

2022 - 2023

Smith Sprouts Youth Gardening Program



Relevance

The Smith Sprouts, youth educational programming plan, will add additional deliveries and outreach in the areas of youth Horticulture. Planned programs will focus on the identified and emerging needs outside of the in-depth educational efforts in Lubbock county. The high prevalence of childhood obesity in Texas is cause for concern because it is linked to negative health consequences for children and their families. Schools are uniquely positioned to have a positive impact on children's knowledge and behaviors associated with obesity. For example, vegetable exposure plus school gardening has been shown to improve consumption of fruits and vegetables. Adding more frequent and more vigorous physical activities during the school day has been shown to improve student fitness and weight. The home environment is also an important influence on a child's eating and activity behaviors. The greater the frequency of vegetable consumption and physical activity modeled by parents, the greater the consumption of these foods and exercise by their children. With child obesity rates among low-income children in Texas ranging from 10% to over 20%, engaging schools and families in prevention efforts is critical.

Response

The Learn, Grow, Eat & Go! (LGEG) course combines the efforts of the Junior Master Gardener "Nutrition in the Garden" curriculum, Walk Across Texas (WAT), and the Coordinated Approach to Child Health program in order to address childhood obesity. By walking children step-by-step through the growing and preparing nutritious foods, this program instills students knowledge to choose healthier food selections while being physically active in an unconventional manner. To also provides a manner for future career exploration and educational paths. To participate in Smith Sprouts, individuals must (1) be a 2nd-5th grade students at Smith Elementary; (2) agree to help maintain the Star Garden, (3) be able to stay after school.

Partnerships & Collaborators

- Smith Elementary & Lubbock ISD provided the use of the land, water and classroom space which contributed greatly to the success of this after school program.
- Lubbock Master Gardener Association provided garden assistance and safety oversight.
- Texas Master Naturalists, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Lubbock County Personnel, Texas Tech University Horticulture Club, Texas Tech University Entomology Club, and Growing Together Texas all provided relevant educational presentations and activities.
- Dr. Russ Wallace provided strawberry crowns and research opportunities engaging students in career and education exploration.
- Little Red Riding Hood Nursery provided materials for plant sale to engage students in career exploration.
- High Plains Water District, Lubbock Mayor's Fitness Council, Texas Farm Bureau and Home Depot provided financial assistance through grant funds for garden construction.

VALUE STATEMENT

School Gardens

The Smith Elementary Star Garden project aims to provide elementary school aged students a garden space where lessons are drawn from real-life experiences rather than textbook examples, allowing students to become active participants in the learning process.



585

Elementary School
Students at Smith
Elementary



Evaluation Strategy

Smith Sprouts was implemented twice a month during the school year. A pre-post evaluation was administered at the conclusion of the session. A total of 141 graduates returned the evaluation instrument for a response rate of 100%.

RESULTS

Extension Agent Reid and other volunteers taught the nutrition and gardening program series. Pre- and post-surveys indicate participants had a statistically different positive change as a result of the Smith Sprouts program in the following areas:

Knowledge Gained

- 49.2% increase in water resource management
- 83.6% increase in gardening confidence
- 30.4% kitchen safety

Perceived Changes

- 27.1% increase in consumption of water once a day
- 9.7% increase in consumption of orange vegetables like carrots, squash and sweet potatoes
- 11.8% increase in consumption of salad consisting of lettuce or other green vegetables like spinach, collard greens, swiss chard, green beans, sugar snap peas, broccoli and other 17.4% increase in consumption of other vegetables like tomatoes, asparagus, red cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, mushrooms, celery



SUMMARY

The value of the Smith Sprouts program in Lubbock County is empowering youth with the knowledge and support to grow their own vegetables, provide examples of how to consume the produce, information about making healthy consumption choices and staying active; therefore, helping combat the childhood obesity crisis as well as educational and career exploration opportunities. It also provides Lubbock County schools and example of how to incorporate different learning models over diverse topics.

FUTURE PROGRAMMING

The Smith Sprouts program will continue next year. Expansion areas include: expansion to other campuses, new production introductions, and introduction of new wildlife species.



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