

Michelle
Johnsrude



TEACHER

CHAMPION

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In this issue of our BCAITC Teacher Champion series, we profile secondary school teacher, Michelle Johnsrude. Discover her passion for educating students about BC agriculture and food.

Q: What school do you teach at? A: [Highroad Academy](#) in Chilliwack.

Q: What grade(s) do you teach? A: 11-12.

Q: How and when did you first learn about BCAITC? A: I first found out about BCAITC from a friend about 8 years ago and I participated in the [Spuds in Tubs](#) program for a few years and my high school kids loved it – especially making baked potatoes at the end of the year.

Q: How long have you been teaching students about BC agriculture and food? A: About 10 years.

Q: What are the most important things that you want your students to learn about BC agriculture and food? A: I think it's really important for students to understand that agriculture is a huge and dynamic industry in BC and across Canada. I want to break down the assumption that everyone in agriculture lives on a farm and drives a tractor. Those ideas are just a small part of what modern agriculture really is. Having a farmer show my students that they manage their barns from their smart phone was mind blowing for them. I want them to appreciate the possibilities in this field and respect the local farmers and suppliers that provide our food.

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 [Grow BC](#) map feature and the [Spotlight Series](#). I've used both of these over and over in my classroom. Students are always amazed by the variety of products from BC. "We grow kiwis here!?"

Q: What is your favourite BCAITC program and why? A: I think [Planting a Promise](#) would be my favourite. Each year I let kids choose where to plant the bulbs and then the look on their faces when 'it works' and the daffodils bloom in the spring is priceless. I think those are the small connections kids make with plants that can grow (ha ha) into something more.

Q: What is an agriculture or food based project you have recently implemented in your classroom? A: We have a school garden and this year my grade 12 students were able to choose something they were passionate about to add to the garden. I had a group of students who were really interested in improving habitat for bees and they researched bee-friendly plants to add, built a bee bath, and installed a bee house. They documented their progress and were so proud to show off their bee garden to the rest of the class. COVID-19 has made food at school a bit more tricky but we are hoping that we will soon be able to return to our berry smoothie bar this year. We grow blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries and the students get to care for the plants, harvest the berries, and then make smoothies for younger students.

Q: Do you have any advice for other educators on how to integrate agriculture and food education into their curriculum? A: Start small and collaborate! I started with 5 tubs of potatoes with the Spuds in Tubs program through BCAITC and colleagues from my school, Sardis Secondary, and University of the Fraser Valley, and I really think teamwork makes amazing things happen.

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.