared farm experience also gave some teachers a touchstone to refer back to when needing to remind students of the many lessons they learned at the farm and to keep those alive in the classroom.

Conflict resolution

In addition to the variety of improved social dynamics discussed above, the farm environment and the high expectations set for the students during their stay at the farm helped many students develop a useful and transferable set of conflict resolution skills. The need to complete chores that required concerted teamwork forced the students to reconcile issues, which in turn created better teamwork. These teacher reports illustrate the types of changes students experienced in their ability to resolve conflicts:

“Through their experiences at the farm I started to see a lot less arguing and much more 'talking things out.' At the age of 11, when my students disagreed with one another they tended to argue and then get angry. They had a tremendous problem with communicating and solving conflicts peacefully. Through activities at the farm they learned that arguing wasn’t going to help them complete their tasks at hand. They began to talk out problems, take turns, and speak to one another more kindly which not only helped them in conflict resolution, but paved the path for them to build their teamwork and cooperation skills.”

“My students definitely learned to talk things out more as opposed to reacting harshly or fighting. Some of my students were very intelligent but had very poor social skills. They did not relate or play well with others. Focusing on a goal somewhat changed that. They realized that everyone needs assistance to complete a large job.”

“I have watched children who were not always that cooperative work together to get some very difficult tasks completed. Children who fought at school never fight at the farm. When they do have conflicts they really work to resolve them. The children also become more polite and have better manners at the farm. They have to eat together, clean up after themselves and learn how get along with many different people during the week.”

Teacher responses to Survey Questions 10 (see above), “My students improved at handling disagreements with each other.” and 11 (left), “My students resolved conflicts better as a result of the farm experience.” reflect general
agreement that the farm week had a positive effect on students’ abilities to resolve conflicts.

Reponses on the student surveys confirm the teachers’ stories. When asked “Do you think the experience of working in teams at the farm has helped you resolve conflicts more effectively with other kids since the trip?” 63% of the students responded “Yes.” About one third of the students who responded no said it was because they did not have any conflicts. Students detailed a number of ways in which the experience helped them with conflicts, including developing greater empathy for others, the improved interpersonal climate described above, specific skills they had learned, and the need for harmony to accomplish the chores at hand.

Having the opportunity to learn about each others’ feelings helped some of the students get along. As one wrote, “There were people that I did not really like and people that I did not know well. I have gotten to know them better and understand their feelings.” Other students shared similar sentiments about the sometimes trying experience of working together such as, “It has helped me work with kids because now I understand both sides of the story,” “You can learn how other people feel,” “It helped me to see the other side of the person I had conflicts with,” and, “You get to know the person and try to work things out with them.”

Three students explained how greater feelings of friendship for their classmates led to less conflict.

“We help out friends so they won’t get in trouble.”
“Because we got along better [after the farm experience] we knew how to solve our problems better.”
“Since we got so much closer we know now what is wrong with some people so we can calm them down easier.”

A number of students mentioned learning specific skills for dealing with conflicts:

“Now we know just talking it out with someone works better because we learn the reason we might have been arguing was petty.”
“Now we can always talk in a calm and positive way.”
“If we argue we resolve the conflict by letting people share their ideas.”
“I think it helped because I can negotiate better.”
“Now I can walk away from a fight instead of instigating it.”
“I used to start many fights when I was angry. The farm showed me taking you mind off something helps.”
“I learned how to get away from all the drama and how to come down and focus on something else.”
“Now in a problem I just handle the situation: be the first to say sorry, work it out by saying our wrongs in the situation, and never let it happen again.”
“When somebody got in a conflict with me one of the farmers would help us solve it. She would say ‘calm down, sit down, and talk about it’. So now I tell other people to do that when we are in the middle of a conflict”

In addition to working well together at the farm, teachers described how these skills were carried back to the classroom setting. One teacher asserted that, “The children who attended the farm were less apt to ask for help immediately when confronted with a conflict [back in the classroom.] They tried a few different strategies on their own, and rarely had to ask the teacher for assistance.” Another remarked that, “If a conflict arises, some of my children would actually say ‘You need to talk it out.’ This is a very big step!”
Conflict resolution is an important skill for success in and out of the classroom for all students, not just those who come from challenging school or home environments. Judging by the observations of students and teachers, the week at Spring Brook Farm provided the students a safe environment to learn and practice conflict resolution skills.

**Improved student-teacher relationships**

"Me and my teacher are best friends. She taught me to get over my fear of insects and arachnids and to work hard every day to get things done."

-Student

Spending a week at the farm living and working with their students allowed teachers an opportunity to strengthen relationships with their students in ways not possible in the school setting. Responses to Question 13 (graph below), "I appreciate my students more since going to the farm with them." offer evidence that many teachers thought the trip helped them see their students in a new light. 76% of teachers "strongly agreed."

![Graph showing responses to Question 13](image)

As one teacher wrote, "The farm trip definitely facilitates growth in relationships that is harder to reach in one's interactions with students in the school. I always feel like I leave the farm having developed a strong connection with the students that went on the trip. There are shared experiences and stories that allow for better interactions."

The idea that shared experiences allow for better interactions between student and teacher is further elucidated by other teachers who wrote:

"Because I shared the experience with them, I feel that they see me differently...outside of the classroom in a more relaxed, real world setting, they recognize that I am multidimensional and I think that does earn a bit more respect from them."

"My students and I certainly related to one another differently, having seen one another in a different light. I was able to refer back to our experiences at the farm often during a lesson or in a situation when dealing with a student."

"The students have much better relationships with me, and through me with teachers in our school in general after the farm trip. Often they'll refer to events at the farm as examples of how 'tight' they are to each other and to me."
“The years I attended the farm, the students and I had a much closer bond. They have graduated and since continuously come back to visit to see me and discuss their accomplishments. When they do, they usually bring up something that happened on the farm.”

Teacher responses to Survey Question 5, “My students were more cooperative with me after the farm program than they were before they went.” hint at some of the benefits of improved relationships with students. Teachers also generally agreed that students listened to them better after the farm program. Students also reported improved relationships with their teachers. When asked, “Do you think your trip to the farm affected the way you get/got along with the teacher you went with?” 59% responded that there had been a positive change. Of the 39% that reported no change, approximately one third of them said they had a good relationship with their teacher prior to the farm trip.

Some students described a much closer personal connection with the teacher. “Sleeping in the same hallway made me feel more safe with the teachers. Now they feel like relatives to me.” Others wrote that at the farm a teacher “…treated me like a father,” and, “I know that away from school she is like a mother.”

Others simply described greater affection for their teachers, with comments like, “I liked them more,” “At the farm we were like friends,” “My teachers really opened up to me and my classmates,” and “She completely understands me.”

While at the farm, away from the classroom environment, many students learned about the “lighter” side of their teachers. Typical comments about this included:

“I did not know she was that nice.”
“I noticed that my teacher has a cool side to her.”
“I always thought that [teachers] don’t have fun but then they started dancing and listening to hip hop.”
“At the farm I found out the fun sides of all the teachers.”
“I got to know the teacher better, and got to know the real person they are and as a farmer.”

Much to one student’s astonishment, “I never knew that teachers were regular people. They actually do everything like we do.”

“As a result of getting to know their teachers outside of the classroom, many students reported greater affinity for and connection with their teachers, more in-depth awareness of teacher’s personal qualities, greater respect for their teachers, and in some cases admiration for skills the teachers deployed on the farm.

Some students described a much closer personal connection with the teacher. “Sleeping in the same hallway made me feel more safe with the teachers. Now they feel like relatives to me.” Others wrote that at the farm a teacher “…treated me like a father,” and, “I know that away from school she is like a mother.”

Others simply described greater affection for their teachers, with comments like, “I liked them more,” “At the farm we were like friends,” “My teachers really opened up to me and my classmates,” and “She completely understands me.”

While at the farm, away from the classroom environment, many students learned about the “lighter” side of their teachers. Typical comments about this included:

“I did not know she was that nice.”
“I noticed that my teacher has a cool side to her.”
“I always thought that [teachers] don’t have fun but then they started dancing and listening to hip hop.”
“At the farm I found out the fun sides of all the teachers.”
“I got to know the teacher better, and got to know the real person they are and as a farmer.”

Much to one student’s astonishment, “I never knew that teachers were regular people. They actually do everything like we do.”
Positive student-teacher relationships likely play an important role in students’ behavioral success in the classroom and adjustment to school in general. Spending time together at the farm provides a rare in-depth opportunity for the teachers and students to get to know and appreciate each other outside the classroom.

**Students’ personal development**

Often the first time away from their home and parents, the farm experience challenges the students in many ways, but the safe and cooperative environment creates numerous opportunities for personal growth. In reflecting on their week at Spring Brook Farm, students expressed great pride in their accomplishments and newly discovered abilities. Based on both student and teacher reports, this section is organized into these three themes:

- Changes to students’ self-confidence and self-esteem
- Greater willingness to try new things
- Greater compassion for animals and others

**Self-confidence and self-esteem**

Self-esteem and self-confidence are interrelated concepts, and often referred to in tandem. For the purpose of this discussion, we will loosely define self-esteem as one’s assessment of his or her worth as a person, and self-confidence as belief in one’s ability to accomplish things.

All responding teachers agreed with Survey Question 15 (graph below), “My students demonstrated more self-confidence in positive ways after the farm program than they did before.” (Teachers were specifically asked about positive expressions of self-confidence, because higher self-confidence is not automatically a good thing. For example, an art thief might feel increased self-confidence after a successful heist.)

In teacher and student reports about increases to self-confidence and self-esteem, a number of factors seemed to be involved:

- Accomplishment of difficult tasks
- Bonding with and feeling responsible for the animals
- Positive feedback and attention from the farm staff

**Accomplishment of difficult tasks**

According to one teacher, “Every time a student experiences something new and is successful, they build self-confidence and self-

**The most important lesson I learned at the farm is that you don’t have to be perfect at anything.” - Student**
esteem.” Almost all of the farm activities are new experiences and challenges for the students, and the program is designed so that they will succeed in these tasks.

The comments of other teachers confirm that with the reassurance and coaching of the staff, the students work hard and see the fruits of their labor.

“The students start to realize that there is no failure on the farm. This gives them great confidence. It is an environment where they all can and do succeed.”

“Many of our students don’t often have opportunities where they feel really helpful.”

Teachers were unanimous that accomplishing challenging farm chores was the primary factor in boosting the self-esteem and self-confidence of the students. Students reacted positively to praise for their successes and also “found strengths in themselves that they didn’t know they had and then felt really proud.” As one teacher wrote:

Students were impressed with what they were able to accomplish. For some students this was their first experience away from home and they were proud that they could do this. They were often surprised at how hard they could work and what they could accomplish. This made them proud of themselves.

When asked how they felt about what they had accomplished at the farm, many students’ responses reflected feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem:

“I feel like I did what I never could before.”
“I feel that I accomplished more than I thought I could, so it really surprised me.”
“I feel like I am a champion.”
“I feel great, I never thought I could do anything I did at the farm.”
“I felt good, and more confident in myself. I did a lot of things I never thought I would accomplish.”
“I was very glad that I accomplished things that I thought I wouldn’t be able to do. I never imagined myself working at a farm.”
“I felt full and whole like a king because to say you could do something is easy, but to do it is something entirely different.”
“I feel that my accomplishments made me better as a person and that I can do more things.”
“I feel proud that I helped around the farm. I also feel like a better person because I made more friends.”
“I feel proud of myself. That was the first time I was ever away from my parents. Now I’m not afraid to be away from my parents.”
“I feel very proud of what I’ve accomplished. After the wonderful experience I have changed a lot and I feel like a whole new me.”
“I feel proud, because I could do anything I put my mind to.”
“I feel great that I overcame some of my fears and weaknesses.”

When asked if they had discovered any new abilities or personal qualities while at the farm, many students also made comments indicating increases to self-confidence and self-esteem:

“I thought I could never milk a cow but I did and it was cool.”
“I discovered that if I worked hard to learn how to do something, I would eventually get the hang of it.”
“Before I went to Spring Brook Farm I thought I was weak. But after the chores, I realized that I’m not weak and that everyone has some kind of strength.”
“I never knew that I could run fast, take care of animals, or garden.”
“I am brave to leave my parents for a week and not call or write a letter.”
“I learned that I should not be scared of animals such as pigs, the cows, or the bull.”

Students clearly took away substantial feelings of accomplishment from their week at the farm. This teacher’s comment neatly summarizes the experience: “It was incredibly empowering. There was a sense of ‘if we can do THAT we can do anything’.”

Teachers’ dramatic agreement with Survey Question 17 (graph at right), “My students’ sense of pride in themselves increased while they were at the farm.,” further confirms that the farm experience seems to have a very positive influence on student’s self-esteem.

**Bonding with and feeling responsible for the animals**

Being a farm-based program, it is unsurprising that the interactions with farm animals left a strong impression on the students. Many of them arrived with significant trepidation about the animals, but it appears that the great majority left the farm not only unafraid of the animals, but very personally attached to them, especially in the case of the baby calves. The students took very seriously their responsibility for the animals, and being given this job seems to have given many students strong feelings of importance and worth.

As one teacher described, “Some students felt really needed around the animals and they got a true sense of worth when they fed the babies their bottles or cleaned out their cages.” Other teachers explained that “The animals rely on the children to take care of them and the children take these tasks very seriously,” and “Students felt a higher sense of responsibility, particularly when they were feeding the animals. They felt important taking care of the animals.” One student discovered that he and his classmates “…work harder when knowing it’s for the sake of the animals.” Another student “…learned to be responsible, because if you aren't responsible the animals die because you didn't feed them.”

The strong impression caring for the animals made on the students appeared in numerous places on the student survey. The most frequently reported “important lesson” students learned on the farm was to take good care of and respect the animals. Students offered comments such as, “Take care of the animals like you take care of yourself,” “I learned that we should treat any animal with care because the need a lot of it,” and, “Animals always come first. We wake up early to feed the animals.”

“I helped out the farm animals and that was the most happy day of my life.”

-Student
When asked if they discovered new abilities or personal qualities at the farm, students most frequently responded with their newfound skills at performing animal-related farm chores. Many students seemed to feel that they had a real talent for taking care of animals, as seen in these responses:

“I discovered that I have a way with animals. I get along with animals more than I thought I did.”
“I discovered that I can take good care of animals and have fun with them at the same time.”
“I found out that I love baby calves and that I can take good care of rabbits.”
“I never knew I could get along with animals. I discovered my inner talent.”
“I can handle animals really well.”
“I discovered that calves are calmed when I’m next to them.”
“I learned I was good with animals. The animals loved me and I fell in love with them.”

Working with animals had deeper implications for the students than simply the accomplishment of the chores. Overcoming their initial fears of animals, and succeeding in tasks such as milking provided a big confidence boost for many of the students. Taking personal responsibility for numerous facets of the care and feeding of such large animals gave the students feelings of self-worth because of the importance of the task, the personal bonds they formed with the animals, and because many felt it was a hidden talent of which they were previously unaware.

Positive feedback and attention from farm staff

Another self-esteem boosting factor mentioned by a number of teachers was the kind behavior and interest shown to the students by the farm staff. These anecdotes from teachers highlight the value of exposing the students to the caring environment created at Spring Brook Farm:

“The farm staff members are so very nice and kind to our students. They talk to them and show genuine interest in them. On the return trip from one farm experience, one student remarked how surprised he was that the farm staff was so interested in them and talked with them. He said, “They didn’t even know me, but they were talking to me and asking me about myself. That was really nice.” Those experiences and interactions have a profound and lasting impact on our students. Many adults in their lives just aren’t all that interested in them.”

“Many of my students are from backgrounds and homes that I can’t ever imagine a child being raised in. They were relieved and ecstatic to be away from those negative environments and at a place where they had warm, healthy meals and people who cared about them (the loving farm staff). One of my students commented on how it was the first time he had been hugged in years. It is such a valuable experience for these students, some of whom don’t make it any further than their neighborhood. It is invaluable to their fragile psyche, and I think for many of them, it is the best thing that has ever happened to them.”

“Such sleep-away opportunities always give students opportunities to mature socially within a safe and nurturing environment. Even in their rooms at night, and around the campfire, the kids felt and shared a lot of love. Some of the students we took had not felt so much love before, especially from adults. Afterwards, they were more receptive to affection, and more generous with it.”

“When [staff member] tells our students that they are some of the hardest working students that come up to the farm, you can see them start to glow and gleam. It is a very powerful experience for them. Often, the students feel like they don’t have much to offer...to each other, to school or to their community. For them to go
to the farm and work hard and feel like they are getting a bunch of things done for the animals and the farm, it is really important.”

One teacher commented on how much the input and feedback from the staff really helped students to succeed in their chores, and then to appreciate the real value of what they were accomplishing:

They direct the students in what to do and then allow them to do it on their own. The farm staff is always very supportive and encouraging which has a tremendous positive impact on students. The fact that the students are being told that they are doing such a great job and being thanked for all of their hard work by those who work on a farm everyday, gives them tremendous confidence that they are responsible, successful and capable of accomplishing challenging tasks.

The importance of the positive environment at the farm can not be understated. For students to build healthy self-confidence, it is helpful that they get immediate and positive feedback about their achievements. Associating strong emotional feelings with the experience likely helps to create a strong memory as well.

**Greater willingness to try new things**

Greater willingness to try new things is likely a result of increased self-confidence, and a number of teachers observed this in their students. “The students are now more willing to venture outside of their comfort zone. They have a new found interest in exploring and trying new things.” wrote one teacher. Another wrote, “I see this improvement in many of my girls. One became more of a risk taker. On the farm she would cry whenever she had to complete a task. Now she can't wait to try new things.”

A student reported that “The most important lesson that I learned on the farm is that I can try and fail and keep going,” a sentiment supported by a teacher’s comment that “I believe they are more willing to take learning risks as a result of their farm experience.”

Teacher’s responses to Survey Question 16 (graph at left), ‘My students’ willingness to take on new things increased as a result of the farm program,” indicate general agreement that the farm trip opened up the students to new experiences.

When asked “What was the most important lesson you learned on the farm?” one student wrote, “To be more open minded about trying new things,” another said it was to “…try new things because you'll never know what you can do,” and another wrote “Before I went to the farm I didn’t
really like farms or farm animals, so I learned that you shouldn't judge something before you have tried it.”

Compassion

“The most important thing I learned was that animals are just like humans. They co-exist in their own worlds just like we live in ours. They have feelings of fear, love, and excitement just like we do, so we shouldn't kill insects and say 'It's just a stupid bug.'”

-Student

As described above, many teachers commented on the improved relationships amongst the students. An element of that which was mentioned specifically by a number of teachers was the development of greater compassion for others, often beginning with the animals.

“Often, it brings out a 'caring' side of the students that we might not otherwise see. On one trip to the farm, one of the cows was quite ill...It was really nice to see how much they cared about the cow and worried that she was sick and would be cold at night. They were so proud they got her in the barn.”

“When students worked with the dairy cows and had to sweep the manure some students really struggled with this while others just went with it. Students were able to see who was really struggling and 'cover' for them - they became more compassionate and understanding of each other.”

“I felt that the students felt closer, more like a family. They would anticipate each others needs. I feel that they were more understanding of peers who were less able or different.”

Another question on the survey asked students if the week at Spring Brook Farm had changed them in any way. Again, many students remarked about their experiences with the animals. In addition to the boost in self-esteem students got from working with animals it seemed to bring about in some students a greater sense of caring for other beings.

“I learned how to take care of animals, how to respect them. Now that I have experienced the life of a farmer, I care about all of our animals and all of yours!”

“I learned that you have to care for them before they learn to care for you and love you back. (animals)”

“I learned that you shouldn't just think about yourself. You should think about other people and other animals. You should be thankful for what you have.”

Developing more compassion was just one of the ways in which student experience personal growth at the farm. The many accounts of increases in self-esteem and self-confidence suggest that these are perhaps some of the most important outcomes of the farm program.

Success for students who struggle academically

While definitely a part of the discussion of self-esteem, enough teachers commented specifically on the farm successes of students who don’t do well academically that it is worth mentioning separately.
Freedom from social and academic pressures, a supportive environment, and the hands-on nature of the work were all cited as reasons that these students did so well at the farm. These comments from teachers reflect a number of the ways in which these students thrived at the farm:

“I saw students who struggle academically really shine at the farm. They were able to engage in hands on activities and take the initiative, which often they don’t feel comfortable doing in the classroom.”

“I have had many students come to farm who were not great at academics who finally felt a sense of accomplishment at the farm that they never got in the classroom. To watch children these kids get awards at the farm and cry when they were leaving is an amazing thing.”

“On each of my visits to the farm, there has been at least one student who is less academically strong who becomes respected by class for skills that come to the fore at the farm.”

“One student in particular who always got kicked out of class back at school was fearless and really good with animals and his self-esteem grew at the farm. When we got back to school the week after the trip, he was much better behaved and rarely got sent out.”

“Students who felt that they were not successful in the traditional terms (doing well in school, behaving well), flourished at the farm. One student in particular has ADD/ADHD and is a behavior problem in class because he can’t keep still was a star at the farm. He was always energized and excited, and kept the morale of the other students up.”

“My students realized that everyone has something to offer, even if they are not the smartest in the class. Some of them showed great organizational skills. That was important because some of my students were receiving special ed. services for reading and writing. They had little confidence in school. Other students were aware of it and at times pointed it out. However, some of these same students shone as they problem solved or spearheaded and activity.”

One student response to the question “Do you think your week at Spring Brook Farm changed you in any way?” suggests perhaps a student observing their own improved learning at the farm: “Yes, because I could learn more about animals than reading, math, science, social studies, and so on.”

The farm experience seems especially valuable for these academically challenged students. Being given an opportunity to succeed along with their classmates likely helps them to build self-confidence and self-esteem in many ways, with all the benefits described above.

Other influences
While the themes discussed above were the focus of the evaluation questions and most prominent in the data, teachers and students commented on other program outcomes that are worth noting.

Broadening of horizons
Numerous teachers commented that many of their students never get out of their home neighborhoods, and as a result had limited worldviews, and limited perceptions of what options might exist in their lives outside of what they knew. As one teacher put it, “Just the fact that they had an experience so different than many of their friends made them begin to understand ways in
which life was or could be different.” Another echoed, “It just opened their eyes to an entire world and way of life that they couldn't have imagined prior to the trip.”

Another teacher observed a similar phenomenon, but found it difficult to quantify:

It is something that you can't really explain, but every year that I have gone I've watched the children change for the better in a matter of a day. They get to see a different world. They begin to see new possibilities for themselves. The idea that there is a different way to live, and that people behave differently in this environment is very important. They may live in the city for the rest of their lives, but know they know there are other alternatives.

Many students also offered reflections on how the farm trip had given them new perspectives:

“I just didn't know that there are people who care about cows so much and I think it changed the way I look at things.”
“It changed how I feel about life and the kind of person I want to be.”
“It taught me to look at other people from different places.”
“It made me think about jobs I could do.”
“I felt like a whole different person because in the city you hear about gangs and fights, but at the farm you can just relax. Even though you're working, it's really fun.”
“Well, now I could be a biologist.”
“I learned that being a grownup is really difficult.”

Personal experience in a world totally different than the one they were used to left some students with feelings of gratitude:

“It made me be appreciative about the way I live.”
“It made me more grateful for the things I have, especially the food. Farmers work hard to grow crops not only for themselves, but for millions of other people.”
“I learned how to appreciate more what my mom does for me.”
“I learned that you shouldn't just think about yourself. You should think about other people and other animals. You should be thankful for what you have.”
“I learned to be grateful for what we have. Everything we have comes from scratch and without the supplies we have, especially from nature, we wouldn't have all the things kids love.”

For students who don't often, if ever, get far from where they live, going to Spring Brook Farm is a real eye-opener. Many benefits come simply with the act of experiencing a different way of life.

Additional outcomes
Numerous other influences on students appeared throughout the data, although either not so prominently or not so correlated by teachers and students to make them suitable for detailed exposition in this report. In most cases these outcomes were not specifically pursued in the survey questions.

Other apparent outcomes of the farm program include:

• Greater appreciation and respect for nature; interest in animals and natural world
• Greater sense of personal responsibility toward chores at home
• Appreciation for hard work and the challenges of agricultural life
• Increased patience
• Increased interest in a healthy lifestyle
• Behavioral improvements
• Good behavior during school year, motivated by a desire to participate in farm program

Lasting value of the farm program

“One of the most common phrases heard in my classroom is ‘Remember on the farm when...’ The farm experience stays with children.”

- Teacher

The Farms for City Kids program hopes to instill “values that will last a lifetime.” While this may be hard to measure, many teachers commented on how strong the students’ memories are of the farm experience. Teachers also observed that, for students with whom they remained in contact over a series of years, the bonds formed and lessons learned at the farm seemed to remain intact in the years following the farm visit.

As mentioned above in the section on social dynamics, after the farm trip, teachers and students were able to refer back to the experience to keep the lessons learned there fresh. As one teacher described:

It was a very real, tangible experience that I (and they) could refer back to when we began to fall into old habits—not trying new things, making fun of others, giving up, etc... The feeling of pride was also something that all other teachers and members of the school community could sense and refer to often. Students also were able to see each other in a situation where they were all new and inexperienced and see each other excel at things that they never would have known was a strength. Students gained a lot of respect not only for themselves but each other and it was easy to refer back to this once we were back in the daily routine of the classroom.

Teachers described how feelings of self-worth remained long after the program:

“We talk about our ‘farm family’ that came about through this incredibly rich shared experience. The children who have been through it light up whenever the farm is mentioned. It remains a place in their minds & hearts where they were valued for being responsible and productive - a place where they felt good about themselves and the team of which they were a part.”

“Yes, many of my students continued to speak of this experience several years after it was over. Some have not had similar experiences since then but they continue to talk about this and to many they consider it the best experience of their lives. The feeling of self-importance was huge and really helped them feel relevant.”

One teacher wrote that she has “…former students who share stories about what they learned on the farm with their middle school teachers.” Others of the former students “…want to be chaperones when they grow up so they can come back to Spring Brook Farm.”
Clearly the experience of the farm program stays with many of the students who attended, leaving them with social skills to apply in and out of the classroom, new friendships to enjoy, and feelings of accomplishment worthy of recalling and sharing with others.
**Quantitative Summary of Teacher Surveys**

Also of interest is an analysis of teacher and student surveys from a quantitative perspective, using the means of teacher responses as a way of gauging the perceived strength of an impact relative to other impacts. The first section of the teacher survey consisted of 17 scaled items asking teachers to rate their level of agreement with statements about the impacts they observe on students.

The means of the responses are presented in the table below, in descending order of teachers’ agreement with the statements (i.e., the first statement listed is the one with which the teachers agreed the most, and so forth.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher survey questions listed in order of agreement</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher survey questions listed in order of agreement</td>
<td>Mean Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 teacher surveys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1=Strongly Disagree 2=Tend to Disagree 3=Tend to Agree 4=Strongly Agree)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The farm program helped my students learn how to cooperate more with each other.</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students learned the value of teamwork at the farm program.</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students' sense of pride in themselves increased while they were at the farm.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students demonstrated more self-confidence in positive ways after the farm program than they had before.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I appreciate my students more since going to the farm with them.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students got along with each other better after the farm program than they did before they went.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of their experience at the farm, my students were more likely to help each other.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students showed more respect for each other after the farm program than they did before.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students' willingness to take on new things increased as a result the farm program.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students were more cooperative with me after the farm program than they were before they went.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The farm program helped my students become more accepting of their classmates' differences. (i.e. skills, opinions, backgrounds)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students improved at handling disagreements with each other while at the farm.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students resolved conflicts better as a result of the farm experience.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My students listened to me more because of our farm experience together.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grouping related responses suggested that teachers rank these impacts of the farm program as follows (note that these responses are presented from greatest to weakest, accordingly):

1. Improved cooperation and teamwork
2. Increased self-esteem and self-confidence
3. Improved relationships between students
4. Improved student-teacher relationships
5. Improved conflict resolution skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>My students demonstrated greater self-control after the farm program</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>did before.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The farm program <strong>did not</strong> seem to change my students' ability to</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>work successfully in teams. (This and the question below were</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>negatively worded)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the farm program my students tended to take <strong>less</strong> responsibility for their actions.</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Findings: Teacher and Student Surveys

The weeklong experience at Spring Brook Farm had numerous positive impacts on the students who participated. Themes emerging from both student and teacher surveys suggest many laudable outcomes of the program. Both teachers and students made a strong case that spending an intensive week working and living together with a common purpose resulted in many changes to the social dynamic among students, and between students and teachers. Improvements to the social dynamic among students included:

- Increased individual friendships
- Group bonding
- Social mixing and greater acceptance of others
- Greater teamwork and cooperation
- Greater respect for each other

Teachers reported feeling a greater appreciation for their students after the trip, as well as receiving more respect and cooperation from their students. The students reported having a greater affinity for, deeper personal connections with, and an improved sense of respect for their teachers.

Teachers and students also reported on improvements to students’ conflict resolution skills. These improvements to the social dynamic appeared to lead to a better classroom climate back at school. Many students experienced other types of meaningful personal growth while at the farm, including:

- Increases to self-confidence and self-esteem
- Greater willingness to try new things
- Greater compassion for animals and each other

It was also noteworthy that students who had not previously achieved social or academic success were often the students who made the most improvement at the farm. Other lesser reported impacts included broadened horizons, agricultural and environmental awareness, increased personal responsibility, and behavioral improvements.

In summary, the week long program at Spring Brook Farm has many important impacts on the students who participate, especially in the realms of personal and social skills. These should not be regarded as the only impacts of the program, but are reported on here as a result of the focused survey design. Perhaps most notably, student expressed great pride in their achievements and newly discovered abilities, and often reported that these gains in self-confidence and self-esteem translated effectively into the students’ lives after the farm. Many of the teachers surveyed have been taking students to Spring Brook Farm for years. According to these teachers’ observations, the impacts described above stay with students for years following the program’s completion.
Section Five:

Recommendations
Recommendations

Recommendations are divided into two categories: **program recommendations** that stem from teacher comments and evaluator observations, and **evaluation recommendations** that offer ideas about how to continue to work toward understanding the Farms for City Kids program and making it as effective as possible. A wide variety of recommendations are offered, incorporating all of the teacher feedback as well as ideas that evolved during all aspects of the evaluation process.

Program recommendations

Program recommendations are offered with the intention of fostering conversation among the Farms for City Kids staff and board about outcomes of the farm program and how to improve them. In addition to the recommendations the evaluation team generated when analyzing the complete data set, specific recommendations made by teachers who completed surveys are also included. Any quotes used in this section are drawn from the teacher surveys.

Provide more opportunity for reflection

Many teachers described a need for more reflective discussion amongst the students, as one teacher put it, to “…make the implicit teachings also very explicit so that students have the words to better explain what they have learned themselves.” It was evident in the student evaluations that some students were able to describe what they understood about teamwork, conflict resolution, leadership, and other skills developed through the chores, but that other students did not have either the language or the understanding to explain it well. A teacher suggested that staff “…incorporate specific vocabulary words such as 'perseverance', and 'cooperation' - that are used consistently.”

It is particularly important to place concepts such as self-confidence and self-esteem in a values context. Self-confidence and self-esteem in a vacuum are not necessarily positive. Consider this comment from a student: “I felt accomplished by pulling pranks, working hard, and learning about responsibility.” While it is positive that a student should feel good about himself for working hard, success at pulling pranks should not be the basis for self-esteem.

Teacher comments on reflection time:

“We have learned the importance of having some framework for de-briefing the students' experience in the evening, when the day is done. It is important for students to reflect on their day, talk about what worked well, what did not work well, and about how things could work better. Having some debriefing process has been really useful for our students.”

“Provide opportunities for discussion about what went well or did not go well during a group activity (social skills) and how we can make it better.”

“Perhaps have more explicit 'debriefing' after tasks that includes discussion of how working together helped the group, or giving goals to students before a task, i.e. “Try to notice three instances of teamwork, etc.” and talk about their observations afterward.”

“Create more opportunities for discussion about self-confidence and self-esteem after the different activities.”
Another teacher offered that “…journal time could be more productive. I am hoping to give more guidelines for this in the coming year.” The evaluator did examine student journals while at the farm, and noted the questions could have been more thought provoking. Rather than asking students to write about what they enjoyed or what they learned, they could be prompted with questions such as: Who did you help today, and how did that feel? What was the most important thing you did today? How could today have been better? What was your biggest challenge today and how did you overcome it?

By giving the students more time to reflect on their farm experiences, and guiding them through the reflections process in an engaging way, students may be able to more explicitly understand the values and skills they are learning at the farm.

**Lead students in more skill building exercises**

Another request made by many teachers was for more skill building exercises. A number of specific suggestions were offered:

“I would like to see some team building activities like those done in Outward Bound programs. (Nothing too crazy of course.)”

“There are several additional team exercises that perhaps should be done at a certain point every day to encourage cooperation, etc.”

“One year, the evening activities were all specifically geared toward social skills building. I’m not sure if that was more effective or not but may be worth revisiting.”

“I have seen some very effective role-playing games in which students respond to dilemmas and difficult situations with their parents and peers that might have a place in your program. Such opportunities help students think about crucial teenage issues of independence and trust before they occur. I think there could also be some kind of test that the students are warned about, that might come at any time, like an unscheduled pen clean-up or pretend animal crisis, for which the students must band together to solve the problem.”

“Incorporate teambuilding and trust exercises along with farm chores.”

“Provide teachers with specific activities to do with the kids in the evening that are fun confidence builders.”

These teachers clearly feel that time at the farm is valuable, and should be used to maximum effect. The students are evidently in a very receptive state while at the farm, making it a good time to reinforce to the strongest degree possible the lessons they are learning. Numerous resources are available for activities that build teamwork, conflict management, trust, etc.

While conducting interviews on the farm, the evaluator observed that some of the students were upset with each other about a game of Red Rover. Perhaps the time might have been spent more effectively if the students had been playing a more cooperative game.

**Expand the reach of the program with follow up activities**

“My hope has always been that we could somehow expand the experience and follow up with the students who have gone through the program. We need a way for them to reconnect with the experience and reinforce the values and skills they have learned.” This teacher’s comment
summarizes the difficulty of instilling lasting values in just five days. The following six ideas address possible ways in which Farms for City Kids could extend its reach and thus deepen the impacts of the weeklong program.⁴

**Ask the teachers:** Teachers who have experienced the weeklong program are likely to have ideas about how to make its effects on students more lasting. Some, for instance, shared that they already have pre- and post-visit projects that they use to deepen the experience. Incorporating questions about this into the regular post-visit teacher survey would be a good way to begin gathering ideas about how the farm staff could support teachers as they prepare for the visit and return to the classroom.

**Develop an in-school Spring Brook Farm curriculum guide:** It is plainly evident from the student surveys that there is great enthusiasm and interest in all things Spring Brook Farm, especially the animals. Specific lessons or multi-disciplinary curriculum units that are based on the farm might be of great use to teachers, if they were developed appropriately. Such units could involve all the traditional academic subjects, using Spring Brook Farm as the underlying context. Understanding the teachers’ existing curricular demands would be essential to designing lessons and units that would be readily incorporated into what are often demanding teaching requirements.

**Offer teachers professional development opportunities:** Once students have left the farm, it is up to the teachers to keep the farm lessons alive. Farms for City Kids could offer a two or three day teacher professional development workshop that could train teachers in how to effectively translate the farm lessons and experiential learning styles back to their classrooms and communities. It is conceivable that these workshops could be offered by Farms for City Kids staff in the teachers’ home region (i.e., a New York City training, a Boston training, etc.), or that teachers could be invited up to the farm for a retreat-workshop session.

**Develop an interactive website:** The Farms for City Kids website might also offer ways for the students to stay connected. The right content and interactive, regularly updated features could be developed to make it of ongoing interest to students. Current technologies offer a wealth of possibilities including live “calf cameras,” blogs, discussion forums, video clips, etc. The right online feature could allow the staff to stay in touch with large numbers of students without being overwhelmed. Students themselves could offer valuable insights into what website features would be most utilized.

**Help teachers translate positive farm behaviors back to the classroom:** A number of teachers mentioned how they “refer back” to the farm experience when handling behavior situations with students. Perhaps some record of the farm trip could be created that would provide tools to help the teacher keep students in touch with farm-learned lessons and behaviors. For example, after the trip, teachers could extend the “farm contract” to a “classroom contract.” Teachers could also look for ways to translate the farm awards back to the classroom.

**Offer chore ideas to teachers and parents:** Taking responsibility for important chores made a strong impact on many of the students. Some mentioned that they helped more at home after the

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⁴ It should be noted when offering and implementing follow-up activities that not all the students in any given classroom are able to go to the farm. It would be important to find ways to include those students in meaningful ways in any farm-related activities back in the classroom.
farm trip. Many students, however, may not have any chores to do at school or home. Farms for City Kids staff could offer suggestions on how teachers and parents might capitalize on students’ newfound sense of responsibility and willingness to help.

Apply academics where students are most engaged

Although academics are frequently mentioned in farm literature, they were not a theme that appeared consistently in the evaluation data. If the program wishes to further enhance the academic experience at the farm, it would be valuable to pursue strategies to make academic work more memorable and as engaging as possible. One approach could be to attach as many academic lessons as possible to the activities that leave the greatest impression on the students.

According to accounts of students and teachers, mucking out the heifer barn is one such activity. One teacher wrote, “Cleaning out the calves' barn is by far the grossest thing these children ever had to do.” The students’ combined horror and fascination with manure could be capitalized upon for engaging academic work. For example, the weight of the manure could be calculated by estimating the weight of a shovelful or a barrowful, and the total could be counted. That could be compared with an estimate of the volume of manure obtained by measuring the floor of the barn and the depth of manure. Students could also time how long the chore takes, and calculate such measures as pounds of manure moved per hour by the team. Teams could compare factors such as time spent, weight shoveled, etc. Science lessons about the use of manure as fertilizer could also be incorporated. There are many possibilities for such lessons, and they could be made very engaging by basing them around the chores and activities that most capture the students’ attention and imagination.

About “classroom” time one teacher remarked that “for older students classroom experiences need to relate to the farm and give them a sense of accomplishment.”

Other program recommendations

• One teacher suggested that the program should be two weeks long. Such a change might be too dramatic, but it may be worth experimenting with program length and evaluating whether increased time at the farm leads to deeper outcomes.

• Another teacher proposed that the program emphasize “…smaller group work instead of teams of five. Maybe pairs for unlikely friends would open students up more to speaking with other children they normally would not.” If the benefits of greater interpersonal contact and relationship building are deemed worthwhile, it could be of value to try different work configurations and gauge the results.

• There appeared to be benefits derived from bringing as many students as possible from a single class, as the positive social dynamic between students and with the teacher created at the farm remains intact back in the classroom. It may be worth comparing the post-farm experience of different sorts of groups to gain insight into this.

• The program serves a variety of groups. It may be that there is no one best one-size-fits-all version of the farm experience. Clearly the program is capable of producing a myriad of outcomes for the participants. Developing different “versions” of the program to suit the needs of different groups could help keep the program focused on very specific
outcomes. For example, some groups might want extra focus on social skills and conflict resolution. Another group might be more interested in environmental awareness, and another may want a focus on academic skills. It may be that the program is even more effective if certain outcomes are given a much stronger emphasis, depending on the group.

• The students are clearly impressed with the value of teamwork, and what can be accomplished with group effort. Some larger project that involves every group over an extended period of time would give the students an even broader community perspective on teamwork, and the chance to contribute to a project that will last. A project such as moving rocks from around the farm to build a stone wall or some other useful and attractive structure could be such an activity. It might also be something that the students check back on as part of staying in touch with the farm.

• Some teachers seem to get more value out of the farm experience than others. Veteran teachers could contribute to developing a handbook for new (or all) teachers on how to get the most out of the farm experience.

• In order to extend the benefits of the farm experience in the classroom, somehow the lessons must be passed in some way to the kids that didn’t go. Activities could be developed that take advantage and reinforce skills learned at the farm by having farm students pass on the learning in some way to the rest of the class.

• The pre- and post-surveys administered in the case study demonstrated that students did not seem to retain knowledge about what foods come from a farm, what foods come from milk, and the life cycle of a dairy cow. If these lessons are regarded as important, more emphasis may need to be placed on imparting them. Creative evening games could be one place to reinforce this knowledge in an active way.

**Evaluation recommendations**

Evaluation is a reflective practice. With an eye on desired outcomes, program staff can always be asking, “Is what we are doing the best way to meet our goals?” Evaluation recommendations are offered to suggest means by which evaluation can become a part of the culture of the organization’s culture, fostering a mindset of continuous program improvement.

**Refine the program logic model based on evaluation findings**

At the outset of the evaluation, an ambitious and thorough logic model was developed. Given the findings of the evaluation, the logic model should be revisited by program staff and updated to reflect new understanding of program outcomes. The logic model can then be used as a tool to consider where program activity changes might be warranted and where future program evaluation would be most useful.

**Continue collecting surveys from students and teachers at the farm**

Teacher and student surveys should be revised based on ongoing evaluation needs determined by the farm staff and board. The surveys should be collected regularly at the farm and entered into a
database so that farm staff can easily refer to the data and analyze it systematically to inform ongoing program improvements. (Evaluators can assist in developing new surveys and analysis techniques.) In the immediate future, new emphasis should be placed on gathering information useful to fulfilling any of the program recommendations that are deemed worthy of pursuing. Ongoing data analysis could be conducted internally by program staff or by an external evaluator.

**Use process evaluation and needs assessment when developing new programs**

Process evaluation involves examining program planning and delivery activities, and considers how these activities compare with what was intended. Critical to the success of new farm programs will be engaging many stakeholders (including teachers, community partners, school administrators, and program alumni) in the development process. Needs assessments can invite the input of those who would be most impacted by programs. Asking veteran teachers and student alumni what suggestions they have for program improvement or new program development can add a useful voice in the program design phase. Formative evaluations are useful during the beginning stages of a program’s implementation so that data-based adjustments and enhancements can be made. Development of program-specific logic models can also be helpful to clarify the desired inputs, activities, and outcomes of the new programs.

**Put the outcomes into context**

Evaluation is a process of asking questions. This evaluation has been focused, essentially, on the question, “What are the outcomes of the Farms for City Kids program?” Now that some of the outcomes are more clearly verified, the next question to ask might be, “What do these outcomes mean in a broader context?”

Program stakeholders (staff, board members, donors, teachers, students, etc.) may wish to take the evaluation findings a step further, asking, for instance, “What does it matter if students are building self-confidence, bonding with their teachers, developing greater compassion for animals or an interest in the environment? What does that lead to?” The long term outcomes suggested in the logic model represent some speculation as to the broader impact of the types of outcomes tested through the evaluation. To take it a step further, a review of pertinent research literature can shed light on the veracity of those connections.

For example, the Farms for City Kids program hopes that while at the Farm, students “…make personal connections with each other and with their teacher.” (See Logic Model in Appendix A.) This evaluation showed that this outcome is indeed often realized. The logic model further posits that, in the longer term (back at school) these personal connections will lead to an “improved classroom climate.” One way to test this link would be to develop an evaluation around changes in classroom climate before and after the farm experience. Another way to explore the link is to review literature on the subject. For instance, there is a US department of Education report that suggests that a caring and positive relationship between students and an adult at school is a critical factor in preventing school violence.
As another example of literature that might be pertinent, numerous studies have focused on self-esteem and its role in various social problems. Once the pertinent literature is distilled, the program can identify which of the outcomes seem most likely to yield the maximum longer term benefits to the students in terms of personal and academic success, and the program can tailor its activities to focus on achieving those outcomes.

5 As a starting point, the “Program Support Research” document produced for the Farms for City Kids capital campaign references a number of similar articles.
Section Six:

Appendices
Appendix A – Logic Model

Farms for City Kids – Working Logic Model 2005-06

**Premise:** If we provide an authentic, five-day, farm-based learning and learning experience, participants will lead healthier lives, become knowledgeable, active, responsible community members, practice environmental stewardship behaviors, and perform better academically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INPUTS</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>SHORT TERM OUTCOMES (right after visit)</th>
<th>MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES (6-12 months later)</th>
<th>LONG TERM OUTCOMES (1-3 years later)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soil Use</td>
<td>Courses: - soil study - garden - farm - small animal farm</td>
<td>Students feel more confident doing challenging physical work. Students experience increased opportunity for success.</td>
<td>Students have increased personal and social skills; - self-esteem - self-confidence - collaboration - communication - responsibility - conflict resolution</td>
<td>Students are more personally and socially successful in their schools and communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Sustainable Facilities</td>
<td>Team community building (e.g., community-oriented classroom, community-based decision making)</td>
<td>Students feel good about their ability to participate and contribute during their visit.</td>
<td>Students have positive experiences with cooperative teamwork, leadership, and conflict resolution.</td>
<td>Students help at home more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Community-mindedness</td>
<td>Students are more likely to be leaders and act in their communities.</td>
<td>Students adopt healthier choices.</td>
<td>Students continue to lead healthy lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Waking, eating, physical activities</td>
<td>Students have increased knowledge of - food cycles - the food world - nutrition basics</td>
<td>Students are more aware of the importance of nutrition and have improved nutrition habits.</td>
<td>Students’ parents are more likely to use understanding of natural and environmental resources and natural habitats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Math/Science</td>
<td>Students have increased knowledge of - food cycles - the food world - nutrition basics</td>
<td>Students are more aware of the importance of nutrition and have improved nutrition habits.</td>
<td>Students’ parents are more likely to use understanding of natural and environmental resources and natural habitats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Support</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Students demonstrate increased awareness and appreciation for natural and environmental resources and natural habitats.</td>
<td>Students demonstrate increased awareness and appreciation for natural and environmental resources and natural habitats.</td>
<td>Students demonstrate increased awareness and appreciation for natural and environmental resources and natural habitats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Systems</td>
<td>Agriculture and soil cycle educational activities</td>
<td>Students are more likely to be leaders and act in their communities.</td>
<td>Students adopt healthier choices.</td>
<td>Students continue to lead healthy lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DKKK Support</td>
<td>Academic activities (e.g., science, nutrition, gardening, history, social studies, etc.)</td>
<td>Students feel attached to the farm and visit.</td>
<td>Students demonstrate improved engagement in learning and participation in school.</td>
<td>Students have greater confidence in academic learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Teachers understand and use experiential learning techniques.</td>
<td>Teachers are more likely to use understanding of natural and environmental resources and natural habitats.</td>
<td>Teachers demonstrate increased awareness and appreciation for natural and environmental resources and natural habitats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>Teacher orientation</td>
<td>Teachers practice experiential teaching techniques.</td>
<td>Teachers are more likely to use understanding of natural and environmental resources and natural habitats.</td>
<td>Teachers demonstrate increased awareness and appreciation for natural and environmental resources and natural habitats.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also included in this model are the following program outcomes: 47% urban students. 60% urban students. 75% urban students. 80% urban students. 90% urban students.
Appendix B – Evaluation Overview

Farms for City Kids
Evaluation Overview
Prepared: July 2005
Updated: November 23, 2005

Program evaluation will:
➢ Evaluate effectiveness of the Farms for City Kids model in terms of process (implementation) and outcomes (results)
➢ Provide useful information for program staff, board members, & funders to assist with program development, justification & refinement
➢ Provide Farms for City Kids with evaluation tools that may be used for ongoing data collection and program analysis

Evaluators’ Philosophy
➢ PEER Associates is committed to using a multiple-methods, utilization-focused, participatory evaluation process. It is our intention to help organizations better understand their programs & to help them to improve their programs based on evidence of program functioning & outcomes. We also intend to help organizations build their own capacity to reflect on & internally evaluate programs & to help to improve the evaluability of programs.

Evaluators’ Roles
➢ Meet with project staff to develop logic model and evaluation plan, & modify as needed
➢ Data collection including site visits, surveys, interviews, photo documentation
➢ Data analysis and report writing
➢ Provide planning and/or recommendations for subsequent evaluation (as appropriate)
➢ PEER Contacts: Amy and Andrew

Farms for City Kids Staff and/or Board Roles in Evaluation Process
➢ Develop logic model and evaluation plan with evaluators
➢ Provide input throughout the evaluation cycle via meetings, phone and/or email on evaluation direction, appropriateness of instruments, & format of final report
➢ Serve as liaison between evaluators & participants (e.g. setting up interview schedule)
➢ Collect & share observation notes, project documentation, photos with evaluators as designated
➢ Assist in administration of surveys, if used
➢ Provide incentives for teacher, student, parent, and/or staff participation in evaluation process

Deliverable Products
➢ Farms for City Kids Program Logic Model: Due December 2005
➢ Informal report, as presentation to board, on existing survey and interview data: Due December 2005
➢ Formal report on 05-06 evaluation findings: Due April 2006
➢ Presentation and facilitation of discussion on final report with board and/or staff: April 2006

Farms for City Kids Evaluation Overview, 2005-2006
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Evaluation Strategy/Activity</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Existing Data</strong></td>
<td>a) Enter, code, and analyze most relevant existing 2003-2005 teacher and student survey data.</td>
<td>Fall 05</td>
<td>• Based on data collected so far, what are the most notable and consistent impacts of the Farms for City Kids program on students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Review video data and document primary themes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Data Collection</strong></td>
<td>c) Initial one-day site visit and program observation.</td>
<td>July 05</td>
<td>As a result of their participation in the Farms for City Kids program:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Develop surveys and interview guides for students and teachers.</td>
<td>Aug 05</td>
<td>• What areas of students’ personal and social skills are being affected, and in what ways? (self-esteem, self-confidence, leadership, cooperative teamwork, conflict resolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Conduct pre- and post- interviews and surveys with one group of students and their teachers at Spring Brook Farm. Conduct follow up interviews and surveys at the school in NYC.</td>
<td>Oct 05 Jan 06</td>
<td>• How have students’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about food and health choices changed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) Conduct interviews with program staff.</td>
<td>Oct 05</td>
<td>• How have students’ knowledge of and attitudes about agriculture, farm animals, and the environment changed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g) Conduct interviews and focus groups with alumni students, teachers, parents, administrators, etc. during on-location visit to NYC.</td>
<td>Jan 06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Report</strong></td>
<td>h) Plan, travel, transcribe, analyze, report on interviews &amp; site visits. Provide electronic and print versions of final report on survey, observation, and interview data (#2), and existing data.</td>
<td>Apr 06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Presentations</strong></td>
<td>i) Present findings and facilitate discussion of informal report on existing data and status of evaluation at Staff or Board Meeting.</td>
<td>Dec 05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j) Present findings and facilitate discussion of final report at Staff or Board Meeting.</td>
<td>Apr 06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>k) Facilitate development of a program logic model, articulating the theory of change, and identifying evaluation needs. Provide final Logic Model as part of Informal and/or Final Report.</td>
<td>July 05</td>
<td>• What resources and activities are used to create desired outcomes? Where are key evaluation needs within the program logic?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C – Evaluation Instruments

1. **Video interview guide**

2. **Case study student pre-post survey**

3. **Case study staff observation form**

4. **Staff interview guide**

5. **Teacher interview guide**

6. **Teacher Survey**

7. **Student Survey**

8. **Teacher cover letter**

9. **Passive consent form**
Video Interview Guide

CONVERSATION BUILDING FORMAT  
BASIC DISCUSSION METHOD*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is this conversation about?</th>
<th>What we learned at Spring Brook Farm and defining the value of this program to students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At what occasion does it take place?</td>
<td>During a filming of a student “debriefing” session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the rational objective of this conversation?</td>
<td>To create a “picture” of the experience of the Farms for City Kids Program so that non-participants can gain a clear understanding of how it operates and how it impacts children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the experiential aim of this conversation?</td>
<td>To create a situation in which student participants can share with enthusiasm and sincerity their experience at the Farms for City Kids Program and how it has affected their lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HINTS: When facilitating this conversation, it is not necessary to ask all of the questions below. You may ask more objective level questions and move through several very quickly. Then, as the conversation flows, ask fewer reflective and fewer still interpretive –allowing students time to really think through their responses. You may also want to allow students to “key off of” responses that others have made at the interpretive level. This process takes some practice to get a good flow and rhythm established, but will be successful, in any case, if you stay true to the progression. The decisional level requires fewer questions AND fewer responses.

| OPENING: | Good Afternoon, boys and girls. Today, we are going to talk about our experiences on the Farm. We want to share what we learned so that the people who watch this video will understand what The Farms for City Kids Program is. OK? |
| OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS | When did your class go to Vermont?  
|                     | Was it a long trip?  
|                     | What did you see when you first arrived?  
|                     | What did you smell?  
|                     | What animals were there?  
|                     | How many cows?  
|                     | Any calves? Heifers?  
|                     | What’s a heifer?  
|                     | Who did you meet?  
|                     | Someone please describe the chores that you had to do?  
|                     | Where did you sleep? What did you eat?  
|                     | Etc. |
| REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS | What was the most fun part of your week at the Farm? What did you like the least?  
|                     | What was the hardest part of being in this program? What do you think that you will remember forever?  
|                     | How did you feel when you were on the Farm?  
|                     | How does that compare to how you feel in other places, like school, or home?  
|                     | What were some of your fears about going to the farm, and did you overcome those fears by the end of your week there? |
| INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS | What do you think is the most important lesson that you learned on the Farm?  
|                     | What did you learn about yourself? About your classmates and teachers?  
|                     | Why is a program like Farms for City Kids important?  
<p>|                     | What is one thing that you do (or feel) differently since you have returned home from the Farm? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DECISIONAL QUESTIONS</th>
<th>What is something that you or your class can do now to continue using the new behaviors and knowledge that you learned on the Farm?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What would you tell a school principal if he or she wanted to know if this is a good program for his/her school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you had the opportunity to return to Spring Brook Farm next year, would you want to go back, and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you had to describe your experience with Farms for City Kids in only one (or two words), what would that word be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOSING:</td>
<td>Thank you very much for sharing with us, today. I can see that you really learned a lot from your time with The Farms for City Kids. Your stories have really helped me to remember what I love about Spring Brook Farm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The Basic Discussion Method is a TOP (Technology of Participation) Trade Marked Method of The Institute of Cultural Affairs.
Case Study Student Pre-Post Survey

Farms for City Kids Student Survey

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. This is not a test! This will not be graded. Your responses will be used to help improve the Farms for City Kids program, and will not affect your school grades in any way. All of your answers will be kept confidential.

Please read these instructions for Part One of the survey:

Read each of the sentences and decide if they are closer to true ("like you"), or closer to false ("not like you"). Use the 8 point scale to indicate how true or false each statement is for you right now. ‘One’ means that you think the sentence is not like you at all. ‘Eight’ means that the sentence is very much like you. Please complete all items -- do not leave any blanks.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS: Your teacher will talk to you about these two examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FALSE</th>
<th>More false</th>
<th>More true</th>
<th>TRUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like me</td>
<td>Not like me</td>
<td>Not like me</td>
<td>Like me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C1. I like to watch cartoons.
James circled 2 because he believes that ‘I like to watch cartoons’ is not very true for him. He hardly ever watches cartoons.

C2. I like to play sports.
Samantha circled 7 because she likes to play basketball and soccer. She thinks that ‘I like to play sports’ describes her pretty well.

**ARE YOU SURE WHAT TO DO?**
If yes, then please turn the page over...
If still unsure about what to do, ASK FOR HELP
PLEASE GIVE HONEST ANSWERS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name: ____________________________</th>
<th>FALSE</th>
<th>More false than true</th>
<th>More true than false</th>
<th>TRUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date: ________________________________</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01. Most things I do turn out well.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02. I am good at cooperating with my classmates.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03. I like taking care of animals.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>04. I solve problems with my friends by talking things out with them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
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<td>05. I know I have the ability to do anything I want to do.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
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<td>06. I know that I can work hard.</td>
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<td>07. I cooperate well when working in a team.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
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<td>08. I think farmers are doing an important job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>09. Overall I have a lot to be proud of.</td>
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<td>10. I respect other people.</td>
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<td>11. Walking and hiking are activities I enjoy.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
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<td>12. I resolve my conflicts with other people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
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<td>13. I think farm animals deserve our respect.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
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<td>14. I don't like hard work.</td>
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<td>15. Farm animals have similar needs to humans.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
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p. 2 of 5
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<th>More false than true</th>
<th>More true than false</th>
<th>TRUE</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>16. I help out with chores at home.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>7 8</td>
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<td>17. I enjoy being outdoors.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>18. I try to avoid unnecessary arguments with others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>7 8</td>
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<td>19. Big farm animals make me nervous.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
<td>7 8</td>
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<td>20. It is important to me to eat well and get exercise.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
<td>7 8</td>
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<td>21. My classmates respect the way I deal with arguments.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
<td>7 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. As a leader, I help people to work well together.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
<td>7 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. I am comfortable with bugs.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
<td>7 8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24. My classmates see me as a leader.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
<td>7 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. When I try hard I know I will succeed.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
<td>7 8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. I behave appropriately toward other people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
<td>7 8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. I am strong.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
<td>7 8</td>
<td></td>
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Part Two

These questions are about food and farming. Answer them as best as you can. Remember, this is not a test.

1. What foods are made from milk? List as many as you can think of.

2. Describe the life cycle of a dairy cow, starting from when it is born until it is an adult.

3. What foods come from a farm?

4. Describe a meal that you would enjoy eating.
5. Create a diagram using words, arrows, and pictures to show how milk gets from a cow to your cereal bowl. Include as many steps and as much detail as you can.
Case Study Staff Observation Form

Filling out this form will provide the evaluation team with your observations about impacts the farm program has on the students. Your contributions are very valuable!! Specific details, quotes from students, and complete sentences make this data much more useful for evaluation purposes. Please keep this form handy and add to it as often as is convenient for you during the week. Feel free to use the front and back of the paper, and add additional sheets if you need to. Please return this to Jen on Friday after the students have departed.

Your Name:

1. We are looking at whether the week at the farm has an effect on these five different areas of the students’ personal and social skills:

   - **Self Esteem** (feeling good about themselves)
   - **Self Confidence** (feeling capable of doing things)
   - Leadership
   - Cooperative Teamwork
   - Conflict Resolution

If you notice that a student seems to be having a success, making a change, feeling challenged, or having a breakthrough in one of these areas, please describe it. Use quotes from the students if you are able to remember them.

   Example: Mark did not think he would make it to the top of the world. When we got there he said “I didn’t think I could make it, but now I know I am a good hiker.”

2. One of the goals for the students is that they learn about healthy choices while they are at the farm. This can include changing attitudes, behaviors, or knowledge about food, exercise, or any healthy activities. Please comment here on any observations you make about students’ healthy choices.

   Example: At lunch today Jessica said she was going to drink milk instead of Pepsi when she got home.

3. We would also like to find out what impact the week at the farm has on students’ knowledge and attitudes about farming, farm animals, and the environment. Please use this page to record your observations about noteworthy student learning in these areas:

   - knowledge and attitudes about farming
   - knowledge and attitudes about farm animals
   - knowledge and attitudes about the environment

   Example: I overheard these comments from students today:

   “I used to think cows were dumb, but now I see they are pretty smart.”
   “I never knew that farming was such hard work!”
   “I’m not afraid of spiders anymore.”
Staff interview guide

Farms for City Kids
Staff Interview Guide
Spring Brook Farm

Introducer: Andrew Powers, PEER Associates
Date: Monday, October 17, 2005
Group size: 2-3 Staff members
Estimated duration: 30 minutes
Taped/Transcribed

Introduction
- Who I am, what am I doing, etc.
- Confidentiality, no names used in any reporting
- Evaluating the program, not the staff themselves, trying to make this the best program it can be, and as staff they are in a unique position to observe the effects on students.

Conversation Starter

1. Based on your personal observations and experiences on the Farm, what do you think are the most significant ways that students change from their experiences here? Why?

Personal Growth

2. We are investigating how a visit to the farm impacts the students’ personal and social skills. I’ll go through a list of these items and ask if you think these aspects of the students are affected by their experience here. Please give specific examples or anecdotes that come to mind.

   • Self-Esteem (feeling good about themselves)
   • Self-Confidence (feeling capable of doing things)
   • Leadership
   • Cooperative Teamwork
   • Conflict Resolution

Healthy Choices

3. We’d like to find out if spending the week at Spring Brook Farm affects students’ relationship with food. Specifically, we are looking for changes in knowledge, attitude, or behavior about food and eating?

   • Do you think the students gain new knowledge or awareness about food while here?
   • Do you think their attitudes toward food change?
• Finally, do you think that the knowledge and attitudes lead to any changes in their behavior?

4. In a similar way to the previous question, we’d like to find out if spending the week at Spring Brook Farm affects students’ knowledge, attitude, or behavior about exercise and physical activity?

• Do you think the students gain new knowledge or awareness about exercise and physical activity?
• Do you think their attitudes toward physical activity change?
• Finally, do you think that the knowledge and attitudes lead to any changes in their behavior?

5. Other than food and exercise, do you think that students learn about other healthy choices while here at the farm?

Farming/Work

6. Do you see students’ knowledge of and attitudes about farm animals changing? How so?

7. More generally speaking, do you see students’ knowledge of and attitudes about farming changing?

8. There seem to be a lot of stories about how students’ attitudes about hard work changes. Do you see that, and why do you think they change? Are they changes for the better or for the worse?

Environment

9. The final area I’d like to ask about is changes to students’ knowledge of and attitudes about the environment. What do you think are the main things students learn about the environment while they are here? Do you think their attitudes change?
Teacher Interview Guide

Farms for City Kids
Teacher Interview Guide
Spring Brook Farm

Interviewer: Andrew Powers, PEER Associates
Date: Thursday, October 20, 2005
Group size: 2 Teachers
Estimated duration: 45 Minutes
Taped/Transcribed

Introduction

• Who I am, what am I doing, etc.
• Confidentiality, no names used in any reporting
• Evaluating the program, not the staff or the students themselves, trying to make this the best program it can be, and as teachers they are in a unique position to observe the effects on students.

Conversation Starter

10. Based on your personal observations and experiences on the Farm this week and in previous visits, what do you think are the most significant ways that students change from their experiences here? Why?

Personal Growth

11. We are investigating how a visit to the farm impacts the students’ personal and social skills. I’ll go through a list of these items and ask if you have seen changes in these areas in your students. Please give specific examples or anecdotes that come to mind.

• Self-Esteem (feeling good about themselves)
• Self-Confidence (feeling capable of doing things)
• Leadership
• Cooperative Teamwork
• Conflict Resolution

Healthy Choices

12. We’d like to find out if spending the week at Spring Brook Farm affected your students’ relationship with food. Specifically, we are looking for changes in knowledge, attitude, or behavior about food and eating?

• Do you think the students gained new knowledge or awareness about food while here?
• Do you think their attitudes toward food changed?
• Finally, do you think that the knowledge and attitudes led or could lead to any changes in their behavior?
13. In a similar way to the previous question, we’d like to find out if spending the week at Spring Brook Farm affects students’ knowledge, attitude, or behavior about exercise and physical activity?

   • Do you think the students gained new knowledge or awareness about exercise and physical activity?
   • Do you think their attitudes toward physical activity changed?
   • Finally, do you think that the knowledge and attitudes led or could lead to any changes in their behavior?

14. Other than food and exercise, do you think that your students learned about other healthy choices while here at the farm?

**Farming/Work**

15. How do you see students’ knowledge of and attitudes about farm animals changing?

16. More generally speaking, do you see students’ knowledge of and attitudes about farming changing?

17. I have already heard a lot of stories about how students’ attitudes about hard work change. Do you see that, and why do you think they change?

**Environment**

18. The final area I’d like to ask about is changes to students’ knowledge of and attitudes about the environment. What do you think are the main things students learn about the environment while they are here? Do you think their attitudes change?

**Classmate/Teacher Relations**

19. Do you think that how your students get along and interact with each other has changed at all from being here together?

20. Do you think that how your students interact with you has changed at all from being here together?
Teacher Survey

**Farms for City Kids Educator Survey**

We recognize that you have many demands on your time and appreciate your completing this survey. Your thoughtful input helps us to evolve our program so that it best serves everyone who comes to the farm. Your responses will be seen only by the evaluation team, and your name will NOT be used in any report, publication or discussion without your prior permission. Your honest feedback is appreciated. Please be candid with your answers. THANK YOU!

**How much do you disagree or agree?**
For each question, please circle only one number that best matches your opinion. Please do not leave any blanks. If you still have the students you went to the farm with, assume the present tense for questions 1-17.

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<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
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(Please complete all three pages. Attach additional pages if necessary.)
18. How did the farm experience translate back into your classroom, or back into school in general (if you don't have these same students in your specific class this year)? For example, did students behave differently, or relate to you or each other differently?

19. Social skills: cooperation, teamwork, conflict resolution, etc.
   a) Do you feel that the farm experience made it possible for your students to improve their cooperation, teamwork, conflict resolution skills, and/or other social skills? circle one: YES  NO  NOT SURE

   If you answered YES, please continue. If you answered NO or NOT SURE, please skip to 19d.

   b) Can you provide specific examples of your students developing these skills at the farm?

   c) Can you name specific activities or events that were part of the farm experience that were most effective in teaching or promoting these skills?

   d) Can you offer any suggestions about how to make the program even more effective in helping students improve their social skills?

20. Personal skills: self-confidence and self-esteem
   a) Do you feel that the farm experience made it possible for your students to improve their feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem? circle one: YES  NO  NOT SURE

   If you answered YES, please continue. If you answered NO or NOT SURE, please skip to 20d.

   (Please complete all three pages. Attach additional pages if necessary.)
b) Can you provide specific examples of your students developing personal skills such as self-confidence and self-esteem at the farm?

c) Can you name specific activities or events that were part of the farm experience that were most effective in teaching or promoting these skills?

d) Can you offer any suggestions about how to make the program even more effective in helping students improve their personal skills?

21. What other influences, if any, did you notice the farm program having on your students? Please be as specific as possible and cite examples.

22. We are also interested in gathering stories about individual students who had exceptionally positive results from participating in the farm program. If you have had such a student and are willing to share the story, please use the back of this page or attach separate sheets with as much detail as you can about the student and how they benefited/changed/grew from the farm experience. Also, if you are willing to help us get brief written statements from these students and their parents, please indicate that and we will contact you.

Your Name __________________ Your grade level or position ______________ Today's Date __________

Only the evaluation team will see your individual responses.

Please return this survey in the envelope provided to:

PEER Associates 836 Snipe Ireland Road Richmond, Vermont 05477

The End. Thank you again for taking the time to fill out this survey!

(Please complete all three pages. Attach additional pages if necessary.)
Student Survey

Your School ____________________________________________

Month and year of your farm visit _________________________

Farms for City Kids Student Survey

These questions are about the week you spent living and working at Spring Brook Farm. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. This is not a test! Your responses will be used to help improve the Farms for City Kids program for future students, and will not affect your school grades in any way. If you need more space, please ask your teacher for extra paper.

1. What was the most important lesson that you learned at the farm?

2. While you were at the farm, did you discover new abilities or personal qualities that you have? If you did, what are they?

3. Do you think your week spent at Spring Brook Farm changed you in any way? If yes, please explain.

4. Do you think that your trip to the farm affected the way you and your classmates get along socially? If so, please give some examples.
5. Do you think that your trip to the farm affected the way you get along with the
   teacher you went with? If so, please give some examples.

6. Kids accomplish a lot of things while they are at the farm. When you look back, how do you
   feel about what you accomplished while you were at the farm?

7. Do you think the experience of working in teams at the farm has helped you cooperate or
   work together more effectively with other kids since the trip? If so, in what ways?

8. Do you think the experience of working in teams at the farm has helped you resolve
   conflicts more effectively with other kids since the trip? If so, in what ways?

Thank you! Your ideas are important! Please hand this back to your teacher when you're done.
March 16, 2006

Dear Teacher,

We hope that you will consider participating in the Farms for City Kids program evaluation which is currently underway. In an effort to learn more about how the program functions, what the impacts are, and how to improve, the Farms for City Kids staff and board hired our team of evaluators to conduct an evaluation of the program. Such an evaluation can also provide them with the evidence they need to fully support and funding for program continuation.

In an effort to gather specific detail about the experiences students and teachers have at the farm, we have developed a survey for you, as a teacher, and for the students who attended the farm program.

We are asking you to do two things:

- If you have not already, please complete the educator survey online at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?n=90664136534
- Have your students who went to the farm complete and return a Student Survey.

In appreciation of your participation in both of these evaluation activities, the Farms for City Kids staff will send you a bottle of their pure Vermont maple syrup.

You will find enclosed a packet of materials to be used by yourself and your students. Here is a brief explanation of each of the enclosed documents:

1. A “passive consent” letter for parents. If you will send this home to parents as soon as possible, it will state that we are notified of any parent who is not comfortable with his or her child participating in the evaluation process. (This is different from a typical “active consent” permission slip in which parents are required to complete and sign a form.)
2. Directions for you to read prior to administering the survey to your students. Part of this is directions for you alone; the other part represents directions we’d like you to share along with the students. It is very important that all the surveys be administered according to these standards.
3. 20 copies of the Student Survey.
4. An Educator Survey for you to complete (You may also complete the same survey online at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?n=90664136534)

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call and talk to Amy or myself at 802-434-4257.

Thanks in advance for your willingness to assist Farms for City Kids in their evaluation efforts.

Regards,

Andrew Poison
Research Associate & Finance Director

836 Snipe Ireland Road, Richmond, VT 05477 802-434-4257 Andrew@PEERassociates.net
272 Eaton Road, Swanzey, NH 03446 603-357-3547 Michael@PEERassociates.net
Passive consent form
March 19, 2006

Dear Parent,

You may recall that, either in 2003 or 2004, your child spent one week at Spring Brook Farm in Vermont as part of the Farms for City Kids program. In an effort to learn more about how the program functions, what the impacts are, and how to improve, the Farms for City Kids staff and hired local teams of evaluators to conduct an evaluation of their program. Such an evaluation can also provide them with the evidence they need to rally support and funding for program continuation.

We are requesting your permission for your child to participate in one of the evaluation activities, a brief written survey, that they will complete in class. Any survey responses that we utilize (for reports, brochures, presentations or other uses) will remain anonymous.

If you grant permission for your child to participate in this survey, you may disregard this form. If we do not hear from you, we will assume we have your consent for your child’s involvement in our evaluation efforts.

If you are not willing to grant your permission, please sign the attached form and give it promptly to the teacher who sent it to you.

If you have any questions about the evaluation, please call Andrew at 802-454-4257. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,
Andrew Powers
Amy L. Powers
Program Evaluators

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**NOTE:** If you are willing to have your child participate in the evaluation, you can disregard this form.

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**Farms for City Kids Evaluation**

**Parent Consent Form**

Please check all that apply:

- [ ] I do NOT give my son/daughter permission to talk to a program evaluator for Farms for City Kids about his/her learning experience, including doing surveys.

- [ ] I do NOT give the evaluator permission to take photos of my son/daughter participating in farm activities.

- [ ] I do NOT give PEER Associates permission to use my child’s photos or quotes in their publications.

- [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Child’s Name:
Classroom teacher (teacher who provided this form):
School Name:
Date:
Parents/Guardian’s Signature:
Parents/Guardian’s Name:

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836 Snipe Ireland Road, Richmond, VT 05477 802-434-4257 Amy@PEERassociates.net
272 Eaton Road, Swanzey, NH 03446 603-357-3547 Michael@PEERassociates.net