



Grace Place for Children & Families

4300 21st Ave. SW
Naples, FL 34116

Organization Profile:

- 501(c)3 Nonprofit
- Serves 800 students from preschool to adults
- Serves 150 K-5th graders at Grace Place campus

Garden Profile:

- 9 years in operation
- About 50 students participate in afterschool garden program at a time
- Mom and Tots preschool program also uses garden
- Gardening Instructor is paid staff
- One volunteer assists teacher and staff; volunteers from Florida Gulf Coast University help with direct lessons and oversee some garden activities

General Garden Information:

Given the fact that many of our students are below grade level in academic areas and many come from homes where English is not spoken, it is so wonderful to give the children access to such great hands-on activities. Gardening develops so many skills, including language, math, writing, science, and fine motor. Nutritional needs are also explored and new foods introduced in a manner that makes learning fun.

The garden consists of 13 4' x 12' beds and two smaller, non-rectangular beds. All 13 beds are slightly raised, made of an eco-friendly composite blend of recycled wood and plastic, and were the product of an Eagle Scout project. We have a pavilion so the kids have shade to sit under and learn right next to the garden. Themed beds include herbs, butterfly beds, salsa bed, salad bed, international edible, edible flower, and mint beds. We are also working on a garden bed of the senses, and at Christmas we put in an edible wreath bed. We had weeding competitions using a scale. It made for a much greater enthusiasm level for weeding on those really hot days.



Naples
Botanical
Garden

Student Involvement & Education:

In the afterschool program, we have cycled through fourth and fifth graders and are now using the garden with second and third graders. Curriculum comes from a multiplicity of sources including Junior Master Gardener Program, Worms Eat Our Gardens, Florida Agriculture in the Classroom, Life Lab, and other online sources.

Garden Product:

We give produce to our families after the kids taste what they have grown. We have made various salads and beverages.

Parent Engagement:

Parents often stop by to chat as they pick up their children. Several children have mentioned visits with their parents on the weekend. We do not, at this point, have a formal program that involves the parents except using what we send home with the kids. Engaging the parents more fully is a great goal for the future use of the garden.

Goals:

Our goals are to keep growing and expanding knowledge and skills related to gardening, health, nutrition, and language learning for our students. It would be great to try partnering parents and their kids in the planning, harvesting, use, and maintenance of the garden.

Additional Notes:

We used last year's Recognition award to purchase gardening supplies and curriculum materials. We purchased a vermicomposting system, made seed bombs, purchased and read *Miss Rumphius*, and discussed the environmental pros and cons of seed bombs. Students also studied and built trebuchets and catapults to launch our seed bombs. Alas, the trebuchets and catapults were not quite up to elementary "sturdiness standards," but we launched a few and the kids learned a lot. Third grade made miniature herb gardens to take home, complete with miniature garden items made by students (benches, chairs, fences, etc., primarily made with clay).

Contact:

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