

RBES donates garden produce

BY ANISA SULLIVAN JIMENEZ

Second graders at Rocky Branch Elementary have planted raised beds for Lanier Gardens residents.

One senior citizen sent a letter back to the school thanking students for the first garden-fresh tomato she had enjoyed in years.

The project combined the school's emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics curriculum as well as character development—an overlap that is visible throughout the school.

RBES is both a Georgia STEM Certified School and a National School of Character.

"We work together as a family to ensure our Rocky Branch Rockets are solving real-world problems in a nurturing learning environment," said Principal Laura Mason, who had previously served as assistant principal for eight years.

Each grade-level has its own focus, ranging from recycling at the kindergarten level to world hunger for third graders.

A variety of outdoor garden spaces—including a greenhouse, chickens and composting bins—sup-

port hands-on learning throughout the school.

In addition to maintaining school gardens while using science and math, students in the cooking club use eggs from the chickens and vegetables from the garden to provide home-cooked meals for those that don't have them over the weekend.

Students in a fourth grade class were recently working on a "Wheel of Choice," coming up with ways to solve problems among peers. Mason shared that there are plans to erect a wooden version on the playground soon to go with the Buddy Bench, a place where a student can sit during recess and soon be joined by someone ready to talk or play.

"The students and teachers here are incredible, and live out what it means to have character every day," said Mason.

"Our students are highly engaged in their learning, all while being good friends and leaving the world a little better than they found it."

Anisa Sullivan Jimenez is the director of communications for Oconee County Schools. This is the first of series of stories submitted by the school district about what makes each school unique.



Third grader Gavin Avinger shows Principal Laura Mason that the color of eggs laid by this variety of hens is the same color as their ear. [Photo by Anisa Sullivan Jimenez]