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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **New Mexico Grow Project Grant Awards Support Hands-On Agricultural Learning Across the State**

The New Mexico Grow Project Grant is a partnership between Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in New Mexico and New Mexico Agriculture in the Classroom (NMAITC). The program helps educators and students make meaningful connections to agriculture and natural resources through hands-on, standards-based learning experiences that build critical thinking and real-world problem-solving skills. Grant recipients receive a fully assembled raised garden bed with drip irrigation, a classroom hydroponic system, growing supplies, specialized trainings, ongoing support from agricultural experts, and access to free K-12 Agriculture in the Classroom curriculum resources.

While the Grow Project looks different for each grant recipient based on their individual goals, all projects share innovative components focused on hands-on agricultural education, student wellness, and real-world learning experiences. Programs include agricultural learning labs featuring hydroponics, vegetable cultivation, food preservation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable agriculture practices, along with outdoor classrooms and demonstration gardens that connect students to soil health, conservation, vermicomposting, and food production. These projects provide engaging STEM-based learning opportunities that build critical thinking, problem-solving, and vocational skills while helping students compare traditional gardening and hydroponics. Additional goals include increasing nutrition awareness through harvest tasting events and farm-to-fork programs, integrating fresh produce into school meals, fostering student leadership, strengthening cultural connections to New Mexico agriculture, and teaching economic literacy through real-world selling experiences. Collectively, the projects create “living laboratories” that support multiple learning styles while helping students develop a deeper understanding of food systems, natural resources, and sustainable agriculture.

“NRCS New Mexico is proud to continue this partnership that brings hands-on agricultural learning directly into classrooms across the state,” said Leonard Luna, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships. “When students have the opportunity to connect conservation, food, and the land around them, it strengthens not only their education, but also the future of New Mexico’s agricultural communities. The New Mexico Ag in the Classroom program is an excellent opportunity for teachers throughout our state.”

Congratulations to these 12 schools receiving the 2025-2026 New Mexico Grow Project Grant

- Texico High School, Texico, NM, Kelsey Mortensen
- Caballo Soil & Water Conservation District, Garfield, NM, Chantal Orosco
- White Mountain Elementary, Ruidoso, NM, Rebecca Ilgen
- Socorro High School, Socorro, NM, Cassidy Cordova
- Ranch & Roots Academy, LLC, Farmington, NM, Heather Beaty
- La Plata Middle School, Silver City, NM, Raine Pettigrew
- Anansi Charter School, El Prado, NM, Kaila Dickey
- Dennis Chavez Elementary School, Albuquerque, NM, Joanna Harbaugh
- Maggie Cordova Elementary School, Rio Rancho, NM, Jennifer Honaberger
- Mesa Middle School, Roswell, NM, Stacy Dietrich
- Lynn Community Middle School, Las Cruces, NM, John Melvin
- Sierra Elementary Complex, Truth or Consequences, NM, Amanda Forrister and Rebecca Quiles

Anyone interested in learning more about curriculum connections to raised bed and hydroponics growing or in applying for the next grant is invited to attend an upcoming training.

Tuesday, June 2 - Sierra Elementary Complex, Truth or Consequences, NM

Tuesday, June 16th - Maggie Cordova Elementary, Rio Rancho, NM

Monday, June 29 - White Mountain Elementary, Ruidoso, NM

To register, please visit <https://form.jotform.com/91183897031158> or email [agclass@nmflb.org](mailto:agclass@nmflb.org)

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Services is an agency committed to "helping people help the land." For more than 80 years, NRCS has made investments in farm, ranch, and forest operations and local communities to improve the quality of our air, water, soil, and habitat, keep working lands working, boost rural economies, and increase the competitiveness of American agriculture. Their mission is to deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world. Please visit us at your local field office or at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/nm](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/nm) for more information. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

New Mexico Agriculture in the Classroom (NMAITC) is a non-profit educational outreach program funded primarily by the membership of the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau. The purpose of NMAITC is to educate the public, with an emphasis on K-12 students and educators, about the importance of agriculture. Visit us at [www.nmaitc.org](http://www.nmaitc.org) for more information.

New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau is a 20,000-member organization comprised of farmers and ranchers, and those who are interested in private property rights and a local food supply. NMF&LB is the state's largest, private agricultural organization and was founded in 1917. For information about joining us, please call 575-532-4703 or visit [www.nmflb.org](http://www.nmflb.org).