



Serendipity's Mission is to provide the best environment for our students to heal and become educated, productive community members.

Growing Minds Garden Fact Sheet

Program Description:

The Growing Minds Garden was established in the fall of 2013 as a key element of Serendipity's comprehensive farm-to-school initiative. It is a nearly half acre school garden devoted to horticulture therapy, sustainability education, and the production of pesticide-free fruits and vegetables. Under the guidance of a full time Garden Coordinator, students study nutrition, life and earth science, and organic growing practices through an inquiry-based, hands-on, service-learning approach. The produce grown is incorporated into meals served in the school's dining room or prepared by students in the Life Skills Classroom to be brought home and shared with their families. Additionally, portions of the garden have been designed to encourage quiet reflection, and are conducive to coaching, problem-solving, and horticulture therapy exercises.



Structure/Curriculum:

- Most of Serendipity's classrooms receives individualized instruction in the Growing Minds Garden totaling 1 – 1.5 hours per week per student.
- The Garden coordinator maintains a white board of tasks for self-directed work by students with 1:1 staff.
- Students in the High School and Transition to Independence Program (TTIP) are eligible for farm apprentice positions in which they spend a portion of their day receiving vocational experience in a setting designed to prepare them for a professional position in the field of urban agriculture.
- A student-run farm-to-table club meets weekly to harvest produce and prepare it in the Life



Students study nutrition, life and earth sciences in Serendipity's Growing Minds Garden.

Skills Classroom before taking it home to share with families.

- Perennial elements of the garden such as the “sensory row” of herbs and flowers, raspberry hedge, cedar grove, concord grapes, and fruit trees connect students to the changing seasons and offer opportunities for yearly celebrations such as the spring cherry harvest and fall apple pressing.
- Soil testing, chemical-free fruit and vegetable production and compliance with best practices for harvest and preparation ensure the safety of all Growing Minds Garden produce.
- The Growing Minds Garden is a fundamental platform for community outreach. Work parties where volunteers are invited onto Serendipity's campus outside of regular school hours, and are introduced to the school's model are engaged in a day of service held monthly in the spring and fall and bi-monthly in the summer.

Serendipity's Core Beliefs, drawn from the Principles of RE-Education:

- Trust is essential.
- Feelings should be nurtured.
- Groups are major sources of instruction.
- Community must be experienced to be learned.
- Intelligence can be enhanced.
- Competence makes a difference, especially with schoolwork.
- Self-control can be taught.
- Physical experiences help us define ourselves.
- Now is when life is to be lived.
- Time is an ally in support of positive changes
- Ceremony and ritual give order, stability, and confidence.
- Joy should be built into each day.

For more information, please contact:

Kristin Harquail, Intake Coordinator
 503-761-7139
 ext. 146 kristinh@serendipitycenter.org