



On Sept. 20, the CDC, Dillard University and Langston Hughes Academy kicked off the “From Seed to Table” program in the greenhouse on Dillard’s campus. The partnership will bring Langston Hughes Academy (LHA) elementary students to Dillard’s campus once a week to garden and learn about biology, nutrition and agriculture. The students are each paired with a Dillard biology student (their “Botany Buddy”), who will serve not only as a teacher and gardening guide, but also as a role model and friend.

“I love the mentorship aspect of the program,” said Amy Zellweger, garden educator at LHA. “Pairing our kids with Dillard students gives them the idea that, ‘Hey, I can go to college too.’”

Students will grow root crops, such as carrots and beets; lettuces, including spinach and mesclun; and brassicas, like cauliflower, broccoli and kale. After sprouting in the temperature-controlled environment of Dillard’s greenhouse, the crops will be replanted down the street in LHA’s Dreamkeeper Garden.

Much of the food will be donated to families at LHA, which is part of the Firstline Schools charter school network. Some crops will be sold at the Sankofa Farmers’ Market in New Orleans’ Upper Ninth Ward, an element of the program that teaches entrepreneurship. Thus, “From Seed to Table” will help combat the food dessert that exists in parts of the city where fresh produce is difficult to find. The program was made available with the help of a grant written by the CDC.

“We’re going to work with all the students to see if their attitudes and knowledge about vegetables and healthy eating improve over the semester,” said Dr. Amy Lesen, biology professor at Dillard. “They’re going to see their vegetables actually grow, and we’re all going to eat our food together. So it’s a real seed-to-table, healthy eating, urban gardening project.”

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