

# SEEDS Program Teaches Students at Forest Area Schools the Art of the Maple Sugar Trade

*March 2, 2021 by Christine Kanerva, Kaleb Vinton*

Students at Forest Area Community Schools are using math and science to create a tasty treat. “It’s fun while learning,” says Julieann Akers, a fifth grader at Forest Area Community Schools. Akers and her classmates are learning how to make a northern Michigan specialty... maple syrup! “I’ve never done it before, and I’ve wanted to try it,” says Akers.

Now she’s able to try it through the SEEDS Ecology & Education Centers.

The program was popular at Forest Area back in the 1980’s, but it came to a halt 15 years ago. SEEDS Site Coordinator Joe Kreider says he’s excited to bring back this opportunity for students: “Gives them something to do, to get excited, to get outside... We’re teaching math with estimating how much sap we’re going to get and how much syrup we’ll get from that.

The students get to learn hands-on, everything from tapping the trees...

“We have this drill and we put it into the tree, we drill a hole in the tree, but not all the way because that could hurt the tree,” says Akers.

To the science of boiling the sap.

“We gather the maple syrup from the trees, and we boil it once in a big pot and then we boil it in a smaller pot,” says Noah Janack, a fifth grader at Forest Area Community Schools.

A process many students didn’t even know existed.

Kreider says, “Kids are amazed that when the sap comes out of the trees, it just tastes like water... takes all of that boiling and all of the hauling and chopping wood and it takes a lot of work to get your end product but it’s really rewarding.”

And really tasty at breakfast time...

“Pancakes, waffles, sausage and I just like eating it,” says Janack.