

Give teachers
the supplies they need
by the brands they trust.



September 18, 2012

HUFF
POST EDUCATION

School Gardens Blooming Teach Lessons On Nutrition, Environment, Science, Teamwork

By JAMIE STENGLE 08/21/12 01:46 PM ET **AP**

DALLAS -- Gathered in the large garden behind an elementary school here, a group of kindergartners watched as their teacher snipped some basil, let them smell the leaves, and then did the same with oregano.

"We do a lot of smelling out there. Looking. Digging," the teacher, LeaAnne Pillers, said. She took her class to the garden two or three times a week after it opened last spring at Moss Haven Elementary, and she's excited to get her new group out among the plants when school starts next week.

One of their first lessons: learning the five senses. "We'll be able to do a lot with 'What does it look like? What does it feel like?' Some of it we'll even be able to taste," Pillers said.

Moss Haven's garden is among a growing number being planted in schoolyards across the country. It is part of an American Heart Association initiative to get kids to eat healthier. Along with nutrition, school gardens also can teach lessons about the environment and science, teamwork, math skills and leadership, proponents say.

Pillers' kindergartners taste-tested vegetables, measured garden plots and investigated what foods caterpillars like.

"The main thing that I really like is citizenship – that everybody is taking responsibility," said Ashley Rich, who works with teachers to develop curriculum at the school. Over the summer, she added, families from the school have been taking turns each week caring for the garden.

She welcomes the chance for hands-on learning, and thinks students are getting the nutritional message.

"If the children are involved in growing the vegetables, then they are interested in eating them," said Judith Collier-Reid, national consultant for the Dallas-based American Heart Association's Teaching Gardens program, which has handed grants to about 160 gardens since kicking off last year. Its mission is to help curb the nation's childhood obesity epidemic.

Cynthia Domenghini of the Vermont-based National Gardening Association said the concept for school gardens has been around a long time – her organization has been helping to fund them for around 30 years – but picked up speed when first lady Michelle Obama broke ground on an herb and vegetable garden at the White House in 2009.

Sponsored Links

Sanford Brown™ College

 The Official Sanford Brown™ Site.
Financial Aid Available-App...
Portland.SanfordBrown-Online.com

wheels when you want em.

Gas & insurance included. Join Zipcar now for \$75 free driving.
zipcar.com



"How Doctors Lose Weight"

Oregon Celebrity Doctor Reveals His #1 Trick To Lose Weight...
iConsumerKnowledge.org

Buy a link here

"There's been an increase in the number of organizations promoting school gardening," said Domenghini. She said her group doesn't keep a count of gardens in schools, but that about 1,300 youth programs in schools, churches, libraries and other places have registered with it.

"Fruit and vegetable gardens are probably most popular, but some grow flowers," she said. "We see all different types of garden programs."

Todd LoFrese, assistant superintendent for support services for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools in North Carolina, said there's a

gardening component at nearly all of their 18 schools, ranging from a small herb garden to support a culinary program to a high school with a student-run program that donates produce to needy families. A new elementary school set to open next year has been designed to include garden plots, he said, and will have a rainwater collection system and a green roof with vegetation.

"It's a good way to get families involved and also the community involved," LoFrese said.

The gardens in his district are funded in a variety of ways, including donations, grants and fundraising from parent groups.

In addition to the garden at Moss Haven, the Richardson school district in suburban Dallas has two other gardens at schools and plans for three more, said Phil Lozano, the district's associate director of facilities services. One of the other gardens in the Richardson district was funded by the district, and the other by a parent-teacher association. Moss Haven, which gets support, including curriculum materials, from the Heart Association, was made possible by donations, grants and funds from its PTA.

Lozano said the goal is for the gardens to reach 100 percent sustainability, which includes composting, and collecting water from sources including rainwater or air-conditioning condensation.

In the Houston area, the nonprofit Urban Harvest has helped start more than 100 school gardens, training and advising those who want to start them and in some cases providing a garden educator to give lessons. The organization aims to promote nutrition and respect for the environment, said Carol Burton, its director of youth gardening education.

Heading into fifth grade this year at Moss Haven, 10-year-old Natalie Duval is anxious to see what the garden looks like after the summer. Last year, she was pleasantly surprised when her fourth-grade class taste-tested dips made from garden ingredients including spinach, parsley and cucumbers.

"I didn't think I was going to like it," she said. "I was like, 'Wow, that was pretty good.'"

"Everybody's trying to eat better, and if we ate those foods in the cafeteria we'd be healthy," she said.

Filed by Emmeline Zhao |

-

HUFF
POST HIGHLIGHTS x

people have highlighted this!

Huzzah! This text has been highlighted.

Highlights is a new way to discover the most interesting text on Huffington Post!

[See All Highlights](#)

[+Highlight this!](#)