

Growing Impacts: Activities & Outcomes for City Schoolyard Garden Programs

FY17 & FY18 Overview Evaluation Report — July 2016-June 2018



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City Schoolyard Garden (CSG) partnered with Dr. Maryfrances Porter, Partnerships for Strategic Impact, to evaluate CSG programs for the 2016-2018 academic years with core interests to better understand student impacts and glean insights into effective programming. Specific focus was placed on participant feedback.

The combined results of these evaluation efforts are described in this summary report including **overall growth points, cumulative impacts, core statistical data results, youth development factors, activity output tracking, and evaluation of partnership outcomes**. This report includes results and impacts from the past two school years (2016-2017 & 2017-2018) in order to provide a more robust and comprehensive evaluation. **Sample participant quotes** and a few photos are also included. A brief methodology is added as an appendix.

CSG Overall Growth Points – The evaluation conducted indicated numerous growth points and strengths in terms of youth garden engagement and leadership development, refined and expanded garden lessons, increased community partnerships and programming, and increased teacher participation and parent support. Students at all six Charlottesville elementary schools, Walker Upper Elementary School, Buford Middle School, and Charlottesville High School (CHS) continued to have the opportunity to engage in the eight schoolyard gardens or in healthy school food programs. Additional accomplishments and points of growth include:

- + **Increased student, volunteer and teacher participation** from past years (12% increase).
- + **Increased student engagement in leadership opportunities** from K-12th grade with a core focus on our summer paid internship program for teens.
- + **Increased teacher engagement** with the gardens through added focus on connection between Garden Coordinators and teachers and the **development of a CSG garden lesson database**.
- + **Improved and broadened the garden curriculum** by further developing project-based lessons, expanding subjects taught in the gardens, and adding a new urban farming class at CHS.
- + **Strengthened *Harvest of the Month***, which was implemented at all nine Charlottesville City Schools and community partners that include the PB&J Fund, Lugo McGinnis Academy and City of Promise.
- + Continued to direct and coordinate the Charlottesville Food Justice Network that **multiplied partnerships for 20+ organizations** working toward amplifying impact, increasing urban agriculture and building a healthy and just community food system for all.
- + **Amplified the impacts of partnerships to strengthen innovative programs** including a Garden-to-Market Class at Charlottesville High School, the City of Promise GardenUp program, the Urban Agriculture Collective of Charlottesville Community Garden Market Days, and Bread and Roses Mobile Kitchen.



CSG's Educational Framework –RootEd Values and Strategies for Youth Engagement

Youth participating in CSG programs

Observe 🌱 Discover 🌱 Engage 🌱 Experiment 🌱 Interact 🌱 Partner 🌱 Practice 🌱 Lead

These practices lead to positive youth impacts such as increased
 Connection, Autonomy, Competence, Well-being, Equity, Confidence, and Happiness.

CSG Cumulative Impacts – Students, teachers, parents and community members significantly value the garden programming, think it is important to have gardens in schools and value the quality of the garden. Students overwhelmingly love being in the garden and enjoy trying new fruits and vegetables offered through CSG programming. Overarching program impacts include these core findings:

- CSG programs were shown to be extremely productive and integrated ties and outcomes across multiple subjects and impact areas, and increased learning of gardening skills and knowledge.
- CSG programs contributed toward character building and leadership among youth specifically in terms of increased feelings of competence and confidence, sense of integrity and care for the gardens, social skills, connection to nature, contribution to community and productivity.
- Students reported overwhelmingly positive feelings associated with CSG activities including feeling happy, excited, peaceful and calm. CSG programs intentionally addressed inequities in the gardens, providing a diverse and welcoming environment for students of all backgrounds.
- Students felt strong ownership over the gardens and felt that the gardens were spaces that they could exhibit leadership skills and independence. Middle school Garden Aide students were specifically able to glean positive youth development (described below in more detail).
- CSG staff and volunteer investment was essential to the success of the program – providing opportunities for students to build positive relationships, feel connected, build skills and feel empowered. CSG staff played the pivotal role in growing impact and engagement in the gardens.
- The *Harvest of the Month* program continued to be an effective intervention for increasing student knowledge about and preference for fresh healthy foods featured, and built capacity within CCS.



Core Statistical Results – The evaluation conducted demonstrated the following results:

- **100%** of Garden Aides, **98%** of PE students, and **86%** of Garden to Market students strongly felt they can demonstrate leadership, care for the garden, build community, and contribute in their garden.
- **83%** of Garden Aides and **98%** of PE students felt competent or demonstrated increased gardening skills.
- **100%** of Garden Aides enjoyed eating what they grow.
- **89%** Garden Aides believed they learned a great deal in the garden (up from 71% in FY16).
- **90%** of PE students enjoyed working in the garden.
- **87%** of students learned a lot about healthy eating and **77%** about plants and garden skills.
- **98%** of parents and **100%** of teachers said the schoolyard garden is Very Important/Important.
- **97%** of parents and **99%** of teachers said the schoolyard garden is Very Good/Good Quality.
- Parents appreciated how the gardens cultivate knowledge of where food comes from, teaches about health, provides hands-on experiences, deliberately addresses inequities, and engages children in nature.
- **93%** of parents believed CSG supports student equity; **91%** believed CSG enhances academic learning.
- Teachers appreciated the schoolyard garden for the opportunity for hands-on learning, garden lessons that incorporated multiple subjects, and building equity and community among diverse students.

Positive Youth Development – The evaluation showed City Schoolyard Garden programs contributed to six main components that **enhance youth development**. These were reflected across the students and most profoundly with the Garden Aides (who have daily garden classes) with 100% expressing the following positive points of growth:

- A. **Caring/Helping** – *fostering sense of compassion for gardens and garden community and willingness to work together.* Students developed connections to the gardens and felt that the gardens were their spaces that they could contribute to shaping and developing.
- B. **Autonomy/Integrity** – *fostering autonomy through choices, guidance and time to lead; developing integrity through autonomy, independence, and leadership.* Students greatly appreciated having choices about the types of garden activities they did and in student-initiated leadership skill development.
- C. **Know-How/Competence** – *fostering competence through teachable moments, modeling and recognition.* Students gained confidence in the skills they were learning including gardening, healthy eating, team building, preparing and eating their harvest, and other new skills.
- D. **Happiness/Peacefulness** – *fostering happiness through being in the garden.* Students reported feeling happy, peaceful, safe and proud in the garden. They enjoyed being outside.
- E. **Connection/Relatedness** – *fostering relatedness through trust with CSG staff and connections with peers, community and nature.* Students built trust and respect with CSG staff and enjoyed being in nature and “taking care of plants”. Peer relationships were critical; students felt a sense of belonging and made friends outside of their typical social circle.
- F. **Contributing to Common Good** – *fostering sense of community within gardens.* Students felt both that the gardens were their own spaces and also spaces for teamwork and community involvement.

“You learn new things [in the garden] – like to plant & you learn how the plants grow and different things.”

– Buford Garden Aide

“[I learned that] it is important to eat healthy, [and] you have to dig up soil to plant a plant.” – Buford PE Student





CSG Activities & Outputs – CSG tracks outputs of our various activities and reported the following results for each school year. Details on specific programs evaluated are highlighted in the Methodology insert.

Expanded reach for youth and community engagement

- ✓ **3,249** youth engaged in **8** schoolyard gardens for **22,407** interactions and **14,595** hours
- ✓ **898** volunteers engaged for **260+** hours of work and **45** partners actively engaged in CSG programs
- ✓ **2** farm field trips for **107** students and **8** farm animal visits at the CSG gardens
- ✓ **44** youth engaged in leadership development programs (garden aides, interns, urban farming)

Capacity building for teachers, school administrators and partners

- ✓ **1,326** hours of garden-based instruction
- ✓ **22** organizations participated in **7** meetings for the Charlottesville Food Justice Network
- ✓ **3** racial equity trainings, **9** food justice public forums, **7** organizational, partners, **5** educational programs for over **311** participants

Garden infrastructure and capacity

- ✓ **28,583** sq foot of organic gardens with over **117** native and edible species
- ✓ **5** new sustainable features including a permaculture garden, urban forestry buffer, sensory garden, living shed roof and renewed native habitat/butterfly garden
- ✓ **3** new garden structures: wheelchair accessible garden, compost benches, bike powered pump
- ✓ **1** garden makeover at CHS, with new chicken coop, caterpillar tunnel, and production growing beds

Harvest of the Month (HoM)

- ✓ **8** HoM crops which provided **25,600** fresh, local snacks to **3,200** students as well as community partners
- ✓ **18,503** pounds of fresh snacks sourced locally
- ✓ Engaged **111** teachers in **54** new lessons
- ✓ **87** volunteers were engaged in HoM delivery and lessons

Spring Seedling Project

- ✓ **9,000** seedlings, **63** plant varieties grown by youth leaders donated to **17** local nonprofits
- ✓ **30** hours of community service hours for middle school youth

CSG Partner Outcomes – CSG collects data of partner programs that were funded, in part, through CSG. These include City of Promise Garden Up Program, UACC Market Days, and Bread & Roses Mobile Kitchen.

City of Promise Garden Up Program

- ✓ **26** youth involved for a total of **185** hours of work in the gardens
- ✓ **233** pounds of produce grown

UACC Market Days

- ✓ **24** community Market Days for **386** community members to receive fresh produce
- ✓ **45** youth volunteers worked **149** hours in the garden and at Market Days
- ✓ **17,036** pounds of produce grown to give away at Market Days

Bread and Roses Mobile Kitchen

- ✓ **11** cooking instructions for **655** community members
- ✓ **2** training sessions held by Bread and Roses to demonstrate how to use mobile kitchen

"Before I got in the garden, I literally did not have any vegetables. My parents were like "EAT THE VEGETABLES." After a while working in the garden I got more respect for the people who work for the food. I figured, "hey, you worked hard to grow this why not try it." -Manny Quezada Romero, CHS student and CSG summer intern



Examples of Participant Feedback

"Oh my gosh, I love cucumbers!" - CCS student

"The garden helps me at school cause sometimes when I'm mad about something, working in the garden, getting dirt on my hands, working with Ms. Emily, and being with the plants calms me down." - 8th grade CCS student

"These carrots are amazingly delicious; I didn't know they could be different colors. They are sweet! I like how you can take home fresh foods you grew yourself." - CCS student

"I had super duper fun! I planted seeds today!" - CCS student

"I think the garden grows positivity. Anyone who comes in the garden always leaves with a smile!" - CCS student

"I think this program enhances every facet of education. The students learn to work together, see the fruits of that labor and learn lifelong skills." - CCS teacher

"In addition to offering meaningful educational opportunities, the CSG at the high school has been a calming space for several students processing trauma; it has also been a wonderful setting for small groups." - CCS teacher

"I've seen some students who are not engaged in traditional academic settings show increasing interest while being in this [CHS garden] class." - CCS teacher

"The joy kids get out of going to the gardens is really exciting!" - CCS teacher

"Students living in the city often have a first nature experience [in the garden]." - CCS teacher

"It has become a community center and gathering spot and the students truly enjoy getting outside in the sunshine and fresh air." - CCS teacher

"If we believe in educating the whole child, kids NEED grounding in nature to balance their lives." - CCS teacher

"Even if I don't hear that much from my child about the garden, I'm convinced that she's learning about healthy eating and developing an appreciation for growing food. Her knowledge comes out in other ways--e.g. in food choices and in discussions about food." - CCS parent

"My child loves helping with the planting and plants the things she is sent home with. As a result of City Schoolyard Garden, I now have a small garden at home!" - CCS parent

"I loved that [my daughter] was able to try all kinds of foods (ones she may not otherwise try) via the Harvest of the Month program!" - CCS parent

"My family has a backyard garden and we visit local farms often, but even so, the learning that takes place in the CSG is what sticks for my daughter. And it's an incredible resource for kids who don't have garden." - CCS parent

"In the garden I feel like I am actually taking care of a life. Preparing the garden beds, doing the physical work... makes me feel useful and confident about my strengths." - CCS student

Methodology The evaluation for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 was robust and expanded to focus on CSG’s core programs as well as our core partnerships. In comparison to FY16, which placed attention towards garden engagement, partnerships, and HoM, there was a stronger focus on parent and teacher feedback of CSG programs. Participant feedback was gleaned in the following areas:

- **Stepping into Leadership in the Garden** – Every experience in the garden is intended to build leadership from our youngest learners to high school students. Garden Coordinators tracked the participation of students, teachers, volunteers and partners engaged in hands-on garden activities and leadership development at each of the eight CSG gardens. This includes all 6 elementary schools, Buford Middle School and Charlottesville High School.
- **Harvest of the Month** – Active in all six elementary schools, Walker Upper Elementary School, Buford Middle School, Charlottesville High School, PB&J Fund, City of Promise and Lugo McGinniss Academy, *Harvest of the Month* (HoM) provided monthly fresh local snacks and garden lessons for an average of 3,200 youth per month. Classroom surveys were conducted by teachers with each crop gauging the students’ self-reporting of preference for the crop and likelihood to try it again.
- **Buford Middle School Garden Aide & Charlottesville High School Garden-to-Market Classes** – Four intensive, year-long and daily classes with 10 middle school students and 18 high school students provided comprehensive opportunities for students to be in the garden each season while they develop ever increasing knowledge and leadership. Their final project, CSG Photo Story, provided opportunities for students to tell the story of the year in the garden. Evaluation surveys, interviews and focus groups were conducted with students to learn of attitude, knowledge or behavior changes.
- **Buford Physical Education (PE) Gardening** – During select weeks of the school year, a total of 500 PE students chose the garden as their weekly activity and reported on their experiences through surveys and interviews.
- **Parent & Teacher Feedback** – An end of year survey was sent to parents and teachers through the Charlottesville City Schools (CCS) electronic communication system (248 parent/154 teacher responses) to glean feedback on perceptions of CSG.
- **Partnership** – CSG was active in several partnerships through our role in hosting and facilitating the Charlottesville Food Justice Network and also with direct program collaborations with the City of Promise garden, Urban Agriculture Collective of Charlottesville (UACC) Community Market Days, and Bread & Roses mobile kitchen. Through these partnerships we were able to connect more youth to community gardens. Tracking of partner engagement and impact is included.
- City Schoolyard Garden staff also collected data across program activities including outputs, activity tracking and additional feedback from participants.

