FIELD TRIP TO THE CSU FULLERTON ARBORETUM
Preschool Classrooms Participate in Harvesting
**Educational Goals**

- To build community relationships between the ASI Children’s Center and the CSU Fullerton Arboretum
- To provide opportunities for children to engage in hands-on experiences that help to develop their appreciation of the natural world and build upon their understanding of science and nature
- To provide ways for children to build upon their understanding of the sources of the food they eat and the need for environmental stewardship
The preschool classrooms at the Asi Children’s Center were invited by the Arboretum to visit and participate in harvesting of potatoes and cucumbers.

- On three different mornings, Jonathan Davis (Farmer Jonathan) led groups of children through the Fullerton Arboretum to the garden beds. Along the way, he pointed out different fruit trees, showing how some trees weren’t “happy” because they didn’t get enough sunlight.

- Many children recognized the apples, oranges and banana trees and some had the opportunity to smell some of the herbs in the herb garden.
When the children reached the garden, they were able to see all the different things that could be grown such as onions, beets, strawberries and pumpkins.

Jonathan pointed out the potato plants, noting that the green parts of the plants were on top and the potatoes, the root of the plants, were in the dirt.

The children were then allowed to dive in and dig for potatoes!
Many of the children remarked that they were digging for potatoes like “a puppy digging for bones” or “looking for buried treasure”. Children noted the different sizes, shapes and colors of the potatoes they collected. Some children found that they had to work hard to get their potatoes out of the ground but saw that their efforts were well worth the results. The children were also enthralled with all the roly-poly bugs they found and tried to catch.
After collecting quite an array of potatoes, Jonathan led the children down to where the cucumbers grew. The children saw other plants growing nearby and some could recognize zucchini and pumpkins. Jonathon explained to the children that plants such as cucumbers, zucchini and pumpkins started off as flowers and then grew into the big green plants they saw.

The children were then allowed to pick cucumbers.
Some children needed help distinguishing what was a cucumber and what were other plants. Most of the children looked for the biggest or strangest looking cucumbers they could find. Many children were excited to see cucumbers grown in the shapes of “U’s” and “C’s”. Jonathan opened up some cucumbers and let the children smell and see the seeds inside. He also showed them a different type of cucumber called a “dragon’s egg”.
After opening the cucumber, some children asked Jonathan what he did with the uneaten food.

To answer that question, he led the children out of the garden area to bring out his compost box. Jonathan explained to the children that the food that wasn’t ok to eat would go into the compost box where worms worked to turn the food into soil to be used in the gardens.
One child asked why it the compost was covered with “old newspaper” and Jonathan explained that it was to keep “the wet in”.

Another child stated that the worms didn’t like sunlight.

The children enjoyed reaching in to take out worms to look at. One worm was affectionately dubbed “Kevin”. “Kevin” and the other worms were then placed back into the compost box to have their lunch and do their work of making soil.
BACK AT THE CHILDREN’S CENTER

When the harvesting field trips were finished at the Arboretum, the children and staff thanked Jonathan for showing us the garden and for allowing us to harvest the potatoes and cucumbers to take back to our center. The children were asked what they wanted to make with the potatoes and cucumbers and answers ranged from “mashed potatoes” to “potato salad” to “potato sandwich”. The children were excited to taste the food.
Most of the potatoes and cucumbers went home with children and families at the end of the day.

In the classrooms, the staff worked with children to wash and scrub potatoes for cooking and tasting. Children sorted different colored potatoes. One classroom made stir-fried potatoes with different seasonings while another made steamed and mashed potatoes.

Dragon’s egg cucumbers and regular cucumbers were prepared for children to taste and compare. Some children cut up their cucumbers to taste or to make cucumber water.

It was a fun and educational experience for all!