

The National Gardening Association surveyed the 2009 Midwest Adopt a School Garden Program recipients to capture quantitative and qualitative data on the grant’s impact. The following is a summary of results.

- Grant package: \$1,000 in materials and funding
- Number of applicants: 55
- Number of recipients: 10
- Number of evaluation respondents: 10

Following is a summary of the highlights from those responses.

Number of participants in Mantis award-winning programs:

Age 2-5 (preschool-K).....	341
Ages 6-8 (grades 1-3).....	806
Ages 9-11 (grades 4-6).....	317
Ages 12-13 (grades 7-8).....	63
Ages 14-18 (grades 9-12).....	121
Adults (18+)	132
Total participants	1,861

Demographic information:

Anglo American	69%
African American	16%
Latino	10%
Asian.....	2%
Other	2%
Native American	1%
Female.....	55%
Male.....	45%
Eligible for free or reduced lunch program	48%

Hours per week a participant was involved in gardening activities:

Average	6.5 hours/week
Range.....	3/4 to 30 hours/week

Months of the year respondents conducted gardening programs:

Average.....	7 1/2 months/year
Range.....	2 to 12 months/year

Type of organizations responding:

Public school.....	70%
Nonprofit agency	10%
Private school.....	10%
Charter school	10%

Program continuation:

Respondents indicating they plan to continue their program next year	100%
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Type of audience participating in programs:

In-school	90%
After-school.....	80%
Special Needs	60%
Summer program/camp	60%
Community garden	60%
Gifted & Talented.....	30%
Intergenerational	30%
Youth club	10%
Preschool/Head Start.....	10%

Location of winners responding:

Urban.....	50%
Rural.....	30%
Suburban	20%

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This grant helped us launch a new composting program, build cold frames to extend our season, and gave our 3-year-old program huge momentum within the school community and beyond. Everyone became excited about the garden. English-learning students were much more engaged among the plants and the garden was a wonderful place to engage special ed students, which can be challenging. All the children loved tasting the food and were often surprised by how good it was.

— Rachel Martin
 Midvale Elementary School, WI



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Program leaders noted participant improvements in these characteristics:

Environmental attitudes	90%
Self-confidence	90%
Community spirit	90%
Leadership skills.....	90%
Volunteerism	90%
Nutritional attitudes.....	80%
Attitude toward school	80%
Social skills	70%
Scholastic achievement.....	60%
Motor skills	60%

Reported evidence documenting the effectiveness of gardening programs:

Positive feedback from participants.....	100%
Positive feedback from family members	100%
Positive feedback from administrators.....	100%
Positive community feedback	100%
Funding and donations	70%
Awards and recognition	40%
Decreased disciplinary actions..	30%
Improved attendance rates	30%
Improved test scores.....	20%
Positive survey results	20%

Subjects taught through programs:

Science	100%
Health and nutrition	90%
Math.....	90%
Community service.....	90%
English	60%
Art	60%
Intra/interpersonal relationships	40%
Social studies.....	30%
Cultural studies/issues	30%
History.....	30%
Physical education.....	20%
Interdisciplinary	20%

Percentage of time spent on instructional techniques (note: this is the average of all the responses for each technique):

Adult-led investigation/hands-on activities.....	30%
Collaborative project work	23%
Student-led investigation/hands-on activities.....	16%
Independent learning.....	14%
Lecture	13%

Source of curriculum used by gardening programs:

Combined materials from numerous sources	70%
Original material.....	40%
Nonprofit organization (such as NGA or Life Lab)	20%
State education department.....	20%
Cooperative Extension (such as 4-H or JMG)	10%
School district	10%

Compliance with State and National Education Standards:

Gardening program is connected to State and National Education Standards	50%
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Importance of linking to the standards for respondents:

Mandatory	0%
Very important.....	40%
Important.....	10%
Somewhat important.....	20%
Not important.....	10%
N/A	20%

Approximate amount of money spent on programs:

Less than \$250.....	0%
\$251 to \$500	10%
\$501 to \$1,000	10%
\$1,001 to \$1,500	20%
\$1,501 to \$2,000	10%
\$2,001 to \$2,500	20%
more than \$2,501	30%



Our gardening program has impacted the students and community in many ways: Neighbors have better access to fresh foods; the community enjoys seeing vacant lots turned into gardens; participating youth exhibit greater enthusiasm for working outside, maintaining the garden, eating healthy foods, and observing flowers and vegetables grow.

— Bakari McClendon
Houghton Elementary School/
Youth Farm Stand Project, MI

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Approximate value of in-kind donations to programs:

Less than \$250.....	0%
\$251 to \$500	0%
\$501 to \$1,000	10%
\$1,001 to \$1,500	30%
\$1,501 to \$2,000	10%
\$2,001 to \$2,500	0%
more than \$2,501	50%

Percentage of funding programs received from other sources (note: this is the average of all the responses for each source):

Grants	57%
Donations	18%
Fundraising	12%
School or school district funds.....	7%
Instructor’s pocket.....	4%
Other	2%
Parent or volunteer organizations	1%

Publicity about the programs:

Newsletter articles	22
Web site features.....	18

Newspaper articles.....	12
TV features	1
Radio features	2

Community interaction and additional impacts noted by respondents:

What was once a vacant weedy area has brought our school together and is our pride and joy! Students helped to plan the garden, cleaning up the area, and plant 10 handicapped-accessible raised bed. All the students were involved. Volunteers helped twice a week; an elderly neighbor visited often to check our progress and share our excitement; and 4-H ran a summer program. Part of our garden club’s mission is to welcome and include community members, which helps students learn what it means to be part of a community. The garden also complements our farm to school program and student nutrition goals. Many new individuals and businesses now have a relationship with the school. We’re just beginning to realize our

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As our garden took shape, everyone got excited. Proud students checked their class gardens every day. But one first grader with behavior problems stands out. When he shut down emotionally and became difficult in class, the garden always calmed him. He had lots of questions, loved to help in the garden, and would ask me to tell him about particular plants. After one long suspension, he immediately asked to see the garden, ‘because I’ve been missing it.’ And when he saw it, he shouted with glee: ‘WOW, when did all this stuff get out here!’ It was amazing to see the power our garden had in changing this little guy’s behavior.

— Samie Winick, Paul C. Bunn Elementary, Youngstown, OH

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garden's full potential. Thank you so much for your support—it's appreciated more than you can ever know.
—Barbara Rohde, B.A. Kennedy Elementary, Prairie du chien, WI



Our gardening project has become one of our most successful school programs. It has changed the culture of our school and provided positive experiences for every student. We are so fortunate!
— Michael Masucci, Poland North Elementary School, Poland, OH



Our community is in awe of our project. Kids are excited and have requested home gardens. Children can't wait to work, eat, plan, pick bugs. We are extremely proud of our students and families who have worked all summer to create a wonderful garden.
— Mary Noonan, Alden-Hebron Elementary School, Hebron, IL



Our garden has nurtured great community spirit. Everyone gathers in the garden to see how the plants are growing and to pick the veggies. All the students have tried new veggies. We had cooking classes at lunch, and invited parents to take extra veggies home. Parents share how vegetables are prepared in their country of origin

Photos courtesy of the Rudolf Steiner School.



Our improved vegetable garden has had a profound impact on our school community. One teacher noted that in these times of economic hardships and tough cutbacks it uplifting to see growth and beauty in the garden every day. Parents told me how much their students enjoyed my classes; many started a garden at home, some for the first

time. One child, whose usual response to “What did you do at school today?” was to shrug his shoulders and say “I don't know,” eagerly told his mother all the ways he'd interacted with nature on gardening days.

— Celia Larsen, Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor, MI

and we all enjoy the cultural exchange. Passing drivers slow down to admire our efforts. We have erected a permanent garden sign and the student are making garden stepping stones. At first some students didn't want to get their hands dirty, but now they happily pull weeds. Others were nervous about bees, but now understand their importance and sing the pollination song when they see bees at work. The compost pile turns out to have a nice, earthy smell and students enjoy adding kitchen scraps to it.
— Heather O'Bannon, Westside Academy, Columbus, OH