

# Benefits of School-Based Community Gardens

## A compilation of research findings

### Academic Achievement

- A study of third and fourth graders involved in a school garden and nutrition program found that “the school garden **supports student inquiry, connection to the natural world**, and engages students in the process of **formulating meaningful questions**” (Habib & Doherty, 2007).
- Students involved with school gardens generally **take pleasure in learning** and **show positive attitudes towards education** (Canaris, 1995; Dirks & Orvis, 2005).
- Students who have school garden programs incorporated into their science curriculum score significantly **higher on science achievement tests** than students who are taught by strictly traditional classroom methods (Klemmer, Waliczek, & Zajicek, 2005).

### Physical Health

- Children who are familiar with growing their own food tend to **eat more fruits and vegetables** (Bell & Dymont, 2008), and are more inclined to continue healthy eating habits through adulthood (Morris & Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002).
- Gardening during childhood **exposes children to healthy food, moderate exercise, and positive social interactions** and can often lead to a lifetime of gardening (Gross & Lane, 2007).

### Social and Emotional Health

- The school garden serves as a “safe place” for students. Studies show that large numbers of students report “**that they feel ‘calm,’ ‘safe,’ ‘happy,’ and ‘relaxed’** in the school garden” (Habib & Doherty, 2007).
- Children who work in gardens are **more likely to accept people different from themselves** (Dymont & Bell, 2006).
- A study of third, fourth and fifth graders showed that students participating in a garden program had **increased self-understanding, interpersonal skills, and cooperative skills** when compared to non-gardening students (Robinson & Zajicek, 2005).

### School and Community Benefits

- According to Skelly & Bradley (2000), teachers who worked in schools with garden programs had **higher workplace morale and increased “general satisfaction with being a teacher at that school.”**
- The study by Habib and Doherty (2000) showed that “**68 percent of the students shared what they were learning with family and friends** unassociated with the school garden program.” This has the potential for spreading the benefits to a much larger community.
- The American Community Gardening Association attributes community gardens to an **increase in home prices for residences** near the garden, a **reduction in violent and non-violent crime** in the neighborhood, and an overall **increase in the feeling of safety** (2009).
- In a Denver study, **95 percent of community gardeners give away some of the produce they grow** to friends, family and people in need; **60 percent specifically donate to food assistance programs** (Litt, J.S., et al., 2012).
- **In a survey of community gardeners in Denver, 80 percent gardened as children**, suggesting that gardening at a young age has a long-reaching impact (Litt, J.S., et al., 2012).
- **More than 50 percent of community gardeners meet national guidelines for fruit and vegetable intake, compared to 25 percent of non-gardeners** (Litt, J.S., et al., 2011).



*I've learned a lot from the garden, but the community garden is also a place where I can just go and breathe in some fresh air. I feel calm and peaceful when I'm in the garden.*

*—Fifth grade student*

## Sources

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