Xavier School Garden  
Year End Report  

September 2012  

Introduction  
The purpose of our school garden is three-fold. First, students are learning responsibility as they care for God’s creation by preserving green space. Second, students are increasing their awareness of the connection between their health and the food they eat. Third, the school garden is fostering community among older and younger students and our community partners as we collaborate together in the care of the garden.

September 2011  
In mid-September 2011: Xavier School was informed that we were one of the grantees for the Kansas School Gardening Pilot Project. Loretta Craig immediately contacted Kansas City Community Gardens (KCCG) as a community partner to help us in the construction of the garden beds. Loretta set up a time in early October for her, fourth grade teacher Janet Meyer, and I to meet with the KCCG staff at an open house at their Beanstalk garden in Kansas City, Missouri.

October 2011  
We met with the KCCG staff and toured the Beanstalk garden. We also visited five school gardens. These tours helped us visualize and plan our own school garden.

October 9-10: Loretta, Janet Meyer, Mandi Mrosczczak, and I attended the Digging in School Gardens workshop in Lawrence. This two day workshop allowed us to join Kansas Green Schools and participate in many cross-curricular activities involving school gardens. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) sponsored the event.

October 14. We applied for a grant through Blue Cross and Blue Shield, but were not chosen as a grantee.

November 2011  
November 2: At the Parents and Teacher Organization (PTO) meeting, I informed the PTO about the garden project and briefly described the process to getting it built. The PTO suggested that funds raised from the annual Green Market go toward our school garden.
November 20, 2011: 5th grade students and parents participated in a bake sale at the Green Market. We raised $250.00 towards our school garden.

November 4, 2011: A total of 70 Xavier students rotated in 30 minute blocks over a period of three hours to build six raised beds. Students helped in the construction of the wooden beds and the shoveling of soil into each of the 4’ x 12’ beds. Adults enlisted to help included Loretta Craig, Steve Horosko (our school maintenance man), Mandy Mroszcak (parent), two KCCG staff, and I.

November 10: We applied for and received a $500 grant for our garden through Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) and the Digging in School Gardens workshop we had attended in October.

December 2011

December 7, 2011: Inception of Xavier’s Green Team. Loretta, Mandy, and myself worked with 30 4th-8th grade students for one hour after school. We sorted seeds and planted garlic in our newly made raised beds.
December 20, 2011: We applied for a Whole Foods grant for school gardens but were not chosen as a grantee.

**January 2012**

January 4: I introduced Loretta to the PTO, and she gave a short talk on the importance of school gardens. We continued to keep the Parents informed on the school garden.

January 19, 2012: Mandy, Loretta, one parent, and I led 30 Green Team students in two activities. This time we split the students into two groups and rotated them through different activities. The first activity was measuring gummy worms and the second one was looking at compost and real worms, and learning about worm behavior. Students were able to work with their bedding and feed the worms by adding damp newspaper and food scraps.

January 31st: We applied for funds for a shed and deer fence from the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

**February 2012**

February 23, 2012: The Green Team met and broke into two activities. Students were able to plant sprouts with a parent volunteer and take the sprouts home to watch them grow and eat them. The other activity was planning two of the six raised beds. Loretta did some research and decided that the Square Foot Gardening method was what we should try this year. It was a wonderful integration of learning about area in math for our students. We placed students in pairs and gave them a list of plants to choose from and how much space they needed. Each pair had 8 square feet to plant. The students had a grid of the bed and drew the plants in that they wished to plant.

We consolidated the plans to make a whole bed map.
**March 2012**

March 3, 2012: Loretta and I attended a workshop at KCCG to learn about planning our garden. This gave us good information on planning and planting. I really wanted students to have 8 square feet that they both planned and planted and gave them ownership of their space.

March 5-8: All 130 students created plans for their 8 square feet for the other 4 raised beds. Loretta presented to the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders using a Powerpoint presentation we jointly created explaining the square foot gardening method. Students used computers to look up certain plants that were unfamiliar to them.

March 20: Steve Horosko created the square foot grid on the six raised beds.

March 26: Loretta went to KCCG to pick up some of our transplants and seeds.

March 27-30: Students went outside in their groups of 5 to plant their eight square feet with Loretta.

March 27: Green Team planted their two beds with their spring crops.

March 31: Xavier had a Greenway auction. We were able to create a garden display and raise funds for a garden shed.

**April 2012**

April 14: Loretta and I attended a second Garden workshop at KCCG and picked up our fruit orders.

April 11, 18, 25: Ten girls from Girl scout troop 560 watered the garden and worked on rehabbing the bathtub for Mary, which included sanding, painting, and cementing the statue in place.

April 16-18: Loretta planted blackberry and raspberries with the junior high students.

April 26: Green Team planted a seed from a biodegradable container of newspaper to take home. (This came from Junior Master Gardener’s Curriculum. Students did a Salad taste test of items growing in our garden. They also Tried Lemonade with Stevia.

April 30: Loretta picked up our summer plants from KCCG.

**May 2012**

May 1: We were chosen as a grantee the funding of a shed and deer fence through a request submitted to the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in January.
May 2: All students planted Summer crops such as tomatoes, peppers, and basil. They also taste tested the greens growing in our garden. At 2:30, the entire school came out for a May crowning of our statue of Mary and a blessing of our garden by our local priest.

May 2: At the PTO meeting, we talked with parents about the May Crowning and the upcoming Parent/Student open house for our school garden.

May 7: The School Garden open house will be held for all parents and students. Students can help build the school shed, do the taste test, eat a salad from our garden, and have fresh lemonade. Parents and students will be able to sign up for helping in the garden during the summer.

May 15-24: Three neighborhood children broke into the garden shed. They offered to come help work in the garden over a two week period to make reparation for their damage. The five year old learned the difference between a grape and a cherry tomato! They helped prepare a salad for a local parish priests’ 25th jubilee celebration. The salad was identified in the serving line as coming from Xavier School garden, and served over 50 people. The children helped prepare huge amounts of salad that were served in the lunch cafeteria and to the staff on numerous occasions. We also served kale chips to the children and staff on numerous occasions, as well. Both were a big hit.
May 30-August 6: During these summer months, there were four sets of lead volunteers who came on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday at 9 am to water, weed, and harvest from the garden. The lead volunteers included two Xavier families, and Loretta Craig. A weekly email was sent out to the students and families who signed up to help in the garden during the summer. We had 6 students and families come regularly to help the lead volunteers. Everyone who came to help took away produce from the garden. We harvested beets, potatoes, kale, chard, sugar snap peas, carrots, garlic, and onions.

August 2012

August 13- We had a garden work day for students, parents, and the University of St Mary freshmen. We worked from 8:30-11:30. We had 8 USM freshmen come, 4 students and two parents. Loretta was able to contact Myrae Tree Services who donated a dump truck of mulch. We sheet mulched an area 34 x 20. We first spread pelletized chicken manure, then laid damp newspaper over it and then covered it with mulch about 6 inches thick. This was to protect our 4 blackberries/raspberry bushes as well as prepare the ground for future plantings next spring. Students also did a fall planting of kale, lettuce, cilantro, and spinach transplants. The transplants came from Kansas City Community Gardens. We labeled the plants in our garden by painting the names of them on paint stirrers. Finally we harvested several batches of kale.
That evening we had a Back to School Ice Cream Social. We also had another garden open house and provided a healthy alternative to the ice cream by serving kale chips and stevia-sweetened lemonade. That evening students harvested from the garden: eggplant, green and purple peppers, sun gold cherry tomatoes, a variety of heirloom tomatoes, red bore and winter bore kale, cucumbers, yellow squash, patty pan squash, and zucchini. We had a great attendance and any families took home produce.

**Back to School: Fall 2012**

August 14-September 17: Over these five weeks we have been able to serve a variety of healthy snacks to all students at this school K-8. Every class has had a cucumber to snack on and sun gold cherry tomatoes at least once. Third through 6th grade had a salsa made of cucumbers, green and purple peppers and tomatoes. Kindergarten, first grade, third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade all were able to try roasted yellow and patty pan squash. 5th and 4th grade have done most of the harvesting and the excitement of the students in being able to pick and then eat their produce from the garden has remained. I have included garden updates every week in the school newsletter and included the recipes for kale chips, roasted squash, and salsa as healthy snack alternatives for parents. One parent told me her child made kale chips for her one afternoon!

September 5: S. Rejane attended the monthly PTO meeting to give an update on the status of the garden. The PTO treasurer allowed for $500 to be added to the budget to help with the annual maintenance of the school garden.

**Describe how the garden project has improved the life of the school and community:**

Students have been able to see firsthand the life cycle of plants from seed to mature plant to harvesting its fruit and to its death. This has helped with the K-2 and 5th grade science curriculum which centers on plants. Since the students see where their food is coming from, they are more willing to try vegetables that they normally would not eat. One parent was surprised to learn that her daughter ate a cucumber from the school garden and she said how come you wouldn’t eat one from ours? Students actually find they like the healthy vegetable snacks and often ask for more. Kindergarten to eighth grade students has had several healthy snacks straight from the garden.
fall. We put our spring garden in late and that was a blessing in disguise as we are now harvesting more produce now when the students are in school.

Having a weekly update in the weekly school newsletter provides parents with easy recipes for healthy snack alternatives. We would like to improve the health of our students by decreasing their sugar intake and increasing their fruit and vegetable intake. Students are educating their parents by asking for the healthy snacks to be prepared at home because they have had them at school.

**Continued plans for this garden:**

September 19th and 27th we are splitting our Green Team into two different age groups because we have such large numbers of students interested in the 4-8th grades. We will have a junior high green team and a 4th and 5th green team. They will meet once a month on different weeks.

In October Loretta is going to come speak to the PTO about healthy snacks versus sugar.

November- A Boy scout- Alex Hunt will be completing his Eagle Project by building two benches and an arched trellis entrance to our garden. We hope to grow gourds around this.

Spring/Summer- on the mulched area we would like to plant watermelons. Students will have a better grasp of how to plan beds and may organize our beds by plant families or themes. Expand the garden by planting some fruit trees around the perimeter. Start composting our food waste from the cafeteria.

**Summary:**

Over Xavier’s 2011-2012 school year we have built six raised beds by involving KCCG and our 130 4th through 8th grade students. We have started a Green Team involving 30 students. We hosted two Garden Open House celebrations and had over fifty families attend. We were able to harvest our first batch of greens and make a salad that fed everyone at our open house plus students in the 4th through 8th grades the next day. Students are excited about our school garden. Many parents tell me their students are now starting gardens at their own homes or actively helping with existing garden beds. One parent said her child now says he wants to grow up to be a farmer! It has been a wonderful experience for all of us.
Future Goals:

- Junior high students will create a school garden blog through our school email that will be monitored by our technology teacher and Loretta.
- The 4th grade, 5th grade, and junior high science teachers will meet to discuss our curriculum and peruse our resources on activities for school gardens to find new ways to integrate them into our curriculum.
- Green team students help build organic fertilizer for our garden by composting lunch waste from our cafeteria.
- Prepare food harvested food from the garden for students to eat either classroom snacks or in the lunch room.