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realschoolgardens.org

About REAL School Gardens

Mission and Purpose:

REAL School Gardens cultivates relationships with elementary school communities to create learning gardens that raise hope, spark imaginations and connect children to nature.

Operations:

REAL School Gardens works with urban schools and communities in the design, installation, and sustainability of school gardens that are used for hands-on learning and to cultivate a deeper connection to nature.

Currently the organization works with over 1,300 educators and more than 30,000 children in 57 public elementary schools in North Texas (32 schools in Fort Worth, four schools in Arlington, three schools in Birdville, and 17 schools in Grand Prairie independent school districts; and one charter school in Fort Worth). Through national partners such as the San Francisco Green Schoolyard Alliance, REAL School Gardens welcomes an additional 39 school gardens, serving another 10,000 students and 450 educators in our network of support.

The organization supports schools for a period of five years in all aspects of managing a school garden program. This support includes professional development for teachers (at least 12 hours annually) as well as guidance about installation topics, such as long- and short-range plans, budget issues, and construction work. The support also includes guidance about maintenance, sustainability and use.

Uses for School Gardens:

- Teaching and learning in all subjects, from math and science to art and music, language arts, reading, writing and social studies

- Counseling students
- Community and family gatherings
- Playing in a natural setting
- Growing healthy food and learning about nutrition

Funding:

A registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, REAL School Gardens is seeking support from individuals, corporations and foundations to expand its operations. Its founding supporter is the Rainwater Charitable Foundation. REAL stands for the Rainwater Environmental Alliance for Learning.

History:

Since 1996 the Rainwater Charitable Foundation has supported school gardens in the Fort Worth area. In 2003, the foundation funded the establishment of REAL School Gardens.

Staffing:

Led by Executive Director Jeanne McCarty, the organization has six full-time employees, including a horticulturist, former elementary school principal, two former teachers, nonprofit specialist, and a part-time employee who is a landscape architect and teacher. It is governed by a board of directors.

Address and Contact Information:

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