

Debbie
Mar



TEACHER

CHAMPION

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In this issue of our BCAITC Teacher Champion series, we are pleased to profile elementary school teacher, Debbie Mar. Discover her passion for educating students about BC agriculture and food.

Q: What school do you teach at? A: [Upper Sumas Elementary](#), Abbotsford.

Q: What grade(s) do you teach? A: Grade 3.

Q: How and when did you first learn about BCAITC? A: A colleague of mine has a cousin (Emma Sweeney) who worked for BCAITC. She told me about [Planting a Promise](#) and [Spuds in Tubs](#) programs. I was so excited I had to register right away!

Q: How long have you been teaching students about BC agriculture and food? A: This is my fifth year with Planting a Promise and Spuds in Tubs and my third year with Celebrating Liberation with a Promise. I have been teaching students about BC agriculture and food for over 30 years. Growing, appreciating, and celebrating harvest has been an important part of my practice.

Q: BCAITC has over 500 free downloadable resources including lesson plans, activities, videos, recipes, and more! What is your favourite BCAITC resource and why? A: I love the online resource [Fresh Stories](#). Fresh Stories provide educational activities to teach students about fresh fruits, veggies, and milk products which are part of the [BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program + Milk](#) programs. I am grateful to local growers and distributors for bringing fresh BC produce and products to students so they can learn where their food comes from, develop nutritional awareness and understand how eating BC grown produce supports local farmers.

Q: What is your favourite BCAITC program and why? A: My favourite programs are Planting a Promise and [Celebrating Liberation with a Promise](#). Students participating in the programs develop a connection to the earth by planting, observing, and nurturing flower bulbs. The seasonal life cycle of flowers allows students to connect this process to the changes in their own lives. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the flowers have become a symbol of hope, inspiring poetry and paintings.

Celebrating Liberation with a Promise teaches students the role tulips play in WWII history as a symbol of friendship between Canada and the Netherlands. Students' creative expression of their learning and their tribute to Canadian soldiers for liberating the Dutch captured the communities' hearts.

This year, students have been matched with a senior as they explore the new [Planting Intergenerational Promises](#) program which unites students and seniors through the planting of bulbs - extending agricultural learning in the classroom. This [newspaper article](#) provides details of how my classroom helped roll out this program.

To build on the program this past holiday season, students decorated living Christmas trees with handmade decorations, lights, and [inspirational messages](#) which were delivered to seniors. This act of service is something that the students had been looking forward to and has brought them great joy (especially during the floods when many of the school's families were displaced from their homes). The gift of giving has provided students with a deep sense of purpose and the desire to care for their community - thus strengthening bonds with seniors. Learn more in this [newspaper article](#).

Q: What is an agriculture or food-based project you have recently implemented in your classroom? A: Exploration of the vital role bees play in BC food production and preserving biodiversity and ecosystem health inspired the design and creation of a nesting mason bee habitat.

Q: Do you have any advice for other educators on how to integrate agriculture and food education into their curriculum? A: I encourage teachers to explore the [BCAITC website](#). It is so rich in resources for all grade levels and highly accessible. The programs are directly connected to the BC curriculum. The programs lend themselves to inquiry-based projects and inspire creativity. The possibilities are endless - bringing a sense of awe and appreciation for BC agriculture each year.

ABOUT THE TEACHER CHAMPION SERIES: This monthly BCAITC series features BC teachers who are passionate about providing agriculture and food education to K-12 students. For more information, please contact our Communications Coordinator, meghan@aitc.ca. *Photo credit Ashley Martens Photography.*