

WINTER
2011

PLANT A SEED

Watch it Grow



SCHOOL IN THE SPOTLIGHT

LEXINGTON ELEMENTARY EL CAJON

Gizar, Zanahoria, Rabano, Figil, Machjoy, Cajewel, Chicharos, and Bazalya are just a few of the vegetables growing in the Lexington Elementary school garden. In recognition of the sixteen languages spoken by their student population, the vegetable boxes are labeled in English, Arabic, and Spanish and they are beginning to add Vietnamese. The school has 728 students, and more than 70% are English learners.

The Lexington Elementary school garden was started in the 2005 / 2006 school year. Principal Sylvia Casas-Werkman and Lynne Howard co-authored a proposal for a grant from the Webster Foundation. This grant provided funding for Sylvia, Lynne and two district employees, James Beard (maintenance) and Dave Kendall

(grounds), to attend Life Lab training in Santa Cruz. Upon their return they purchased the materials and built the raised beds, shed, and picket fence that surrounds the garden. Today they have six raised beds of vegetables and numerous half-barrels filled with fruits and herbs.

The Webster Grant provides for enrichment at the school in the areas of music, arts, science, physical education, and nutrition. This grant allows a group of students to spend an hour after school each day in the garden. It's just one way the school supports their mission to provide consistent and continual growth in the academic, social, emotional, artistic, and physical well-being of their diverse student population.

ASSIGNING THE GARDEN TASKS



Composting



Watering



Raking and Trash Clean-Up

Christina Shields is the garden coordinator as of the start of the 2010 / 2011 school year. As a science teacher, she uses the garden as an extension of her classroom for her science students to have hands-ons experience with topics such as photosynthesis and germination. You will also find Christina in the garden each school day from 2 to 3 leading the after school garden enrichment program.

In addition to traditional curriculum, Christina discusses how the garden is also a place for the students to continue to develop and apply their **CATS** skills, a key part of Lexington's mission to develop their students. **C**haracter, **A**chievement, **T**eamwork = **S**uccess. When the third grade students arrive in the garden, they meet at the picnic table and are assigned the tasks for the day - weeding, composting, trash pick-up, watering, pruning, etc. At times a student may end up with a task that is not their favorite, but they learn to accept it as being part of a team. Christina related the story of a boy who was assigned the weeding task. She overheard him say to a friend that he did not like to weed. His garden teammate replied, "in the garden we are a team, just like in soccer. We don't always like what we do, but you weed today and I'll weed tomorrow." As a

team, the students have achieved so much and take great care and pride in their garden accomplishments.

The entire student community supports the garden. The student Peace Patrol painted all of the stepping stones located throughout the garden. Christina also welcomes the involvement of parents.

Carol Stevens is their Master Gardener volunteer. She was there often when Suzin was developing and expanding the garden. Carol is now working out her on-going support plans with Christina. A few days earlier Carol had given the students a lesson in pruning. The students eagerly talked about what they had learned, explained the importance of pruning, and gave a demonstration of their new skills.

Lexington Elementary uses the garden for multicultural studies to teach what vegetables are grown in different countries and how the foods are prepared. The students were surprised to learn that some cultures only eat raw carrots, never cooked carrots. There is no broccoli in the Middle East so they don't have a word for it on their multi language garden signs.

They had a Thanksgiving feast and although the foods were varied, Christina said the students could agree that they all liked peas.

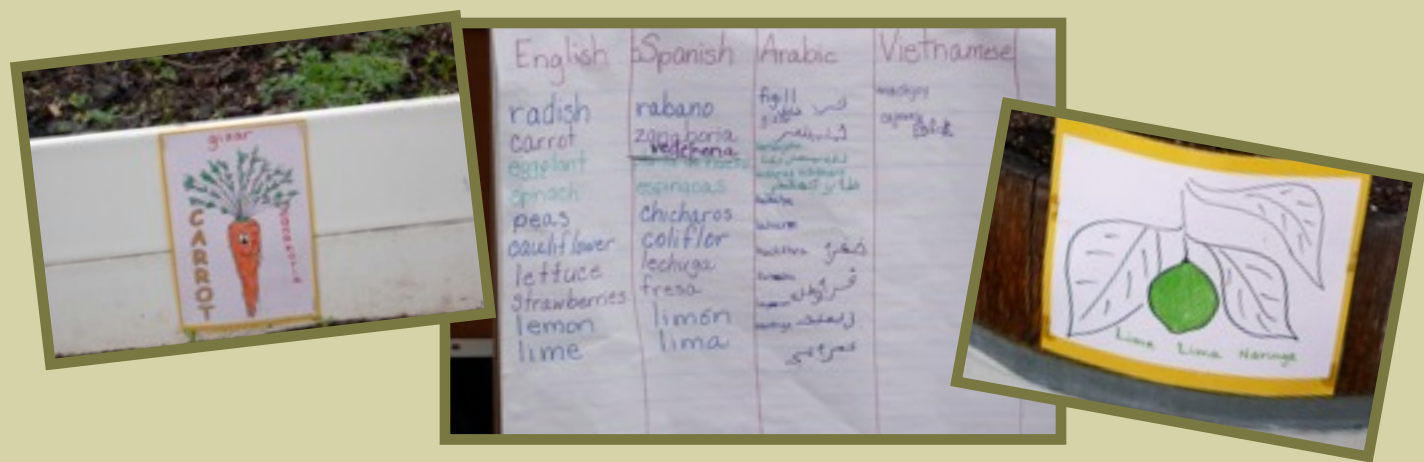


In front of the pea plants

Another important element of their garden enrichment is to practice their language skills. As Christina called out a vegetable name in English the students would respond with the name in other languages. What are all those vegetables? Gizar, Zanahoria, and Cajewel are carrots. Chicharos and Bazalya are peas. Rabano, Figil, Machjoy are radishes. The languages represented are Spanish, Arabic, and Vietnamese respectively.

For the spring, Christina and her students may plant some theme gardens which will further increase the diversity of their garden. Their multi language plant list will expand. With dedicated **c**haracter and the focus on **a**chievement that this **t**eam of garden student excels at, the results can only be even greater **s**uccess. More **CATS** in the garden.

Their list of fruits and vegetables in multiple languages and samples of the signage they have added to their garden beds and barrels.



CURRICULUM CORNER



THEME GARDENS -

Students can grow the fresh ingredients for pizza - tomatoes, green and red peppers, basil, rosemary, and oregano. Make the bed round and divide it into "slices". Plant each "slice" with a different pizza ingredient and edge it with dwarf marigolds to resemble the crust. When it is harvest time, assemble the ingredients on pizza dough, bake, and enjoy in the garden.



★ **Life Lab** - <http://www.lifelab.org/> The two day workshop, *The Growing Classroom: An Introduction to Garden Based Learning*, played a key role in getting the Lexington Elementary garden up and growing. The workshop uses The Growing Classroom activity guide for grades 2-6, to provide experience with hands-on activities, learn basic science concepts and gardening techniques, and develop management strategies for a school gardening program. It covers how to teach the standards while you guide students through the natural cycles of the garden. In addition to workshops, Life Lab offers a wealth of on-line materials for educators.

★ Books

The Growing Classroom: Garden-Based Science by Roberta Jaffe and Gary Appel,
Sowing the Seeds of Wonder from Life Lab

★ Websites

KidsGardening.org

★ **Theme Gardens** - Some other examples of theme gardens include: Ethnic or multicultural gardens explore cultures represented in the school and local community or those featured in the social studies curriculum.

Pollinator gardens are great to explore science concepts such as plant-animal interdependence and learning about environmental stewardship.

Literature gardens can represent a book currently being read by the students. Christina is writing a play for the students based on the book, *Stone Soup*.

Red Ribbon are gardens with plants that produce red flowers, fruit, or leaves to remind students year round of their drug free pledges made during Red Ribbon Week.

INFORMATION

Go to <http://www.mastergardenerssandiego.org>

Click on School Program to request a school garden consultant, check out current grant opportunities, read past newsletters, and more.

Click on SUBSCRIBE TO OUR E-MAIL LIST (in lower left corner) to sign up for Master Gardener (MG) and School Garden E-mails.

Email schoolgardennews@gmail.com with comments or questions about this newsletter.

If you have questions, want to share information, or network with Lexington Elementary, contact Christina at shieldsc@cajonvalley.net

Newsletter written by MG Gretchen Yager, Lexington Teacher / Garden Coordinator Christina Shields, MG Carol Stevens, and MG Leta Bender.

