

October 2020



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

The Pumpkin Patch Project

As fall arrives, our months-long pumpkin patch project is coming to completion. Students have used their observational skills, counting and measuring, some basic botany and, of course, teamwork. The project has helped students become more aware of the seasons and their connection to the growing cycle.

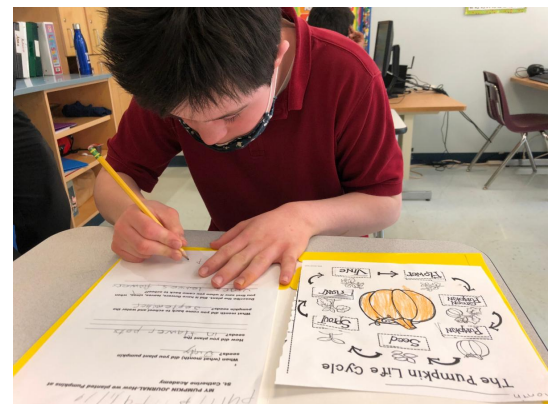
The project is the brainstorm of Patty Loh, one of the Academy teachers. "In summer school I thought it would be fun to study the life cycle of pumpkins," she said. "I bought the tray of seeds; we planted them, and within a week we had sprouts. The students were all excited."

The whole school got involved, with each class engaged in various activities. Mrs. Loh's class started with the basics. What is a seed? When is the best time to plant a seed? How do you help it grow?

She created a bulletin board illustrating the growing cycle and filling in the specific timeline of the Saint Catherine project. Her students worked on their calendar skills, connecting the names of the months with the number of the month on the timeline and identifying the stages of growth from photos.

Mrs. LaPorta's class conducted some "pumpkin investigation" each Wednesday afternoon, noting what they saw, answering specific questions about size and color, and reinforcing what they saw by coloring worksheets. In Sr. Cheryl's class, students created Pumpkin Patch journals, in which they recorded the number of plants and blossoms they observed, measured vines, and studied the planting timeline.

Like all scientific experiments, the results do not always come out as hoped. It is likely that we planted our seedlings too late for pumpkins to be harvested this fall. That is great information, and Mrs. Loh plans to



talk with her class about what they can do to make sure that we have pumpkins next year.

However, all this didn't stop a certain parent "Pumpkin Wizard" from dropping off a few full-grown pumpkins in the patch! Just for fun, of course.

[See more photos](#)



Adapting to a New Normal

We continue to welcome back our participants to the Adult Program. Many who returned part-time in mid-July are now attending full-time, arriving and leaving by team in a staggered morning and afternoon schedule.

"Scheduling is a complicated algorithm, but the staff is figuring it out," said Helen Burland, Executive Director. "We are working hard to make sure every square foot of space in the building is well-used and creating enough room for everyone to properly distance as much as possible." This has meant creating a fourth "cohort" and relocating the therapy and exercise room. The new space has also meant adding a new interactive Board and other equipment so that teams can continue to interact with each other and virtually with individuals at home.

"In small cohorts we're learning more about what works best with each individual," said Brady Cronin, Director of the Adult Program. "For instance, we knew that Ellie could read, but not as much as she does."

Ellie's mother, Sarah Kahn, agreed. "Samera (a direct service provider) and Ellie really bonded through reading," she said. "Samera noticed her vocalizing, and by encouraging the vocalizations, Ellie's reading has really blossomed."

While space will continue to be an issue going forward, there is a sense of hope and community in the midst of the new arrangements. "Everyone is so obviously happy to be back together again," said Burland.





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