



Think&EatGreen@Dickens

Project Report



Introduction

Dickens Elementary School was given a Leed Silver certification with many sustainable features: energy savings in lighting, geothermal heating, storage of rainwater to irrigate the field, grounds and other uses. The students and staff are very active in recycling and have three recycling programs at the school. The roof top garden space was also built to be used as a teaching garden and an educational outdoor classroom space.

The staff and community have consistently met throughout 2010-2012 to work on completing phase three of the school: the roof top herb garden and the school community garden on the northwest corner of Windsor and 17th Avenue. The school Garden Club (includes students, teachers, student support workers, administration and parents) along with staff and PAC have supported the school and community garden which was completed in the fall of 2011. Students have been engaged in planting, growing, preparing, sharing and managing their new garden.

“Taking care of our garden means that it takes care of us.”



Objectives

The main objectives of the Think and Eat Green School Project at Dickens, for all students, were to address healthy sustainable food systems using the new school and community garden and to integrate skills and knowledge about:

- Food and environment education.
- Informed choices about food consumed.
- Use of environmentally sensitive food practices by using local foods, foods sourced close to home whenever possible, recycling, and composting.
- Supporting, sustaining and maintaining a school garden.

Activities

The Dickens School Green Team worked with Susan Garber, classroom teacher, to plan a seasonal food garden that focuses on producing food throughout the year. This year for the first time the Green Team prepared the soil for planting garlic, seedlings, and seeds and is working to care and manage the garden during the growing season, harvesting vegetables and herbs for a variety of meals including the in-residence Project Chef program. The Green Team promoted the school community garden and the school recycling program at school wide assemblies. They also participated in harvesting seeds that they sold to the school community. Funds earned went to the recycling program and the Western Wilderness Community a charity of choice.

The Project Chef In-Residence Program worked with the students in ten classes, K to Grade Four for six weeks. It is a hands-on, authentic experience with a high level of content that inspires the learning for all participants. The program goals were accomplished. Students “gained knowledge about informed choices, developed skill and confidence in making culturally diverse, nutritious meals that comply with the Canada Food Guide, learned principles of safety in the kitchen – food safety, safety using equipment and utensils, participated in shared meals, learned social and cultural behaviours associated with meal service, and worked cooperatively with peers, staff, parents and the community”. This program also donated herb plants and tubarbs that have been planted in the garden.

Students were introduced to some local community-based organizations – e.g., Price Mart, John Bishop – Restaurateur, Chris Hergesheimer the Flour Peddler.

Outcomes

The implementation of the Think and Eat Green Project Grant provided support for:

- The Dickens Green Team to promote a green, sustainable school community garden program;
- Students in kindergarten to grade four to participate in the in-residence Project Chef Program;
- Accessing farmers, gardeners, nutrition and health experts and other community partners to speak to classes;
- Opportunities to influence parent and community about healthy, sustainable food choices;
- Access to other partnerships – community based and university based.

As a result from the above activities, students wrote about healthy foods and bodies, food consumption, preparation of meals, and even created class recipe books. Students researched topics about the garden and the cultural diversity of food. A variety of subject areas were integrated. Group projects were developed and students presented their work to their parents and families.

“The garden is important because it teaches us about how important plants are.”

“I love digging in the soil.”



Reflections

The participation in the Think and Eat Green School project helped to promote activities for students to reconnect to healthy bodies, edible food and the environment. Students learned patience, cooperation, teamwork and their social skills blossomed. The activities implemented at Dickens proved to be successful and are ongoing.



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