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 & Dyment, 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 (Dyment & 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).
Sources


