Digging in the Dirt!
Making Gardens Learning Spaces
Marcia Fritz, Cozad Elementary School

Butterfly release

Ladybug release

2010, the beginning….

Before the outdoor gardens….

After the raised beds…..

After outside garden

March 1, 2020

2015 improvements….

Before the greenhouse

Haymaker Greenhouse

Students today:

- Screen time - "electronic pacifiers"
- Outside time
  - Parent fears – "biophobia" – "stranger danger"
  - Fewer playgrounds/green areas
- If students are to care about our planet,
  - they need to learn to LOVE being in it!
- Students do not "dress" for outside
  - After it rains – worms, rainbows, puddles
  - After it snows – birds, clean world

Why garden with students?

- Contact with nature:
  - Improves concentration, productivity,
    - and cognitive development
  - Relieves symptoms of ADD
  - Feeds imagination and encourages a
    - "sense of wonder"
  - Buffers stress for "over-structured"
    - kids
  - Encourages activity & combats obesity
  - Promotes social interaction
  - EVERY STUDENT can enjoy the garden
  - Community involvement

Young children

- Natural Learners
- Have you ever tried to take a "quick"
  - walk with a toddler?
- Early exposure to nature is better
  - for their health
- The garden is a small space with
  - LOTS of possibilities!
- Give them freedom within your definitions
- OWNERSHIP is critical!
- Instant gratification – senses!
- But also patience! Seeds take time

School Gardens – Possible barriers

- District "buy-in"
- Space
- Nebraska weather
- Labor intensive
- Who will take care of it?
- Vandalism
- Location (8 hours of sun, water source, dumpster location)
- Start SMALL – always easier to enlarge in Year 2
- Cost (seeds vary from 10 cents to more than $10)
- Expertise – UNL Master Gardeners – volunteer hours

Tips for gardening with students

- Establish "Garden Rules" early and consistently
  - Remind them they're entering a special place!
  - Even though they are outside, it is NOT recess time
  - Calm voices so not to scare the creatures
    - Do not harm ANY creature in the garden
- No running   *Stay on paths
- Do not eat anything without
  - adult permission
- Handle tools appropriately
- Wash hands when you
  - leave the garden

As a teacher…

- Include students in decisions
- Supervision is important for safety
- Be prepared with materials
- LISTEN to them in the garden…
- Make a game of chores
- Make it interesting and unhurried
- Have a signal that means "quietly gather"
- Introduce vocabulary as needed and appropriate
- Be enthusiastic, but you do not have to know everything
- Don't be sooooo serious….weird things will happen!

Adult expectations

- Rows will not be straight
- Good plants will be "weeded"
- Wheelbarrows will tip over
- Kids do not like to weed
- Nature is in the garden
- Plants get stepped on and die
- It is hot in the garden
- Do not always be the "leader"
- Seeds will be dropped and come up other places
- Our ONE TOMATO SEED!

ONE
tomato
plant

Activities

- Take home/do at home activities
  - Seed activities   Scavenger Hunt
  - Journaling   Taking Pictures
- What do you know? What do you want to know?
- Record things
  - Student kits – pencils, clipboards,
  - measuring tools, cameras,
  - Calendars, white boards, journals
- Scientific Method
  - GUESS what will happen
  - TEST your idea
  - TELL what happened

Other Activities

- Seed bombs
- Seed tapes
- Three Sisters
- Red Wiggler Worms
- Birds
- Animal Tracks
- Insect hatching and release
- Vegetable vs Fruit
- What part do we eat? (stem, root, leaf, flowers, seed, fruit, bark)
  - Pull entire plant up to see how it grows

Kinds of gardens

- Raised Beds
- Container Gardens
- Sensory Gardens
- Garbage Gardens
- Vertical Gardens
- Terrariums

Resources

- Local UNL Master Gardeners
- Kid's Gardening – grants & lesson plans
  - https://kidsgardening.org
  - Youth Garden Grant
  - Many other grants
- Lesson Plans
  - Project Wild
  - Burpee Seeds
  - www.gardeners.com/how-to
- State Standards

Questions??

Activities you
are doing?

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