

Senior Citizen Community Garden

By Marc Sevigny

The Midtown Academy kindergarten class revitalized a dilapidated community garden with the help of low-income elderly citizens. Midtown Academy is situated in Baltimore City and in walking distance of an elderly retirement apartment.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project (e.g. health, education, environmental or public safety need)? After completing a small art project at a nearby retirement home, some students noticed there was a weed and grass overgrown garden on their property. The kindergarten class recognized a need and thought they could be of assistance to help the residence with their garden.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to school curriculum (e.g. what course outcomes were met and/or how did the project reinforce or enhance student academic learning)? The curricular objectives the primary team achieved were applying what we learned in the classroom to real-life situations. The math curriculum for kindergarten is the study of sorting, graphing, patterns, geometry, fractions, numbers, money, and measurement. Kindergarten's science curriculum is the study of constructing knowledge, applying evidence and reasoning, life science, and communicating scientific information. In our community garden, we are able to apply the curriculum objectives to the work done each week in the garden.

Best Practice 3: How did you reflect on your experience throughout the project? The kindergarten reflected on their experience through the use of journal writing, picture essays, home garden experiences, and communication with family members.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? The students gained responsibility by caring for their area of the garden, using and taking care of tools needed in the garden, and they gained a new respect for elderly people and the important role they play in our society.

Best Practice 5: What community partners did you work with on this project (e.g. non-profits, civic organizations, business that provided donations, etc.)? The kindergarten experience has led to a working relationship with the retirement home for future projects. The students have access to land to create a working garden in an inner city environment that residence can use for enjoyment. The school has also built partnerships with citizens of the community and the local hardware store for our supplies.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? In order to plan for service-learning, we needed to build relationships with the apartment manager, community residences with gardening expertise, and gain support from parents to let their children participate in the project. Students prepared for the garden experience by connecting our in-class objectives and applying those objectives to our garden task. A medical professional came to speak to the students about working and communicating with elderly people as part of the preparation for the project.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project?

Students learned that they can contribute to society and help solve problems even at a young age. Students applied skills learned in the classroom such as math, science, and language arts to their garden.

