



Garden for the Environment

College Corps Fellow Training

2024/25



Contents

1. Background and History of GFE
2. Goals
3. GFE Garden Tour
4. Field Trip Outline
5. Teaching Best Practices
6. Basic Gardening in San Francisco
7. Field Trip Schedule
8. SFE Resources

Background and History

Garden for the Environment (GFE) is San Francisco's public teaching garden. **Our mission is to teach people about the environment - soil, water, plants, creatures, and climate - so together we can grow a resilient, more beautiful world.**

Founded in 1990, we are one of the city's longest lasting gardening organizations and the only organization that has the sole purpose of teaching people about sustainable gardening techniques in San Francisco. Our organization consists of a small, experienced group of core staff, a team of part-time garden educators and instructors, an advisory board, and hundreds of volunteers.

GFE serves a unique and valuable purpose: educating children and adults about environmental stewardship, pollution prevention, water-wise gardening, and waste reduction through hands-on gardening education. Last year, GFE delivered 9,500 educational hours at low or no cost to participants. Over our 32-year history, GFE has taught 21,000 youth and 20,000 adults how to garden organically while conserving water. Our programming includes youth field trips on Tuesday and Thursday in the fall and spring, adult workshops on Saturdays, volunteer house on Wednesday and Saturdays, and a 3-month long, in-depth training program for future garden educators that happens each fall.



Field Trip Overview

Field trips are one of our favorite ways to teach here at GFE. We host San Francisco students from mostly SFUSD schools from October to December, then February to May each school year. Trips are meant to be educational, but fun, and offer several opportunities for hands-on exploration and learning. Field trips take place on Tuesdays, Thursdays and an occasional Friday. Sometimes there may be gaps in the schedule or cancellations due to rain or other circumstances.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) sponsors 32 fieldtrips each school year. The SFPUC manages the water, power and sewer for the city of San Francisco. Using gardening as a framework, students will learn about core SFPUC concepts including local water conditions, the San Francisco water and wastewater system, water conservation programs and principles, and water pollution prevention. In addition to these 32 sponsored trips, the GFE takes on some private school classes at a cost to those schools.

Field trips will be for a wide range of youth, from kindergarten through twelfth grade, although the target age-range is 3rd - 6th graders. GFE staff and the SFPUC will also be working with another city department called the Department of the Environment (SFE). SFE will be responsible for scheduling field trip dates and arranging transportation for selected groups. GFE staff will be responsible for working with SFE to reschedule field trips on any dates that cancellations occur. SFE will be responsible for rescheduling bus arrangements for any rescheduled field trips. SFE will deliver a water presentation to each classroom ahead of their GFE field trip and will include information on what students can expect and how they should prepare for their upcoming trip.

Each field trip will include the following:

- Introduction to core SFPUC/GFE concepts and garden rules
- Detailed educational garden tour focusing on: water saving features, water-wise and native garden, and less toxic gardening methods, and tasting tour.
- Two to three educational hands-on activity stations (depending on the group size). These stations may include learning and working to maintain our three-bin compost system, any combination of garden care tasks such as planting, watering, removing pests, and/or harvesting, arts and crafts projects such as plant part art or observational sketching just to name a few.
- Group picnic lunch (packed by the students in advance)
- If time allows we do additional activities such as scavenger hunts, have gardening books available, or other bonus activities at the ready.
- Closing circle and reflections

Field Trip Agenda

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>
<i>9:00 - 10:00</i>	<i>Set Up</i>
<i>10:00 - 10:15</i>	<i>Students arrive, introduction: GFE background and SFE water review</i>
<i>10:15 - 11:00</i>	<i>Garden Tour in small groups</i>
<i>11:00-11:15</i>	<i>Break / Snack</i>
<i>11:15 - 12:00</i>	<i>Rotating Activity Stations</i>
<i>12:00 - 12:30</i>	<i>Lunch and lunchtime activities/ freetime</i>
<i>12:30 - 12:45</i>	<i>Wrap-up, bonus activities, closing reflections</i>
<i>1:00 - 1:30</i>	<i>Clean-up, debrief, note student quotes, staff planning</i>

(approximate timetable)

Goals

Field Trip Goal

By the end of the day, students can identify several restorative gardening practices involving water conservation and pollution prevention, leaving with tangible environmental stewardship practices. Our ultimate goal is for youth to be passionate about spending time in nature, protecting the environment, and excited to share their enthusiasm with others. Our hands-on experience provides the opportunity to learn tangible stewardship practices *and* have a memorable, positive experience in the natural world.

Your Goals

Please write at least two things you would like to get out of this internship. Try to be as specific as possible! It could be specific teaching or gardening skills, something you hope to know by the end of the semester, confidence in terms of public speaking, etc.

GFE Garden Tour

This is a rough outline of what you might say on a tour, but feel free to personalize! Talk more about what excites you, cater to students' questions, go with the flow.

Water Wise Garden

- What does it mean to be wise?
- If these plants are wise, do they need a lot or a little water? (1x/month)
- Compared to green lawn across the street (it needs water every day!)
- Plants have special ways of being "wise." Point out:
 - Fuzzy leaves - catch fog/moisture
 - Waxy leaves: water inside, outside like sunblock
 - Tall, skinny leaves that direct moisture inside
- Can you think of any other ways that plants here have special ways of being water-wise?
- Lots of colors, shapes, sizes
- This is one way we **GFE**: planting plants that don't need much water and look beautiful!

Container Garden

- Look up at the apartments in front of you: do the people who live there have a yard?
- No! One way that people without a yard can still have a garden is by growing in containers
- Anything can be a container garden! What kinds of things around your house could you plant in?
- Taste/smell/touch: Sorrel, lemon balm, ground cherries, mullen, herbs

Urban Farm

- What do people generally grow on farms?
- Veggies! This is the area where we grow them.
- Why do you think we raise the plants above ground?
- Way to protect our food from city soil, which can be contaminated and polluted.
- Put your finger on something black, then find a hole on that thing: this is *drip irrigation*, what we use to water plants instead of a hose or sprinklers.
- Pieces fit together like legos
- Where do you notice the tubes are? Way above ground like a sprinkler or at ground level? Water drips in the exact place it is needed to conserve water.
- Tour students around the farm, pointing out different vegetables and tasting. Point out the bunk bed.

Rain Barrels

- What do you think is inside of these?
- Allow students to peek inside.
- Why are these barrels so important?
- We use it to water our plants!
- How full is it right now? Ask if it makes sense based on the season we are in now.
- This is one way we **GFE**: save and recycle water!

Greenhouse area

- What do you notice about this structure? (clear walls, small, plants inside)
- It's a greenhouse! Let's each go inside to look around (3-4 at a time). Observe with your eyes only and see if you notice anything different about how it feels.
- It's warm so that our baby plants are safe and have what they need to start growing.
- Also a place to store gardening tools and supplies.
- Turn around and look at the thing right behind you: sink!
- Special type of sink because the water doesn't go to the ocean...it goes to the Juncus plant! Soap is environmentally friendly too.

Compost

- This is one of the most important structures in the whole garden!
- How many sections does this structure have? 3! 3 bin compost system.
- It's a way for us to recycle our plants. It takes our plant trimmings and food scraps and transforms them into very nutritious soil.
- A very magical process: ask students to feel bin 2 and read the thermometer. Why do you think it is getting so hot?
- Think about it and see if you have any ideas by the time we return for activity stations later.

Cob Oven

- Ask students for ideas about this structure. What is it?
- A regular oven uses gas to heat up which is not good for the environment.
- This one uses natural materials that heat up easily when you light a fire.
- Clay, sand, straw, water
- People started using these ovens 10,000 years ago and still use them today!
We use it to make pizza sometimes.

Victory Garden

- Do you *or someone you know* have a backyard?
- These gardens are about the size of a backyard in SF.
- The one to the South demonstrates how you can grow vegetables
- The garden to the North demonstrates how you can plant native plants and use very little water
- (Hold on to the idea of native plants, we'll talk about it later)
- There is a special apple tree that separates these two gardens. Has a fancy name: espalier - means shoulder in french!
- Kind of like a "Frankenplant"

- Each branch grows a different type of apple. Try and see where the branches connect to the main trunk.

Shade Garden

- What's different about this garden from the rest of the space?
- It's in the shade!
- All the plants here love to be in the shade.
- How does it make you feel? Take a deep breath here.
- Point out urbanite: chunks of sidewalk we use as steps in the garden. We save these from the landfill. Another way we recycle materials and GFE!

Fruit Orchard

- What do people grow in orchards?
- As we walk up the steps, count either how many trees you see or how many different types of fruit are growing.
- At the top: GFE has 47 fruit trees: pear, plum, apple
- Fall - pick an apple to taste
- Other times: How come we don't see any fruit?
- Our fruit orchard is on a hill. The roots of the fruit trees and the plants underneath them help stabilize the hillside.
If you could grow a fruit tree at your house, what would it be?

Native Plant Pathway

- This is our native plant pathway. What does native mean?
- (originally from here, been in CA for thousands of years and perfect for climate)
- Learned to survive dry summers: go dormant during the summer, wake up during a certain time! RAIN!
- Native plants can also be used as medicine: yarrow used to heal wounds, calming, pain reliever
- Taste/touch/smell: california sagebrush saltbush, matilija poppy, ceanothus, yerba buena,
- Point out oldest plant, Monterey Cypress
- These plants help us save water because they go dormant over the summer and don't use much water, plus they are meant to be here! Another way we GFE.

Bees

- What do you think is inside of those boxes?
- Why do you think we keep bees in the garden?
- To help pollinate our plants! And we use the honey for tasting.
- GFE has special beekeepers who take care of the bees for us.
- Bees don't want to bother humans - if one is flying around you, stay very still and enjoy its visit!

Other things to point out...

- Plant signs are in Latin, this is a universal language for gardeners
- Classrooms are for adults on the weekends, think of it as a Hogwarts for gardening
- Asparagus, kiwi, passion vine, tree aloe
- Toolshed

- Outside border

Teaching Outdoors

Best practices

1. Student engagement

Learning outdoors can be a brand new experience for kids. Keeping students engaged, interested, and occupied will set them up for success and promote a positive experience in the outdoors.

- **Voice** - use a loud, clear, slow talking voice, and try not to use filler words. Animating your voice by varying tone and volume keeps kids interested. Teaching is like a performance, so it might feel uncomfortable to try this out.
- **Keep it active** - elementary aged students have a very short attention span (think 10 min tops listening to talking for 3rd graders), so keep your instruction to a minimum. If you need to talk for longer periods of time, try to engage students by asking them to repeat something you said, do a hand motion, etc.
- **Learning modalities** - not everyone learns in the same way. Try to include visuals, movement, and/or songs/chants/catchy phrases when giving instruction or introducing a concept to help include all types of learners.
- **Seeing** - make a point to say hi or otherwise acknowledge students to build trust between you and them. If a student answers a question aloud with the group, comment on their response instead of just moving on to the next one - something like "Thank you for sharing!"

2. Giving instructions

The clearer instructions are, the more we set students up for success in the garden! So important!

- **Break it into steps** - especially for younger students, writing out very simple steps that you go over verbally is helpful to break up the activity into digestible pieces. For example: 1. Soil 2. Water 3. Seed 4. Ball.
- **Boundaries** - Make it clear where students may go (and where they may not go).
- **Time warnings** - give students a heads up for how much time they have left, so that they aren't shocked and caught off guard when time is up. A 2 minute warning is generally good, then 10 seconds, time to start wrapping up.
- **Check for understanding** - to make sure students have understood the instructions, ask questions that the whole class responds to at once. For example, "How many treasures are you going to collect?" "What does this sound mean again?"
- **Early finish** - have a plan or backup activity for students who finish earlier than the allotted amount of time. Scavenger sticks are a great option, or something for them to find.

3. Behavior management

The hardest part about teaching! Luckily, at GFE, we have the classroom teacher there with us to put out any big fires. Generally, students have been prepared beforehand about what the expected behavior is on a field trip, but that's not always the case.

- **Chattiness** - if students are chatting a lot it usually means they want to talk. Give them an opportunity to do so by proposing a turn and talk question, do a call and response (when I say WORMS you say WIGGLE), etc.
- **Squirminess** - usually a sign that students want to move! Do an activity such as a shake down, dance, jump up and down, anything that allows them to get some of those wiggles out and refocus their energy.
- **Positive narration** - praise students who are exemplifying behavior you want to see, and applaud students who have made a change in behavior. For example, if a student is picking things during your tour and you ask them not to, later on make a point to say something like "I appreciate how you asked if you could pick a leaf this time [student name]!" The best way to encourage positive behavior is to model it yourself - students pick up on your tone of voice and demeanor more than you might think.
 - Try to avoid language that rewards students for pleasing you (i.e. I love that you touched soil) - this motivates students' behavior to please you as the adult. Rephrase as "You must be so proud of yourself for trying something new!"
- **Anticipate tricky situations** - teaching is all about thinking ahead. Try and anticipate situations that might arise by walking through the activity yourself, either physically or in your head. For example, if students are making seed balls, anticipate that their hands will be cold and dirty and they will want to wash them. In your instruction, include something about when they get to wash their hands and what to do if they get cold.
- **Give options** - giving students options about what to do likely leads them to participate in the expected way. For example, if a student is complaining about not wanting to do the activity, you might say "your options are to do the scavenger hunt, or to make a plant sketch." Do not be lenient with your options!

4. Weather and circumstances

One of the hardest things about working outdoors is the elements. In a foggy part of the city, we get lots of precipitation, wind, and sometimes strong sun.

- **Heat** - allow for breaks for water and shade, consider moving your group to the shade or rethinking an activity.
- **Precipitation** - try and move your group under a pop up tent, or when you're standing try and gather under some type of cover. Try and spin it into a positive thing - we're part of nature, we're getting a drink just like the plants!
- **Complaints** - students will often complain about the weather. Try not to negate what they are saying, but validate it. For example, if a student says "I'm soooo cold," try something like "You sound cold! I wish I had a blanket to wrap you up in and a cup of hot cocoa for you to drink!" as opposed to "Be tough."

5. Encouraging participation

We want to aim for as much participation as possible! More participation = more buy in.

- **Modalities** - when we ask students to just raise their hands and answer a question, this only encourages one type of student to participate- the one who wants to share aloud with the group. Incorporate other ways of participating such as hand gestures, writing, thumb-o-meters, songs, whole group share, turn and talk, silent think time.
- **Think time** - build in think time so that if you are asking for raised hands, everyone has a chance to think about what they might want their answer to be before sharing.
- **Don't force it** - if a student doesn't want to participate, don't force them to. Find a way to allow them to participate in a way that feels comfortable. For example, if a student doesn't want to make a seed ball because they don't want to touch dirt, ask if a

classmate can make an extra for them.

- **No right or wrong** - try not to use language with definite terms, like right or wrong (i.e. "Let's see if you're right.") Try and find a way to validate what the student has said even if it doesn't make sense or it wasn't the answer you were looking for.

6. Safety

- **WALKING (not running!)** - this is *always* an issue! Always remind students of this rule.
- **Tools** - demonstrate how to use tools before allowing students to use them.
- **Materials** - if students are using materials unsafely, remind them of the agreements we talked about at the beginning. If need be, provide a definite and specific consequence. For example "Terry, it's not safe to be throwing mulch because it could hurt someone else. I will have to ask you to take a 5 minute break on the bench if you throw mulch again."

Gardening in San Francisco

1. Climate and Weather

- **Climate** - San Francisco has a “Mediterranean Climate,” meaning the climate is mild all year round. The ocean at the edge of the city is what keeps things temperate. Because of this temperate climate, we are very lucky that we get to grow plants (including food) all year round!
- **Weather** - San Francisco is known for its microclimates- many different weather patterns throughout the city. GFE is located in the Inner Sunset, right on the edge of the fog belt. Because of this location, we are limited in what we can grow - we cannot grow some of the more traditional warm weather, summer crops such as tomatoes or peppers.
- **Right plant, right place** - GFE’s motto! We cannot force plants to thrive in places or conditions they are not meant to be in. It is about selecting the right environment and conditions for that plant.

2. Perennials vs Annuals

- **Perennials** - plants that have multiple life cycles and come back year after year. Most perennials have a period of dormancy. In northern California, this period of dormancy is often over the dry summer.
- **Annuals** - plants that have only one life cycle. These are plants that gardeners need to replant year after year. Most vegetables are annuals.

3. Composting

- **What is it?** - Composting is the process where organic material gets broken down into a nutritious humus, which is an important amendment to soil.
- **How does it work?**
 - *Bin 1:* Organic material gets chopped up into small pieces by gardeners. We try to layer “greens” and “browns.” Greens = nitrogen-rich materials. “Browns” = carbon-rich material.
 - *Bin 2:* We mix the greens and browns with 3 ingredients: water, pigeon manure, and coffee grounds, which help to jumpstart the decomposition process by adding more organic material, and bacteria. In Bin 2, fungus, bacteria, and invertebrates (FBI) start to decompose the organic material by eating away at it, moving it through their bodies, and pooping it out. With so many FBI moving and eating, the compost pile gets really hot - ideally up to 160 degrees. It takes about 5 days for the pile to reach max temperature.
 - *Bin 3:* Once Bin 2 has cooled down, we transfer it to Bin 3 to finish decomposition. From there, we sift out the bigger pieces (compost “sticks”) from the smaller ones. The smaller pieces are the humus that we use in the garden, while the compost sticks are used as nutrient-rich mulch.
- **Why do we do it?**
 - It’s a way of recycling our garden scraps so we can reuse the material that we create as “waste” in the garden.
 - It provides nutrients for the soil and has water-retention properties, so we decrease the amount of water we need to use to keep plants alive.
 - Decreases methane production from organic material decomposing in landfills.

Field Trip Schedule (example of)

We start hosting fieldtrips typically by mid October until winter break in December. We then resume in February until the end of May. We follow the SFUSD school schedule. GFE will create and share with Fellows an updated google doc for each year's schedule. The PUC sponsors 32 fieldtrips each school year and we take on a few additional private schools each year, typically on a Friday. There may also be rain or cancellations for various reasons. Fellows will need to work some Wednesdays and Saturdays to fulfill their required hours, we've learned from experience.

Day	Date	School	Grade	Number of youth expected
Tuesday	2/4	Sherman Elementary (SFUSD)	5th	31
Thursday	2/6	Intern training day!		
Tuesday	2/11	Jefferson Elementary (SFUSD)	4th	22
Thursday	2/13	San Francisco Pacific Academy	4th/5th combo	30
Tuesday	2/18			
Thursday	2/20	Lakeshore Elementary (SFUSD)	3rd	21
Tuesday	2/25			
Thursday	2/27			
Tuesday	3/3	Lafayette Elementary (SFUSD)	3rd	20
Thursday	3/5			
Tuesday	3/10			
Thursday	3/12			
Tuesday	3/17	Alta Vista School	4th	21
Thursday	3/19	Longfellow Elementary (SFUSD)	5th	28
FRIDAY	3/20	Ed team visits Presidio education programs!		
Tuesday	3/24	Jean Parker Elementary (SFUSD)	5th	26
Thursday	3/26			

Tuesday	3/31			
Thursday	4/2	Our Lady of the Visitacion	3rd	25
Tuesday	4/7	Sunnyside Elementary (SFUSD)	3rd	22
Thursday	4/9	Sherman Elementary (SFUSD)	5th	29
FRIDAY	4/10	Hamlin School (paid field trip)	1st	23
Tuesday	4/14	Lawton Elementary (SFUSD)	3rd	26
Thursday	4/16			
Tuesday	4/21			

Emergency Procedures

These are all things that we hope will never happen while we're at GFE, however being prepared, taking a few precautionary measures and always being aware of our surroundings can help us navigate unsafe situations to the best of our abilities.

Best Practices

- Never be alone with a child. Never be alone in the garden.
- Defer to the classroom teacher and/or parent helpers for many things such as injuries, behavior issues, bathroom breaks, snacks, etc.
- Let GFE Staff and others know if you see something that may be unsafe, unusual behavior in the garden, an unleashed dog, broken glass, etc.
- Don't be on your phone or have earbuds in while working.
- Remain calm and move away from unsafe situations. **Our regrouping area will always be the North Classroom** unless of course, this is where the dangerous situation is located.

Injuries

Children

They happen, but can often be prevented. We often say, "low and slow, like a pro," to visiting children when it comes to handling our tools, and just about everything else they do in the garden.

Before using any tools please review safe handling procedures, such as always wearing gloves when using tools, keeping pointed ends of tools pointed down and below the waist, paying attention to what you are doing, working slow and purposefully, and never play fighting or acting inappropriately with tools. Not only do we use real tools, we use some of the best brands so they are very sharp. If a group is demonstrating unsafe behaviors or does not appear ready to follow rules, it may be the best decision to not allow tool use for that group.

Injuries can also occur when students are running, overly excited and basically not paying attention, causing them to trip or fall over things in the garden. Our basic rules or agreements in the garden are to respect plants, animals, people and tools so by being safe, you are respecting yourself.

Remind children to "Please walk" when you see them running or say "slow feet". Reminding students to stay on our paths is also helpful.

If a child does get hurt in the garden, classroom teachers are responsible for administering care. Remain calm and never leave an injured child alone. Send another child to get the teacher or, if needed, yell for assistance.

Teachers typically travel with a first aid kit, however we also have one located in the greenhouse on the rear wall.

Adults

If you ever get injured on site, please let GFE staff know and ask for assistance with care.

Natural Disaster/Harmful Situation

- Duck and cover in the North Classroom. Children may even go under the benches if limbs are falling.
- If there is an especially harmful and dangerous situation, leave the garden through the closest and safest exit and head away from danger.
- The open lot across the street to the south is a great regrouping point.

Garden Cancellation

- If the air **AQI goes above 100** we will cancel our day in the garden.
- If the **chances of rain are above 70%** at the start time of our programming we will cancel our day in the garden. We may sometimes work in damp, off and on rainy conditions. GFE staff will coordinate with classroom teachers 24 hours before scheduled fieldtrips if there is a chance of rain to let them decide what they think is best for their students.

Volunteer Days (Wednesdays and Saturdays)

Our regularly scheduled volunteer hours are Wednesday and Saturday from 10am - 3pm. Fellows' can work 9am - 3pm on these days if their schedule permits or if they need additional hours.

On Saturday, in addition to volunteers, we often have classes taking place in the South and North Classrooms from 10am - noon, sometimes into the afternoon. GFE is also open to the public, dawn to dusk, everyday, so there may be folks passing through or walking dogs as well. **Please say hi to everyone and be welcoming!**

New volunteers are asked to register ahead of time, while regulars and Get Up grads are free to stop in as they wish. We have 12 slots for registration, but based on the fact some folks are allowed to drop-in and some registered folks don't show-up, we never really know for certain how many volunteers we will have. Class sizes are typically 15 - 25 attendees so on any given Saturday morning we may easily have over 50 folks showing up to learn to garden with us, but don't worry, it usually goes very smoothly!

Although you are Education and/or Native Plant fellows, we may ask that you help assist with our volunteers when you work on Wednesdays and Saturdays. This may include: helping set-up and clean-up for the day, taking part in introductions, providing small group tours of the garden, checking in on volunteers, helping them locate tools and eventually leading work stations with folks that may or may not be related to Native plants or the field trip program. Always be kind to our visitors and if you are unsure of an answer or how to help someone, please ask a GFE Staff for assistance.

Volunteer hours are meant to be instructional, engaging and fun. We try our best to provide a variety of activities and to check-in with volunteers often to see how things are going as well as explain *why* we are doing what we are doing, rather than just telling folks *what* to do.

Some tasks that almost always need to be worked on that we will demonstrate to you so that you can show volunteers are:

- Chopping material for our compost system
- Sifting compost
- Sweeping and tidying of our steps, entrances, paths, sidewalks
- Trash hunt
- Weeding
- Mulching
- Watering of veggies and new perennials
- Harvest Box (Saturdays)
- Reorganizing of materials/greenhouse/shed

In addition to the regular tasks above, we will often have bigger projects such as revamping a particular section of the garden, planting, pruning and sometimes minor construction projects. Sometimes we even do arts and crafts type of projects if the timing seems right.

Please Tell us about Yourself

(Please print and return this page)

Fellow Name: _____

Email: _____ Cell: _____

Emergency contacts, Names and Cell: _____

Interests and Hobbies: _____

Rate your level of comfort/interest/knowledge with the following (1 lowest, to 5 highest). Remember that we are a teaching garden so we will happily help you get more comfortable in all areas! This will just help us know where to start.

Working with school-age youth: _____

Working outdoors: _____ Bees: _____ Worms: _____ Spiders: _____

Soil: _____ Compost: _____ Recycling: _____ SF Water Systems: _____

Organic Gardening: _____ Organic Produce: _____ Food Systems: _____

Working with others from diverse backgrounds: _____

Please share with us any information about yourself that may make working together this school year together the most successful:

Thank you and looking forward to working with, and getting to know you better this year!