Growing our gardens.

City High School strives to make learning relevant and meaningful to the lives of our students. We seek opportunities for students to solve real problems and experience learning first-hand. Over the past year, our Farm to School program has grown to be an integral part of that educational mission.

The outdoor space between our buildings in downtown Tucson has been recreated this past year with a lively new look. Green vines snake along brick walls, climbing oxidized steel trellises. Tiny fish swim tirelessly in the aquaponics system, fertilizing lettuce, arugula, sage and kale with their waste. Student gardeners have planted vegetables, flowering vines and herbs that provide bright pops of green, yellow and purple visible through the steel gate on Pennington Street.

City High School and Paulo Freire Freedom School staff and students collaborated with a studio class in the University of Arizona’s College of Architecture, Planning and Landscape Architecture (CAPLA) to...
Creating our future – together.

Carrie Brennan, Executive Director, CITY Center for Collaborative Learning

Stakeholders shape ‘CITY 2020’ strategic plan.

City High School has been involved in the first stages of an ambitious strategic planning process over the past year and a half. Parents, students, staff, school founders, board members, partners, and community members participated in strategic input sessions from June 2014 through October 2015. The voices and perspectives of many stakeholders have come together to help envision and create our future.

New nonprofit develops. One of the major developments of the strategic planning process has been the emergence of a new nonprofit organization, CITY Center for Collaborative Learning. City High School will join with its long-time partners, the Paulo Freire Freedom Schools, in July 2016. This will result in a “larger than the sum of their parts” entity, allowing each of the three innovative and effective schools to continue to thrive and to better serve as powerful demonstration sites to share teaching and learning practices with others. Looking forward to 2020 and beyond, the mission is to have a bigger impact on the education landscape in Southern Arizona and beyond.

The CITY 2020 plan is official. At their monthly meeting on December 3, 2015, our nonprofit corporate board officially approved the CITY 2020 plan that includes the new organizational mission, vision, and values, as well as six strategic priority areas focused on organizational growth and excellence for 2015-2020.
The strategic priorities are Impact, Academic Program, Wellness, Technology & Facilities, Financial Sustainability, Governance & Organization. Each priority area has its own set of 4-6 goals and a list of recommendations and activities, developed with extensive input from the many stakeholders involved in the planning sessions. Example goals include:

- **Impact**
  - Goal 1: Achieve regional and national recognition for exemplary educational practices and professional development.

- **Academic Program**
  - Goal 1: Elevate excellence in project-based learning with a real world context.

- **Wellness**
  - Goal 2: School culture is positive, inclusive, caring, and invested.

- **Technology & Facilities**
  - Goal 5: Renovate 37 E. Pennington St. to create CITY Innovation Lab.

- **Financial Sustainability**
  - Goal 1: Create a culture of philanthropy throughout the organization.

- **Governance & Organization**
  - Goal 5: Engage in robust board development for corporate board.

**Momentum is growing.** The CITY 2020 plan is already generating a lot of action. As part of the governance goals, City High School launched a new school board this fall (members listed on page 8), allowing the corporate board to evolve its role away from school oversight toward expanded nonprofit leadership and pave the way for a future capital campaign. City High School staff and the new school board are making headway with the wellness goals, including a deeper attention to our Farm to School program (see “Growing our gardens,” page 1). CITY Center for Collaborative Learning is focused on the impact goals, developing professional development opportunities for educators and community partners throughout our region.

Thank you to all who were involved in creating the CITY 2020 plan. The process was collaborative, thoughtful, complex, and fruitful. Together we have created a vision for the future. Onward toward the horizon!
Growing our gardens, cont. from page 1

Redesign this urban alley and create an open-air space for play, learning and growing food.

**Sustainability Laboratory + Urban Garden = SLUG.** The SLUG project, as the CAPLA students came to call it, is now a key focal point of our blooming Farm to School program and serves as a campus playground, event space and outdoor classroom for City High School and Paulo Freire Freedom School. It is also a space for discovery and innovation, and students are especially enjoying learning about the aquaponics system.

Aquaponic gardening, a soilless method of growing that relies on fish waste to fertilize plants, requires significantly less water than conventional gardening and eliminates the need for nutrient dense, well-aerated soil. Student gardeners are exploring which plant varieties grow best in the system and learning why many gardeners and food producers regard this method of growing as the future of food production, especially in the Southwest.

**Las Milpitas de Cottonwood Community Farm** acts as a sunny, lush extension of the City High campus. A partnership with the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, the six-acre farm, two miles south of downtown, provides bountiful opportunities for place-based learning. Students learn about healthy eating by growing and cooking with organic food, about ecosystems by studying the wildlife that the farm’s vegetation attracts, and about the history of agriculture in the desert southwest by experimenting with native crops and farming methods.

Las Milpitas also serves as a resource for teaching and learning in core subject areas.

In 2015, math students calculated and measured the perfect locations for shade and fruit-providing apple trees. Humanities students studying native foodways made prickly pear lemonade during a hot farm visit. After sifting compost, biology students used microscopes to study insects, roots, flowers and fruits gathered around the farm. The farm allows students to close the gap between the classroom and the real world, to experience concepts in addition to reading about them.

**Students in the Urban Gardening and Sustainability class are key players in the Farm to School program.** The class is designed to produce young leaders who will be instrumental in evolving our food systems and stewarding a more sustainable future, with a focus on gardening in small and urban spaces. Students in the 2015-2016 class are studying climate change, sustainable development, healthy eating, youth activism...
and volunteerism, native foods, seed saving, food systems and security, and organic and commercial agriculture.

The class has become a tight-knit and spirited think tank for personal and campus-wide sustainability. Students conducted a school food survey, assisted in cooking and hosting the school’s first vegan Thanksgiving meal, debated genetically modified food, and grew plants for the farm and the SLUG.

A highlight of the Urban Garden & Sustainability class is the monthly cooking lesson with local plant-based chef, Kathy Iannacone. Kathy teaches the students about healthy eating for a more sustainable world. Students are learning to cook with more plants and less meat and dairy. It’s been exciting to taste nature’s bounty and to learn how decreasing consumption of animal products can conserve water, promote responsible land use, curb animal abuse and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. During a recent lesson on plant-based Italian cooking, Kathy dished out zucchini pasta doused in savory Bolognese sauce. “This is delicious,” exclaimed sophomore Skylar Moyer. “It tastes like the real thing!”

-- Leah Farbstein, Farm to School VISTA Member & Brett Goble, Principal

Who’s sponsoring?
Green Apple Day of Service Grant,
US Green Building Council
$500 to create garden signage.

Community Seed Grant,
Native Seeds/SEARCH
30 seed packets of heirloom seeds.

What’s growing?
Romaine lettuce, Onions, Kale, Sage
Arugula, Chives, Wheat, Chard,
Spinach, Cabbage, Mesclun Greens,
Beets, Carrots, Bok Choy, Radishes,
Broccoli, Chamomile, Calendula

Who’s talking?
Edible Baja Arizona
Community Spotlight Blog, 12/9/15
AZ Daily Star
Vegan Thanksgiving, 11/24/15
City High School Showcases New Urban Alley Garden, 10/30/15


No record of 2015 would be complete without a remembrance of Elliott. Our community grieved the loss of a dear friend, colleague, teacher, and mentor when Elliott Lax passed away on February 5, 2015. Elliott worked at City High School from 2004-2013 and was a key player in developing the school from its earliest years on. Elliott embodied the City High School mission throughout his life as an active citizen and responsible steward of his world.

Elliott had an impact on generations of students during his long Tucson teaching career that included years at The Gregory School, Catalina Foothills High School, and City High School. He was connected to many organizations and causes throughout his decades in our community, and he was a dear friend to so many. He leaves an enormous legacy.

We planted a fig tree in Elliott’s honor at Las Milpitas Farm, a piece of land we know he loved and one of the many community resources he helped connect to the school. It is one of many ways we are remembering Elliott this year.

Elliott (right) with students at a national service learning conference in Atlanta, GA.
Over ten years ago, when we made the commitment to keep our school small, we knew we had to be creative to keep to our mission of helping each student make meaningful connections to their city, region, and world. Over the years, we have collaborated closely with many community partners, together making it possible for our students to have the kinds of experiences many high school students only dream of.

Community partners have opened doors for our students to gain transferable skills and to have opportunities to showcase their work to public audiences. Our outreach efforts continue this year as classroom teachers take advantage of the resources and professional expertise right here in the Tucson community.

A group of professional documentary filmmakers are mentoring students in Annie Holub’s 9th grade Humanities class this year to help them write, direct, and produce documentary films. The connection to the real world of filmmaking enhances classroom lessons on rhetoric and the power of images. Students are also learning valuable technical skills from experts in the field. Students Samantha Zazueta and Michaela Silva are creating a film about their families and their Thanksgiving celebrations. “The best thing about this project is learning how to film and edit our own work. It’s a really interesting new skill set that I haven’t learned before. I’ve never been good at technology, and now I’m feeling comfortable with it,” said Michaela.

This fall, students in Dillon Martino’s 10th grade Humanities class teamed up with the Southwest Folklife Alliance to launch a new initiative at Tucson Meet Yourself, a 3-day festival celebrating local folk customs. The students worked with folklorist Nic Hartmann to conduct ethnographic research on folk traditions in southern Arizona and northern Mexico. Students applied their interviewing skills to collect stories of folklife and foodways at the “Ask Me About My Foodways” booth.

Next semester Jessica Melrose’s Fine Arts classes are working on a bookmaking project with one of our long-time community partners, Stories That Soar. Students will illustrate and produce books based on stories written by elementary school students and inspired by the works of Edgar Allen Poe. The project is part of the year-long “Big Read” events throughout Tucson, coordinated by Literacy Connects and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. The student-created books will be on display at the Festival of Books in March.

These opportunities – and many others each year – happen for our students because of the commitment and generosity of our community partners. We are grateful for the collaboration!
12 shout-outs & highlights from 2015

Jan → SRI’s national education conference comes to Tucson!

Feb → 9th annual Career Day features STEM experts!

March → Eve Rifkin receives word: She is the MEC College Counselor of the year!

April → City High Narwhal basketball team wins charter school championship!

May → 9th grader Michael Fisher takes top prize in congressional art contest!

June → City High School convenes the inaugural Tucson Queer Youth Summit!

July → Our afterschool program wins another 5-year 21st Century CLC grant!

August → School year #12 begins!

Sept → The whole school retreats to Mt. Lemmon!

Oct → City High Radio students win big AIPA awards!

Nov → Sophomore class hosts 9th annual Thanksgiving meal for the school – and the first ever vegan one!

Dec → Drama class performs 12 Angry Jurors at Zuzi Theatre!

Our annual tax credit campaign is racing to the finish line.

***

As of print time, we have raised almost $40,000 toward our goal of $60,000.

***

Thanks to all of those who have made their contribution already!

***

The deadline is Thursday 12/31.
School Board, 2015-2016
Marisol Badilla
Oliver Dewey '18
Meta Everett
Gaye Lynn Fisher
Michael Garcia
Brett Goble, Principal
Anne LaVigne
Rudy McCormick
Hannah Providence ‘17
Eve Rifkin
Erica Saunders
Caroline Tompkins
Alfredo Vasquez ‘17