Garden-Based Learning in Green Ribbon Schools: Case Studies of Exemplary Schools

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What are Green Ribbon Schools?

The aim of U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools is to inspire schools, districts and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to strive for 21st century excellence, by highlighting exemplary practices and resources that all can employ. To that end, the award recognizes schools, districts, and IHEs that:

- Reduce environmental impact and costs;
- Improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff;
- Provide environmental education, which teaches many disciplines, and is especially good at effectively incorporating STEM, civic skills, and green career pathways;
- Combined achievement in ALL three of these areas, collectively known as Pillars, serves as the basis for recognition.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS - Comprehensive

(1) In what ways are school gardens linked with academic classroom learning and integrated with the larger school context for children and youth? What are the nuances of the ties to classroom learning that occur? -- *This year, the focus is on this question*

(2) What difference does garden-based learning make to the overall experience of schooling for students?

(3) What are the lessons that can be shared? What is the roadmap to inductively build learning theories?
Study School Sites

Study across School Districts in
Chicago
Los Altos (CA)
Mountain View (CA)
Portland
San Jose
What is Garden-Based Learning (GBL)?

Garden-based learning is an instructional strategy that utilizes a garden as an instructional resource, a teaching tool. “It encompasses programs, activities and projects in which the garden is the foundation for integrated learning, in and across disciplines, through active, engaging real-world experiences” (Desmond et al., 2002, p.7).
Findings: Present focus - Q1
Various models used by schools for integration

• In a few places-teachers are involved in actual teaching in the gardens
• Most teachers tie GBL to classroom teaching
• Garden coordinators: hired & trained – integrate curricular ties with GBL/experience
• Docents trained: curriculum fully developed; classroom teachers may also be involved in garden teaching
• Where teachers take full responsibility, full integration with curriculum
1. Cultivating a Sense of Place
2. Fostering Curiosity and Wonder
3. Discovering Rhythm and Scale
4. Valuing Biocultural Diversity
5. Embracing Practical Experience
6. Nurturing Interconnectedness
7. Awakening the Senses

Use 5 out of 7 Pedagogical Principles developed in Learning Gardens and Sustainability Education Book