



Food is different. It touches all aspects of our lives. Sustainability of the agricultural systems and food production that bring food to our plates is one the largest societal challenges we face today. Therefore, it has been an honor to build my career as a food educator. Through these roles I use experiential learning and alternative education to teach students of all ages about the importance of sustaining our agricultural and food systems under the pressures of population growth and limited resources.

My journey to become a food educator began when I took my first PitE class, ENVIRON 270: *Our Common Future-Ecology, Economics, and Ethics of Sustainable Development*. It was learning about the interconnectedness of global food system and how my actions impact the lives of farmers across the world that ignited my passion for improving the social, economic, and environmental equity of that very system. It was this class that motivated me to get my hands dirty working on Wilson College's Center for Sustainable Learning 7-acre organic farm. And it was this class that ultimately drove me to inspire others to learn through growing and celebrating food.

After exploring the role of educational farms, I spent two years working under a Department of Labor grant starting an organic farm on the College of Lake County campus and developing open source courses for their new Associates Degree in Local Foods and Sustainable Agriculture. In order to become a better educator, I attended Chatham University's Falk School of Sustainability and Environment for a Masters in Food Studies. This experience afforded me the time and space to research how experiential learning pedagogy can be used to teach students about complex sustainability issues, including food and agricultural systems.



This experience led me to my current role as the Director of Shady Side Academy Farms. The Shady Side Academy Farms are an academy-wide sustainability initiative with gardens at all four of our campuses. The goals of the farm include demonstrating sustainability within our community, providing experiential learning opportunities, developing leadership training amongst the youth, and community engagement. At Shady Side Academy, I manage the educational gardens, co-teach with faculty across various disciplines at all three campuses, and work directly with students to help them manage our campus farmers market.



Taking what I learned in my Masters of Food Studies program, I began envisioning how the Shady Side Academy farms could become living laboratories. This vision



is becoming a reality as I integrated these fields of learning into lesson plans from Pre-K cooking to third grade seed starting experiments to 10<sup>th</sup> grade nutrition. It has been my goal to integrate this rich farm program not just within the sciences or into our cafeterias, but across the entire academy. I have worked with faculty members at all four of our campuses to make this vision a reality. Together we have created holistic learning experiences in the farm spaces and in the classroom that foster dynamic types of engagement and allow students to truly be inquisitive, develop a passion for experimenting, and connect with the environment around them.

When I am not teaching Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, I work as an adjunct faculty at Chatham University's Falk School of Sustainability and the Environment. I

have developed curricula and taught courses in agroecology, coffee production, and sustainable food systems. As a farm manager and educator at Shady Side Academy and Chatham University, I now teach my own courses about agroecology and sustainable food systems, which I hope will prepare global leaders to cultivate more innovative sustainable food production and consumption.