

Children's Harvest Garden
Woodland Elementary West School
Gages Lake, Illinois

Goal: Engage students, parents and the community in a hands-on learning project that complements curriculum, and emphasizes the values of team work, citizenship, respect, perseverance, initiative, responsibility, and charitable giving.

Who's Involved: 400 second grade students (17 classrooms)

How the Project Works: Second grade students plant and tend seeds in their classroom, then transplant them in late May into the 140x50 foot harvest garden. Each child plants a seedling in the garden. A short presentation by a parent volunteer highlights what plants need to grow, reinforcing classroom learning.

Over the summer, families volunteer to weed, water and harvest the vegetables, which are donated to a local food pantry. When they return to school as third graders, students tour the now-grown garden to see how big their seedlings have grown and to actually see vegetables on the plants. New second graders tour the garden to learn about the project they will be participating in.

Parent and community volunteers solicit donations and prepare seed planting kits for each classroom, plan and prepare the garden soil for planting day (a two-day event), maintain and harvest the garden over summer, and tear it down in fall.

Results: Each year community excitement, awareness and support for the garden has grown. So has the yield: In 2007, more than 900 pounds of vegetables were donated to the local food bank. These vegetables were used to make more than 2,000 meals for hungry people.

Photos:



Planting seeds in class



Planting day in the garden



Tending and harvest during summer



Classroom tour of garden



Fall clean up