

# Mary Rieke Elementary 2019 Year-End Report

## Accomplishments

This year, our grant funding from WMSWCD continued to aid in supporting Mary Rieke Elementary's garden educator. This is our educator's second year with us. She has instructed every K-5 class for one hour, twice monthly, throughout the 2018-2019 school year. This is what our garden educator, Miss Madeline, had to say about her accomplishments and impact that she has made during her time at Rieke this past year:

"One of the things I cherished most this year was building relationships with students and teachers. I have been able to build trust with them and get to know many students on a personal level. In the garden I have witnessed a trend that students in their second year of learning in the garden have developed a strong connection and level of comfort in the space. Their behavior is much better and they know how to act in an outdoor classroom. They also have seen changes over the seasons and feel a sense of responsibility over the plants, soil, and creatures living there. A major accomplishment I've seen is the kids connecting what they have learned in the classroom, or at home, to what they are learning in the garden. Many students will excitedly tell me that their family is growing a vegetable garden for the first time or that they convinced their parents to plant native plants in their yards. They are also very excited to taste everything. I got a class of kindergarteners to fall in love with raw beets, which felt like a big accomplishment to me! I believe that their experiences in the garden have opened them up to trying new foods and seeing their food in the context of a living garden ecosystem."

My daughter's first grade teacher, Mrs. Baker, had this to say about her class's time in the outdoor classroom with Madeline this year:

"It is such a fantastic program and I'm so very happy to have it. Madeline taught my students about the water cycle, worms from the worm bin (which we have referenced back to now in our insect unit), about flora and fauna in the backyard and how a seed grows. We were able to watch the garden throughout the seasons and have planted peas and are hoping to harvest and eat them! I've been able to bring in the literature that supports Madeline's work in the garden—particularly nonfiction. This is important because much of what we learn in first grade is about making meaning of what we are reading, especially nonfiction."

I was not able to get reports back from every teacher, but the stories are similar in that the core lessons learned in the classroom are translated into the garden and back again into the classroom to solidify meaning and deepen their understanding.

Your funding, along with successful fundraising and PTA donations, has made it possible for every student at Rieke to engage in our outdoor classroom and garden.

## Metrics

- Number of students engaged in our garden education programming
  - 388 students are benefitting from the program in grades K-5.
- Number of hours of student engagement
  - One hour every other week per student. Madeline does 8 hours of instruction per week; this year's total will be about 240 hours [of instruction and 7,760 student engagement hours –LT].
- Grade level participation
  - Kindergarten through fifth grade, all classes.
- Results of any learning assessments related to our garden education program
  - No formal learning assessments have been made at this time.
- Number and type/variety of plants planted and harvested this year
  - Various plant starts and seeds have been donated and planted this year, among them are: lavender, thyme, rosemary, sage, oregano, basil, chives, parsley, fennel, sorrel, chamomile, borage, calendula, bee balm, catnip, sunflowers, geraniums, strawberries, peppermint, peas, radishes, kale, chard, broccoli, cabbage, garlic, lettuce, tomato, succulents, cacti and possibly others.
- Land area improved
  - All improvements to the garden space/outdoor classroom have been made possible through community donations. In the fall, PPS delivered eight cubic yards of woodchips that were placed in the garden, on top of cardboard and burlap, to serve as a weed barrier surrounding the raised garden beds. The woodchips also provided a cleaner and drier learning environment for the students.
  - This spring, succulents were planted in the living wall pockets.
  - New soil and compost were added to amend the existing garden beds for spring planting.

- Later this month, on May 19<sup>th</sup>, we will be improving the gravel ADA pathway that goes through the garden.
- Results of any learning assessments related to the project
  - No learning assessments have been done at this time.





