On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I sit in soil pulling crab grass and borage. I've been a farmer since sophomore year. The farm--managed by my school--is a one-acre plot more accurately described as a garden with chickens.

My task today is to pick cherry tomatoes, most of which have ripened. I grab a tray from the shed and walk across pathways to the vine. I created these pathways during junior year, shoveling large heaps of wood-chips into a wheelbarrow, then raking these chips onto the pathways between beds. Our two tomato vines stand three feet tall and extend horizontally at least six feet; they are heavy with small red and orange glistening spheres.

I fall into a rhythm, plucking and setting tomatoes in the container, eating several here and there. I recall when I was six, my Mom would send my twin brother and me to the backyard to weed dandelions. We would get distracted and play with our dog or climb the dogwood tree. I recall the awe I felt last week when I harvested a giant sunflower, discovering at least ten potatoes growing in its roots, or when I found a sweet potato the size of a football. I had planted the seed potato pieces last year. I think about jalapenos, how scratches on their skin indicate spiciness level. The satisfaction I felt the first time I ate a piece of food I grew at the farm, a raw green-bean. The pleasure I feel knowing friends and teachers also eat the food I grow; we donate the farm's produce to our school's dining hall and sell it at the weekly farmer's market in the parking lot.

After farm, I will work a shift at the Farmer's Market. I will sit, perhaps eating Thai iced-tea-flavored ice cream from another stand, ready to explain where the farm is located, who works it, what we do with unsold food, and, finally, whether the price for a head of lettuce is negotiable (it is). Sometimes, I remember farmers I met during an exchange trip to Yangshuo, China, who were selling pomelos and bamboo shoots. I think about how to me, the difference between one-versus-two dollars for pomelos seems miniscule, but for those farmers, it means a lot. They rely solely on farming to feed their families; I farm for the pleasure of learning what they do out of necessity.

As I carry my share of tomatoes to the shed - tomatoes I nurtured from seeds into sprouts into fruits – I contemplate how much farm has done for me. I can't sit down to a meal without imagining the plants on my plate as seeds and then sprouts, without wondering about the many hands that brought them to my table. Education, to me, means understanding the hidden processes that make up daily life. Playing with the farm chickens - Pablo, Claude, Vincent, Leonardo - and knowing how the coating around an egg works as a natural preservative makes me appreciate my omelet a tad more. Watching weeds that I pulled from various beds slowly decompose into fertilizer in the compost pile makes me consider the roles carbon and nitrogen cycles play in that process.

Although I initially joined farm because I wanted to try something new, I quickly found that the work offers a balance with the intellectual work of the rest of my day. The farm connects education with experience; teaching me to see the application of my classroom learning in a real setting. Being able to see the relevance of what I am studying piques my curiosity. I aspire to maintain this connection between education and experience throughout my life, and will always find ways to contribute to my community, locally or globally. I will look for soil to cultivate, using my learning to see and understand more of the world, whether it be the natural environment or the way people live.