



Parkside Elementary

5322 Texas Ave.
Naples, FL 34113

School Profile:

- Collier County Public Schools
- PreK-5th grades
- 773 students

Garden Profile:

- Four years in operation
- 350 K-5th graders participate in garden
- One teacher is paid to run the afterschool program; no one is paid to care for the garden when the afterschool academy isn't running or when school is not in session.
- No volunteers

General Garden Information:

Our garden is about 800 square feet and consists of raised beds and containers, with about 95% planted in edible plants. We have an herb bed, a cabbage patch, some citrus trees, and a kumquat tree. We also grew butterfly-attracting plants to try and draw in butterflies to lay eggs.

We had a wealth of interest in our garden due to the Twitter posts I made about our caterpillars in the dill we planted. We saw them from tiny eggs to a chrysalis. Our staff commented on the beautiful plants in the garden and their students' excitement for what was happening in the garden.

I take care of the garden on the weekends or afterschool. I have also had students come in on the weekend to help me weed and water, but this is not a consistent happening. We have been fortunate in having our afterschool academies and a student Garden Club help maintain our garden throughout the school year. There are a few lapses in time when it is not being used, but we even use the garden during our summer school program.



Student Involvement & Education:

Three-hundred and fifty students participate in an afterschool garden program. Other students visit the garden during lessons that tie into it. Third grade visited when they were reading about soil. Second grade visited when they learned about the parts of plants. Third grade visited when they learned about living things. Kindergarten used the EarthBoxes in the garden to experiment with growing pumpkins.

Garden Product:

We have the kids prepare the produce and eat it. Leftovers get bagged up and taken home. This year one of the things we also did was use lemon balm and peppermint leaves to make tea. We are very excited for our potato patch and are looking forward to weighing the potatoes and making a delicious treat for Parkside students to enjoy.

Parent Engagement:

We have a STEM Night where our academy students give the parents a tour of the garden and we usually have something for the parents to taste; this is always a big hit! We do struggle to get parents involved in the garden, but one of our goals is to increase parent involvement.

Goals:

Our goals for the garden are more parental and staff involvement. I also want the beds fixed.

Additional Notes:

We used last year's Recognition award to purchase plants and seeds for our garden. We also purchased some soil. We received a Lowe's grant at the end of last year for \$4,445, too.

This year has been difficult in our garden. A group came to help us build new boxes and other learning spaces. It was a catastrophe; it just isn't a good-looking space. BUT it didn't matter to us; we planted and had a bountiful year learning and planting in the garden. THEN over Spring Break, two people snuck on campus and tore everything out of our beds. We had broccoli, cabbage, herbs galore, tomato plants, kale, incredible eggplant, watermelon, etc. I came in with my daughters to water on a Monday during break and was completely DEVASTATED. We have the culprits on camera, but can't make out the faces and watching them single-handedly destroy all that my students and I worked for was heart-breaking. So, right now when we should be harvesting and sharing the fruits of all our labors, we are left with nothing but our potato plant experiment. We tried putting everything back in the soil, but I think our plants are too stressed to make it. So, to understand our garden, you must know how hard this year has been, but know that we will bring our garden back even better than before. Each year, I work on the garden with the students and we get better and better at decision-making and our vision for our school garden.

Contact:

Kriste Eaton, Math Coach, eatonk@collierschools.com

David Ware, Science Coach, wareda@collierschools.com