

NEWS RELEASE



CENTER FOR
ECOLITERACY



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Whole Kids Foundation® Launches Free Organic Education App, Helping Kids Discover the Meaning of Organic

“Starting with Soil” now available in App Store and Google Play

AUSTIN, Texas (June 29, 2017)—Today, Whole Kids Foundation launches [Starting with Soil](#), a free tablet-based organic education app available via [Google Play](#) and the [App Store](#), to provide a fun way for kids and parents to learn what it looks and feels like to grow food in harmony with nature.

Created with support from [United Natural Foods, Inc.](#) and in partnership with the [Center for Ecoliteracy](#), an organization with over 20 years of experience in designing effective curriculum for children, the free organic education app functions as an interactive story in four chapters. The first three chapters demonstrate how nature creates soil and how long this process takes, the importance of pollinators, and the critical roles animals, the weather, microorganisms and cover crops play in organic farming. The final chapter presents ways families can explore organic education at home, in school, in the community or while they shop.

“We wanted to create a playful way to help kids understand the importance of healthy soil and see first-hand the roles that plants, animals and people play in keeping it balanced,” said Nona Evans, president and executive director of Whole Kids Foundation. “We think it’s critical kids understand where food comes from, the process it goes through to land on our plates and the significant effects these processes have on our environment, communities and bodies.”

Slow motion video allows kids to behold bees pollinating and butterflies extracting nectar with startling zeal. Time lapse photography captures the way apple, radish and bean seeds become seedlings that burst through topsoil in vibrant color. Nematodes, algae and protozoa make cameo appearances. Young users can plant seeds, build a compost pile, drag a microscope over organisms in soil to get a better look, and view the symbiosis at work when corn, beans and squash are planted together, as Native Americans have done for centuries. Animation and well-placed sound effects tie the content together.

“Soil is literally packed with reciprocal and fascinating relationships, and kids are captivated to discover that life and energy are alive and well beneath their feet,” said Zenobia Barlow, Executive Director of the Center for Ecoliteracy.

The app is designed at a third-grade reading level. Environmental educators and teachers with access to school gardens will appreciate the central message: soil is alive, riveting and vital. School gardens are becoming an increasingly common educational tool; they are shown to improve children’s behavior and performance at school and improve their attitudes about and appreciation for the environment. Children who grow their own food are also [more likely to eat fruits and vegetables and to be more knowledgeable about nutrition](#).

Since its inception in 2011, Whole Kids Foundation, a Whole Foods Market Foundation dedicated to helping kids eat better and enjoy it, has raised more than \$21 million, investing \$18 million in programs that have served more than five million children in the United States, Canada and the U.K. For more information on Starting with Soil, visit www.wholekidsfoundation.org/organiceducation.

About Whole Kids Foundation®

Whole Kids Foundation, a Whole Foods Market foundation, is based in Austin, Texas, and operates as an independent, nonprofit organization. By empowering schools and inspiring families, the Foundation aims to help children reach optimal health through the strength of a healthy body fueled by nutritious food. For more information on the Foundation's programs, including school gardens, salad bars and nutrition education for teachers, visit wholekidsfoundation.org.

About Center for Ecoliteracy

The Center for Ecoliteracy (CEL) promotes ecological education. CEL recognizes that students need to experience and understand how nature sustains life and how to live accordingly, and encourages schools to teach and model sustainable practices. One of CEL's key initiatives, [California Food for California Kids](#), is a statewide collaboration with a network of public school districts to serve healthy, freshly prepared school meals made from California-grown food.

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