

Vernon School Garden 2015 - 2016 Final Report



Thank you for the opportunity to work as the Vernon School Garden Educator for the 2015 - 2016 school year. It's been a honor to work with students and staff to provide garden and cooking opportunities for our school community. Here are some of the projects that I worked on this school year:

1) **Kindergarten and 2nd Grade ESL weekly garden club** - partnered with Lisa Parson's to provide weekly garden clubs for ESL students. Students started and cared for a class worm bin, harvested and washed lettuce for the cafeteria and home, created a "pea bed" and trellis, planted Mother's day flowers to take home, started tomato and lettuce under grow lights in the classroom, tracked the progress of plants growing under the lights in classroom, harvested flowers and herbs and distributed to teachers.

2) **Recess gardening** - weekly drop-in garden opportunity for students. Generally it was the same group of students choosing to drop-in to the garden. While in the garden, students would observe and study worms and insects in the worm bin, dig in the dig pit, harvest and eat greens, or work on a specific task laid out for the day

3) **In- class lessons**

Kindergarten - Winter soup making and Spring Garden tour

1st grade - Stone soup making and Spring salad harvest and eating

2nd grade - Setup class worm bin, winter garden observation and harvest, and spring worm bin vermicompost harvest

3rd grade - study life cycle of tomato and start tomatoes inside, spring tomato transplant and bean planting

4th grade - Garden poetry using the study of rosemary, Native plant salve making, and Cornmeal pancakes with grains hand ground during their Oregon Trail overnight trip

5th grade - Photosynthesis game, Plant adaptation lesson, and Spring unit on lettuce planting and harvest.

6th grade world cultures - Sauerkraut making for study of germany, Pasta making for study of Italy

6th grade science - Weathering and Erosion in the garden experiment

MYP Math classes - Unit "Mathematics of Lettuce Growing", students started lettuce inside under lights and outside and measured growth rates. Students also study fractions in a lesson called "Sushi Fractions" where they made sushi rolls using fractions and then ate their sushi. Finally students used ratios and fractions to complete a recipe for "Chinese Noodles".

MYP Social Studies - Civil War and Food Polittics, students studied the impact of food blockades and rations of the outcome of the civilware and made "Jonnycakes" and ate hardtack

4) Special Events

- Hosted Headstart students for garden tour given by 2nd grade ESL students
- Hosted three "Family Cooking Nights" after-school
- Hosted two Oregon Food Bank adult garden education classes
- Participated in PTA STEAM night
- Harvested salad for Vernon School Carnival
- All school cafeteria taste-test "Arugula Pesto"
- Harvested salad for SUN School Holiday Food Drive
- STEM Night - hosted families in the garden for late night worm bin exploration

5) Lessons Learned

-It takes a lot of time to prepare for, execute, clean-up from, and lug around supplies for cooking based classes

- Volunteer support is key to an abundant and successful garden program.
- Garden goes beyond experiential hands-on learning, for some students it is a vital resource. I have had students tell me - "I'm hungry I don't eat enough at home, can I eat from the garden?", "I used to garden with my grandma who died, and the garden reminds me of her and makes me happy", "I planted garlic chives from the garden at my foster home to help me get through sad times", "If I do a good job in class, my reward is I get garden time"
- The garden is a living, learning resource that has the potential to build community in a large meaningful way. Parents often come up to me and say they want to learn about plants that their kiddos come home talking about!
- We are a model school for garden education in PPS!
- Consistency is key - having a more full time presence in the school is good for students, staff, and me. 2 days / week led to a lot of running around and trying to catch up (in the garden or in classes).

6) Top 5 successes

- **Recess gardening** - students self select and often the same kids, giving them the opportunity to work in the garden over the course of the whole school year. These students really built a sense of place / ownership in the garden
- **Cooking/nutrition education** - students love to cook and eat from the garden! Kids stop me in the hallway all the time and say "When are you coming in my class to cook?". Cafeteria taste test was a great success this winter

- **ESL garden clubs** - excellent opportunity for students to develop their language skills and build their confidence. Having Lisa Parson's as a committed garden teacher / liaison meant that she could help with things in the gardening (like watering or weeding) when I was not able to. Weekly garden lessons were a great opportunity for students
- **After-school opportunities** - STEAM night, STEM night, Family Cooking Club, OFB garden classes all great opportunities for families to build community.
- **Incredible support from staff and teachers** - Nearly doubled in-class lessons because teachers see and understand the roles the garden can play in student learning. Teachers bring their students into the garden more frequently with out the garden educator = success! Principals incredible champions of the garden, brainstorming ideas and new opportunities for learning.

7) 2015 - 2016 Vernon Garden Educator Percentage of Hours Spent on Varied Tasks

In- class lessons = 28%

Coordinating, meeting, and reporting = 19%

Recess Gardening = 18%

Maintenance = 16%

ESL Garden Clubs = 16%

Special Events = 3%

8) 2016 - 2017 Garden Education at Vernon School

- We've received a grant from Growing Gardens via the Oregon Department of Education to provide 20 hours per week of garden and cooking education at Vernon for the school year! As a result, each student will receive 10 hours of garden education next year. The grant provides opportunities for - garden education activities in-class, 1 SUN school class per week, cafeteria taste tests, food pantry taste tests, harvest for the cafeteria, community events and outreach, work parties, harvest of the month integration in the classes, and 1 grade level field trip to Sauvie Island Center. We've also received money for garden and instructional supplies.
- PTA sponsors 10 hours per week of garden education at Vernon School. These hours will be used to provide Recess gardening to students, provide harvests and education for special events, allow teachers to increase the number of in-class lessons per students, increase hours for garden maintenance, planning, and development.

THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT! IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE SERVING AS THE GARDEN EDUCATOR AT VERNON THIS SCHOOL YEAR!

