



## Brickyard Educational Farm

### **Chicken Station**

#### **Summary:**

In this station students will interact directly with a flock of layer hens. By passing a hen around the circle, students learn to calmly hold a chicken and examine its beak, waddle, gizzard, foot, wing and comb. Students will carry out daily chores while learning how to care for a chicken's basic needs. The group will discuss five important roles of a chicken on a farm: eggs, meat, manure as fertilizer, scratching and pest control.

#### **Enduring Understandings:**

- Chickens and other domesticated animals are contributors to an organic farming system for their eggs, meat, soil preparation, pest control and manure.

#### **Objectives:**

- Students will understand the various roles of chickens in a holistic, organic farming system.
- Students will be able to identify the parts of a chicken and their function.

#### **Vocabulary:**

Rooster, laying hen, moveable electric netting, gizzard, waddle, comb, manure, nesting box, roost, coop, domesticated.

#### **Materials:**

Chicken feed  
Chicken flock  
Coop  
Egg basket  
Hand sanitizer

#### **Engage:**

Today we're going to visit and care for the chickens. Why do we need to care for the chickens?

- What do chickens need to live?
- Why do farmers keep chickens?
- Farmers keep chickens for meat, eggs, pest control and fertilizer

- Hens are female chickens, roosters are male chickens. Hens lay eggs while roosters protect the flock and fertilize eggs.
- Hens lay about one egg a day if their basic needs are met, and they are stress free.
- Chickens also produce important organic fertilizer.

### **Explore:**

- Set the tone and review rules before entering chicken coop.
- Have students observe chicken behavior and mimic their movements. Then enter coop once students are calm.
- Teach students how to handle and pick up chickens to view up close different chicken parts (beak, eye, ear, nostril, comb, waddle, primary and secondary wings, breast, scales, spur, gizzard). Allow time for individual observation.
- Tell students to watch where they are stepping. Ask students to observe what they see on the ground in the coop. (Chicken manure).
- Time for chicken chores! Direct students to feed barrel, and water spigot to refill food and water. Rotate chicken house three feet to new grass. Refill straw bedding in nesting boxes. Check for eggs in coop, and tally monthly count on chart.

### **Explain:**

Students recant observations from the coop and make hypotheses about roles and functions of the chickens.

- Chickens scratch with their feet for bugs, digest food with their gizzard, smell with their nostrils, hear with their ears, temperature regulate through the combs that also serve for mating purposes, flap with their wings, peck and eat with their beaks, fight with their spurs.
- Review the way the farmer cares for the chickens by filling their water, feed, collecting eggs, and providing fresh bedding in the chicken house to meet chicken's basic needs.
- In return, the farmer gets meat, eggs, fertilizer and pest control from chickens.
- The chicken fence is a portable, electric fence that the farmer rotates weekly. This allows for chickens to eat fresh grass and bugs that enhance their overall health.

### **Elaborate:**

Students are asked to think critically, and apply concepts they have learned to problem solve real life situations.

- Imagine a farmer's chicken coop has started to get muddy, and the chickens aren't laying very often. They are receiving the same amount of feed and water. What do you think is the cause, and what advice could you give the farmer?

- Because we are organic farmers, we don't use chemical pesticides. Collect a pest from the garden and see if chickens find this bug tasty! How could a farmer use this on a large scale?
- Students brainstorm if chickens have all the necessary requirements to meet their needs. If there is enough time, students will have the opportunity to rotate the fence to a new location with fresh grass and bugs.
- Chicken manure is fertilizer for the soil, which is why the chickens are rotated to new pasture.
- What do you think would happen to the ground if you never rotated the chickens?

**Evaluate:**

Ask students at the end of the station:

- What are the various roles of a chicken on the farm? (Why do farmers keep chickens?)
- What are the different parts of a chicken, and what role do they serve?

**Prepare students for the next station:**

- Take chicken bedding spent feed to compost station to add to pile.