For the past few weeks, students and staff at Trindale Elementary School have been hard at work on an ambitious project to plant a community garden in a courtyard at the school. Pictured here is the team of Evan Blakely, Riley Stevens and Morgyn Lassiter, who designed the “Beach Garden” that will be planted Saturday at the school. With them are Trindale Lead Teacher Whitney Aiken and Principal Todd Henderson, who assisted seven teams of students who submitted garden designs.

**Students help design vegetable garden at Trindale Elementary**

**BY DEBBIE HIGHTOWER**

ARCHDALE — An unused space will soon produce much-needed vegetables thanks to the efforts of Trindale Elementary School students, staff and administrators.

Trindale students learning about the importance of consuming fresh fruits and vegetables found out that it’s not always easy for families to get the fresh produce they need because many items aren’t grown locally.

That’s when Principal Todd Henderson had a light bulb idea. Why can’t we grow a garden right here, he asked. An enclosed courtyard at the school that’s not being used will provide the perfect place to grow vegetables.

“We talked about how food insecurity is high and there is a need for fresh produce,” said lead teacher Whitney Aiken, who did some lead-in lessons prior to giving an assignment to design the gardens.

One in four children in North Carolina are food insecure. According to ncfoodbanks.org, North Carolina has some of the most food insecure cities in the nation, including High Point, Greensboro and Winston-Salem.

Over the next few weeks, Trindale students and staff will use math skills, creativity and public speaking skills to make the dream come to fruition.
Left: After completing their garden designs, teams had to explain why their design would work the best at a Donuts for Dads breakfast this month. Parents who attended had the opportunity to vote for their favorite design. Right: Back in March, students and staff held an outdoor gala event featuring games to raise money for the garden project. Pictured here, a student tries his hand at the baseball throw.

Left: Taking into consideration how much each plant will yield, garden designers came up with a projection of the total amount that may be produced by their design. Vegetables produced by the garden will not be sold, but instead offered at a vegetable stand for members of the community. Right: Utilizing their public speaking skills, Evan Blakely, Riley Stevens and Morgan Lanzer pitch their “Beach Garden” design at Donuts for Dads.

Left: Pictured here, Principal Todd Henderson takes it for the team, spending a few hours in a dunking booth to raise funds for the Trindale Elementary School garden. Right: Teams that designed gardens had to research how much food plants they selected would produce.

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To raise funds for the garden, staff and parents pitched in at a March fundraising event. Seated inside a dunking booth, Henderson was a good sport to raise funds for the important cause.

Planning sessions came later, when Trinity High School students teamed up with academically-gifted students at Trindale for garden planning sessions. Garden planning teams used concepts such as perimeter, area, volume and yield to create diagrams scaled to the available spaces.

“They had to keep their costs under budget so there was a lot of math that went into these designs,” said Henderson. In all, seven groups came up with designs for gardens. “We’ve got a gazebo in our garden,” said Lanzer, whose group came up with a design they named “Tropical Garden.”

Groups who came up with designs had to pitch them in front of an audience at a Donuts for Dads breakfast. Parents who attended were invited to vote for their favorite garden. When the team that had been selected, Morgan Lanzer, was excited.

The Beach Garden plans designed by Morgan, Riley Stevens and Evan Blakely will include tomatoes, carrots, watermelons and potatoes. Some of the plants that will be incorporated were purchased from the Trinity High School PTA plant sale. “We’re going to have umbrella and picnic tables in it,” Morgan said.

Total yield for the Beach Garden is 3,381 pounds of food for a cost of $9,644. The final step in the monumental project is installation. Working hands are needed to help with garden planting on Saturday. To volunteer, call 258-434-1516.

Staff under Debbie Highower may be reached at 336-880-3578.