

# Research Rundown

## Article:

### Sustenance and Sustainability: Maximizing the Impact of School Gardens on Health Outcomes

## What did this study examine?

The objective of this study was to review published garden-based programs conducted in schools targeting dietary intake and/or determinants of dietary behavior in children and to identify the similarities in strategies and components used. The review included thirteen studies that examined the impact of garden-based programs conducted in school, either during school hours or in after-school settings, on dietary behaviors in children (Kindergarten-8th grade students).

## Key findings:

Three reviewed studies did not have a comparison or control group and evaluated within-group changes after a garden intervention. None of the reviewed studies were randomized but were assigned based on the school's interest and the timing of new school gardens being built. Similar strategies most of the programs used included 'hands on' curriculum, cooking components, parental and stakeholder support, food provision, and using the garden as the focal point for media promotion.

- ▶ Out of the **eleven** programs that examined dietary intake:
  - **six** found that the program resulted in **increased** vegetable intake,
  - and **four** showed **no effect**.
- ▶ **Seven** of the eight studies that measured **preference** found:
  - the programs resulted in **increased preference** for vegetables.
- ▶ Gardening programs resulted in **improved attitudes** towards:
  - willingness to taste,
  - identification of fruit & vegetables,
  - and confidence to prepare fruit & vegetables.

**In conclusion**, some of the garden programs resulted in increased vegetable intake, which had positive implications for both environment sustainability and health-related outcomes. Further, the majority resulted in some improvement in behavior determinants more generally. However, more research is warranted to understand how to achieve long-term improvements in dietary behaviors and how to sustain the garden-based programs in schools.

## Put it into practice!



Aim to create a 'hands on' curriculum and incorporate fun easy recipes that include school garden grown fruits and vegetables.



Create and promote! Capture the gardening process and take a snapshot of your best-looking fruits and veggies to showcase your garden on social media.



Get the community involved! Reach out to parents, guardians, and stakeholders for support and share the program's vision and benefits.

### Reference:

Davis, J., Spaniol, M., & Somerset, S. (2015). Sustenance and sustainability: Maximizing the impact of school gardens on health outcomes. *Public Health Nutrition*, 18(13), 2358-2367. doi:10.1017/S1368980015000221



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