

# **The Growing Minds Garden Program**

## **How does your project include professional development?**

This project includes several Harloe educators who will not only share their skill set with the students on campus, but also with faculty and staff. Teachers will have the opportunity to incorporate our garden program into their curriculum with the help of the nonprofit organization One Cool Earth as well as myself. As the grant applicant, I plan to hold Tuesday Tidbits for teachers addressing how to utilize our garden program as a tool to enhance their teaching practices with project based learning.

## **How will your idea create innovative change and/or promote educational excellence?**

This idea will provide students with the opportunity to learn and apply skills that pertain to multiple facets of the real world. The innovative change will be derived through students leading their area of expertise. It will promote leadership and communication skills by creating student led initiatives and projects that are achievable. In addition, this idea will teach students not only where food comes from, but how it is grown, sold, and the infrastructure necessary to achieve a long term goal. This project requires students to practice and execute organizational skills for success. As a school wide project, it's collaboration will enhance the school culture by all age groups able to appreciate and contribute to the same unifying goal.

## **Summarize your proposed project:**

Information to include:

- **Name of project:**
- **Challenge:**
- **Target beneficiaries:**
- **What's your innovative idea?**
- **How does it solve the challenge/problem?**
- **How long will this project take to develop and implement?**
- **What's its intended impact?**

The Growing Minds Garden Program is a project well beyond simply planting and harvesting. This program will create several clubs at Harloe that will appeal to a large number of students. Before/after school programs at Harloe are limited and do not appeal to all types of learners. My idea stemmed from a conversation with my own students about what their demands were. Not all students feel confident in robotics, many do not qualify for GATE or necessarily need to be in a reading program, and some students are simply not the athletic type. So what can I do to provide options for students who want to be involved? Create them. The Growing Minds Garden Program is a project based program that will create four distinct clubs, include a family cooking night once a trimester, incorporate art and provide a positive learning space for all students and teachers.

The Builder's Club will lead the design and construction of the garden beds and rolling farm stand. This club will have the biggest responsibility, which is why two teachers will collaborate and lead it; Janine Brown and Ken Easland are two committed teachers who have the skill set for this club. Students and parents will need to sign a waiver to participate.

In addition, there will also be a Botany Club responsible for seeding, upkeep of the garden beds and greenhouse, and preparing bouquets and veggie bags for the rolling farm stand. I will be the teacher leading the Botany Club. The farm stand will be a donation-based stand where produce and flowers will be sold twice a month.

The Entrepreneur Club & student council, both led by the sixth grade teacher Bonnie Davis, will be responsible to complete all sales, keep track of money earned, and calculate 10% of every sale, which will be added to our Harloe Scholarship Fund. The fund will be granted to students whose families struggle to afford Science Camp costs or field trips.

The remaining profit will be used to maintain the garden area and purchase necessary materials. Any produce remaining after a sale will be donated to our school cafeteria, and flowers will be donated to the local senior citizen center.

The final club will be the Computer and Journalism Club, which will be student led and teacher facilitated. Karin Havemose will lead this club. Students will be responsible to capture pictures of classes while in the garden

and interview students. They will use a computer program to create a monthly “Growing Minds Garden Happenings” flyer. It’s purpose is to update families and staff on our progress, upcoming events, and student involvement. Programs will take place before or after school. This project allows for K-6th grade students to play a role. Little Buddy classes can help maintain the garden space, add their own garden art, and assist in preparing items for the farm stand. They are also free to utilize the outdoor space with their classroom teachers.

Construction and landscaping of the garden area will be done in stages. The garden beds will be raised so students who may have physical impairments are able to participate. The entire area, from the kindergarten fence to the end of the outdoor classroom, will be professionally wood chipped. This allows for permanent seating, no chemical treatments to grass around the eating areas, and a place where garden art can be placed and appreciated. Because it is a student & teacher maintained area rather than Lucia Mar maintenance, it will promote responsibility and ownership over the space. A garden art fund has been created for each grade level to participate in a project and add it to our outdoor learning space. Due to the busy road parallel to our garden, Put-In Cups will be purchased to create an entire fence mural providing privacy and some noise control. These are only removable from the campus side of the fence and an outdoor surveillance camera will be put in place to discourage vandalism after school hours. Last but not least, an outdoor classroom space will be created at the opposite end of the garden with ample seating and a rolling whiteboard. This provides teachers an opportunity to take their teaching outside.

This project will affect the entire student body at Harloe Elementary school, which approximates around 700 students. Because this project will lay the foundation for the following years, the amount of students affected will continue to be the same from year to year.

### **What phase is your proposed project in?**

This project idea was built off of what is already in place on our campus. The idea of a school garden was intriguing to me, but after my students and I used it, we realized that it has much more potential, and it became clear that the

space and resources are being underutilized. Therefore, the project will be at the beginning phase, but could come to fruition within six months.

**How will you implement your project?**

With the collaboration of other faculty who have confirmed their participation, this project will be managed as a group with my lead. These faculty members will run a section of the project utilizing their specialty skill set. Each different section will accommodate the diverse interests & passions of Harloe's student body. All sections will have a clear objective and timeline, and weekly check-ins will take place between myself and said faculty members.

**Have you raised any other funds for the project?**

Earlier in the year, I was able to acquire soil and plant donations from local businesses as well as significant parent/student volunteer help to successfully execute a campus beautification day and create native gardens around campus. There has been no fundraising for this specific project yet.

**What is your project budget?**

If granted the X-Prize, this project is expected to budget for the full \$50,000.

**What is the expected impact of this project if successful?**

Apart from the specific student growth mentioned above, this project will unify the school and improve the school atmosphere. It will provide families with opportunities to connect with one another and become involved with school projects. In addition to the educational outcome this project is capable of, it will create fluid relationships amongst students, parents and people of the community.

**What are the 1-3 key indicators you will use to track progress toward the impact you described above?**

Key indicators will be teacher participation in outdoor learning which will be tracked using a Google Doc shared on the school drive, faculty participants keeping a student and parent/community member volunteer log, pre- and post- data that will show student growth, and student reflections.

**What's the core insight or innovation that differentiates this project?**

The accessibility to all age groups differentiates this project. There are simplistic aspects that would appeal to a kindergartener's abilities as well as more advanced challenges that appeal to older age groups. Given the variety of learning opportunities, students are provided with the option to pursue a topic that interests them.

**How will your project scale beyond what you've proposed here?**

*For example, will you create a model that other grade levels or schools can replicate, scale through district implementation, etc? (150 Word Limit)*

Successfully implementing an outdoor learning space can serve as a template for other schools and communities. In addition, specific projects or learning zones within this model can be altered to fit a variety of those schools and communities.

**What are the 2-3 most significant risks you foresee in this project?**

With any project of this scale, there are always risks. The most significant risks I foresee are maintenance and upkeep. With an outdoor learning area, it takes consistent attention to maintain a functional space. Although student council leaders would play a large role in this, it does require dedication from teachers. A simple teacher rotation with a maintenance checklist would reduce this risk. Another risk is challenging students to maintain their commitment throughout the year. Implementing incentives to continue participation would encourage dedication.