LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Melinda Matice, Instructor
English Language Institute (ELI)
Denise Galarza Sepúlveda, Director
Center For Engaged Academic Learning (CEAL)

Engaged Learning: Gardening & the Community
This course places EAP and ELS students in local Community Gardens as weekly volunteers in order to:
- Understand how gardens are representative of variations within our regional economies
- Analyze how these gardens reflect the needs of their respective cultures
- Explore larger food networking systems by visiting urban gardens in Detroit
- Develop confidence and fluency while speaking with Americans from across the region

“Working with Mindy’s students was a great opportunity for the teens to get out of the comfort zone of strictly peer relationships. The teens became both teachers and students in the garden alongside enthusiastic people from a diverse range of ages, languages, and experiences.”
- Rachel Nisch, Director
Avalon Youth Leadership Program

“Detroit is changing very positively with the power of community.”
- Naoto Watanabe, Masters
Public Policy

Collaboration Between CEAL & ELI
- Context and Parameters
- Discussion of Goals & Principles
- Theme and Community Connection Brainstorm
- Strategies & Course Design
- Community Liaising & Logistical Work
- Evaluation, Partner Feedback & Adjustments

Community Connections
Ann Arbor & Ypsilanti
- Avalon’s Youth Leadership Program, Ann Arbor
- Working with teens from local homeless housing organization

- Recreation Park Community Garden, Normal Park, Ypsilanti
- A garden for adjacent senior center, and local community (and beekeeping too).

- Zion Lutheran Food & Faith Garden, Ann Arbor
- A local church whose garden is solely devoted to feeding those in need.

- Project Grow Community Garden, Leslie Science Center, Ann Arbor
- Working with one of the oldest community garden organizations in the U.S.

Detroit
- Michigan Urban Farming Initiative (MUTF), in Detroit’s North End
Since 2011, a center for alternative projects for revitalizing sustainable farming.

- D-Town Farms, River Rouge Park, Detroit
- Working for Justice and Food Sovereignty and a center for education.

- Forgotten Harvest, Oak Park, MI
- Dedicated to relieving hunger in Metro Detroit, Forgotten Harvest “rescued” 40.9 million pounds of food last year.

Partnering Principles
- Conversations, Context & Relationship Building
- Co-Creation of Projects
- Bi-Directional Benefit (Letters of Agreement)
- U-M Student Preparation
- Feedback & Adjustments

All these interactions have been a spark and inspiration to continue my commitment for social justice in the world.”
- Erika Murcia, Masters
School of Social Work