



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

As the guiding philosophy for our therapeutic school, Serendipity embraces the principles of Re-Education. These focus on the strength inherent in each child, employing a variety of perspectives and experiential approaches to thoughtfully move students towards independence.

Program Description:

Serendipity's Growing Minds Garden was established in 2013 as a comprehensive farm-to-school initiative and key element of our wellness pillar. The half-acre school garden is devoted to the production of organically grown fruits and vegetables, therapeutic gardening activities and sustainability education. Under the guidance of a full-time two-person team, students learn about nutrition, life and earth science and organic growing practice through an inquiry-based, hands-on, service-learning approach.

Over 2,000 pounds of vegetables and fruits are grown, harvested and washed by students and volunteers each year.

Produce is eaten fresh from the field, incorporated into school meals and prepared by students in our life skills classroom to be taken home and shared with their families. Additionally, portions of the garden have been designed to facilitate therapeutic gardening activities, and are conducive to quiet reflection, coaching and problem-solving.



Structure/Curriculum:

- All lower school classrooms receive two 30-minute garden-based classes per week, year-round.
- Additional activities are coordinated by case managers, the garden team and classroom staff for students who benefit from more time in the garden.
- High school students are invited to participate in the garden program in three ways: as garden apprentices, through a semester-long food science course or via the Farm-To-Community Project.
- Garden apprentices spend a portion of their day caring for the garden in every season and receive vocational experience as well as life skills via a weekly farm-to-table cooking class.



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

- Food Science leads two high school classes per year on a hands-on deep dive into the science behind ways raw ingredients are transformed into cooked and fermented foods.
- The Farm-to-Community Project engages high school seniors in a year-long service-learning project focused on fostering community food security by donating garden produce to local food banks.
- Perennial elements of the garden like the sensory row, sour chew patch, raspberry hedge, cedar grove, grape vines, and fruit trees as well as native plants support garden wildlife, connect students to the changing seasons and offer opportunities for yearly celebrations like the fall harvest festival.
- The garden is a natural platform for community outreach. During the spring, summer and fall, college interns are hosted and work parties held where volunteers are invited to campus outside of school hours to participate in a day of service, learn more about the school's model, and share in the harvest.
- Food safety of all garden produce is ensured through soil testing, sustainable fruit and vegetable production and compliance with best practices for harvest and cleaning.

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:

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