How Does Your Garden Grow?

DEVELOPED BY:
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Checklist:

- ☑ Thank you letters
- ☑ Additional photos
- ☐ Video (if resources were available)
- ☑ Copy of newsletter and/or correspondence (website screenshot) featuring AnnouncementAd

PROJECT OVERVIEW

How Does Your Garden Grow is an agricultural project that served 400 students in grades K-5 at Cleveland Elementary School. 98% of these urban students receive free lunch and more than 75% of their families receive AFDC assistance. Most walk to our neighborhood school from a nearby housing development. With a mobility rate of 65%, my students lack security and stability. Learning about Florida Agriculture and the possibilities of growing fresh produce in their own backyard is a lesson in sustainability that will benefit their health and the health of our planet.

Kindergarten and Fourth Grade teachers who are part of a Florida Ag in the Classrooms grant teamed up to give their students a service-learning experience. The older students handled the technical writing for documentation and the mathematical layout of the school garden boxes, while the kindergarteners focused on germination and getting starts ready for planting as well as learning what the parts of plants are called. They worked with a master gardener three times each week and attended a field trip to Sweetwater Organic Community Farm together where they learned a multitude of lessons that apply to their own school garden.

Additional teachers became tantalized by the beautiful produce and the hands-on lessons across the curriculum and now we have participation at every grade level. Parent volunteers recruited as chaperones for the field trip to the farm have emerged and offered assistance to teachers in our ever-growing school garden.

PROJECT IMPACT

Florida Agricultural Gardens-K-5 Pre-test-25% scored at an entry level of 1 and 75% scored at an accomplished level of 2.
Post-test- 95% scored at an exemplary level of 3 and 5% scored at an accomplished level of 2

Germination-K-2 Pre-test-100% scored at an entry level of 1
Post-test- 95% scored at an exemplary level of 3 and 5% scored at an accomplished level of 2

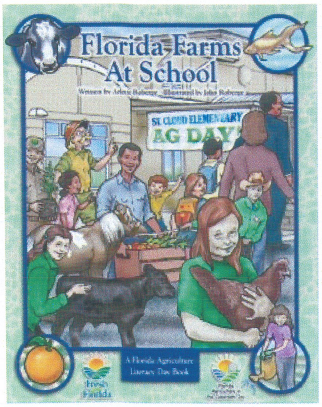
Germination-Grade 3-5 Pre-test-10% scored at an entry level of 1, 80% scored at an accomplished level of 2, and 10% scored at an exemplary level of 3.
Post-test- 97% scored at an exemplary level of 3 and 3% scored at an accomplished level of 2

Photosynthesis-Grade 3-5 Pre-test-33% scored at an entry level of 1, 60% scored at an accomplished level of 2 and 7% scored at an exemplary level of 3.
Post-test- 97% scored at an exemplary level of 3 and 3% scored at an accomplished level of 2.

Garden Box Layout-Grade 3-5: Pre-test-95% scored at an entry level of 1 and 5% scored at an accomplished level of 2.
Post-test- 85% scored at an exemplary level of 3 and 5% scored at an accomplished level of 2.

In addition to lessons in science & mathematics, all grade levels worked together to produce newsletter articles and informative flyers for distribution to the community in hard copy and for the school website.

Students in grades 3-5 also performed service learning activities to increase interest in agriculture throughout the school. They served as readers on Ag Literacy Day for primary-aged students to promote gardening.



Original program goals and outcomes

- To increase understanding of the different types of agricultural gardens that can be grown in Tampa Bay as evidenced in documentation after visits to existing gardens and agricultural events.

90% of the students who visited Sweetwater Organic Community Farm demonstrated growth in knowledge about different types of gardens that can easily be grown in Florida, including edible flowers and plants as well as heat tolerant plants that can survive the summers.

- To increase understanding of agricultural growing methods in Florida as evidenced by documentation and school garden beds after working with teachers and master gardeners.

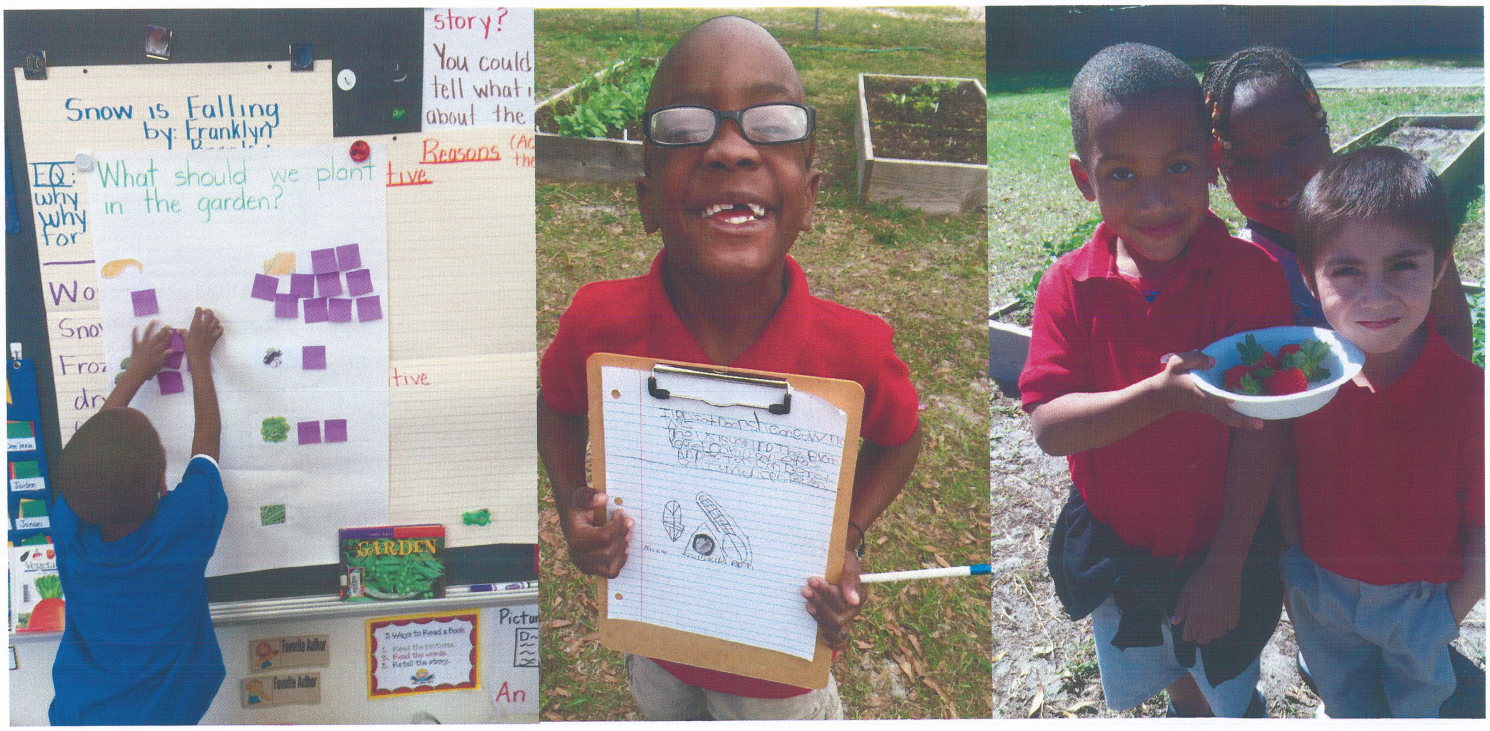
85% of students were able to demonstrate knowledge of new and enhanced growing methods both vertically and horizontally, with and without soil, etc. via garden bed design drawing and documentation.

- To increase understanding of agricultural plants that can be grown in Tampa Bay by season and type as evidenced by pre and post assessments & electronic portfolio demonstrations.

Pre and post assessments indicated 100% growth in knowledge of seasonal agriculture for our gardening zone.

- To improve communication skills as evidenced by participation in an online community (OpenIdeas) that supports wikis, blogs and podcasts.

25% of the intermediate-aged students contributed article and posts to our website and school newsletter.



Evaluation

All students participating in this project took pre and post-tests (see project impact page for results). Students contributed articles, artwork and original photography for class and school newsletters as well as the school website. Project funds were used to purchase transportation (school busses) and for fees from visit to Sweetwater Organic Community Garden. *A camera was ordered for documentation but required several bids and is on backorder. (Teachers used personal equipment to document through photography and video so that the grant could move forward.)* Our own school garden was funded by match money from the Florida Ag. Dept. and a master builder provided lumber, materials and labor to build garden boxes. A master gardener worked with our students 3-4 times weekly coordinating layout for the garden & planting, as well as serving as a chaperone and lessons for students and adults.

Utilizing gardening as an educational tool for my inner city students provided concrete examples of theoretical or abstract concepts or processes. Greater understanding of difficult concepts and application of those concepts across the curriculum were developed. The students developed an understanding of photosynthesis through a lesson designed to make this relatively abstract process concrete for students and, in particular, young students.

The most important lessons the students took from this project are the ones relating to sustainability. Learning the possibilities for growing fresh produce year-round in their own backyard with minimal expense gives our impoverished children hope for eating a more healthy diet now and for years to come. Connections made with the local, community farms will also serve our students and community in a positive way.