



SAN MATEO  
COUNTY

Ag Innovations Network

Call to Action

Creating an enduring food system that connects people to agriculture and enhances the health of all residents.

FALL 2010

# A Garden in Every School

**t**HE SAN MATEO COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM ALLIANCE strongly supports our county health department's goal of having a garden in EVERY school. Our children deserve environments and programs that directly support the development of life long health and citizenship.

Access to experiential garden-based learning leads to:

- Higher academic achievement
- Supplemental classroom lessons in core curricular areas
- Reinforcement of California's academic standards-based concepts through real-world applications
- Addressing the crisis in children's health and nutrition through improved eating habits
- Creating agricultural literacy and an excitement for eating fresh fruits and vegetables
- Helping children to be healthier so they can learn, grow and play



Gardens provide a space for fun and learning.

“The San Mateo County Health Department believes that every child in our county should have the experience of eating something that they themselves planted. When this activity happens in a school garden setting and with an associated curriculum, it has positive impacts on educational achievement, individual and family health, and the environment.”

– *Scott Morrow, San Mateo County Health Officer*

# What is Garden-Based Learning?

**g**arden-based learning (GBL) uses the garden as an outdoor classroom to provide integrated learning experiences, in and across disciplines, through active, engaging real-world experiences that bring abstract concepts to life.

Although there is no single methodology for garden-based learning, many educators use gardens to enhance learning in core subjects such as science, math and social studies, as well as promote nutrition and environmental stewardship, and create awareness around where our food comes from.

School gardens are a key component of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* campaign against obesity.

“With my kids, especially if they were involved in planting it and picking it, they were much more curious about giving it a try.”

— *First Lady Michelle Obama*



Teamwork and physical activity.



Learning and mentorship.



Hands-on examination and learning.



Working with rainbow chard.

# Why Garden-Based Learning?

## Living Laboratories

School garden settings provide *Outdoor Living Laboratories* connecting student experience to cross-curricular science, math, social studies, and language arts classroom instruction.

## High Retention Rate

A study conducted by Bethel Learning Institute documented different student retention rates based on teaching method, with 11% retention for lectures, 75% for learning by doing, & 90% when children teach other students (Subramaniam, Aarti. Monograph. UC Davis, Summer 2002).

## Academic Achievement

Studies demonstrate school garden instruction has a positive impact on standardized test scores, daily attendance, and student learning engagement.

## Health and Nutrition

In a population facing tremendous cost associated with the growing problem of childhood obesity, school garden experience promotes increased fruit and vegetable consumption and the adoption of healthy attitudes.

## Environmental Literacy

School gardens teach lifelong sustainability skills, enhance environmental and ecological understanding, and promote awareness of the interconnectedness of all human and other living communities.

## Student Empowerment

By providing students with real-life results, school garden instruction promotes a sense of personal achievement and pride that motivates the thirst for greater knowledge.

## Getting Involved

School gardens are an important part of the food system and the San Mateo Food System Alliance invites you to take action:

- 1) Establish or expand a local school garden
- 2) Volunteer or donate resources to support a local school garden
- 3) Advocate for school gardens among school staff, administrators, and your local school board

With your help, we can have a garden in every school in San Mateo County.

For more information, contact [garden@aginnovations.org](mailto:garden@aginnovations.org). Additional school garden resources are available at <http://www.getthehealthysmc.org/>.



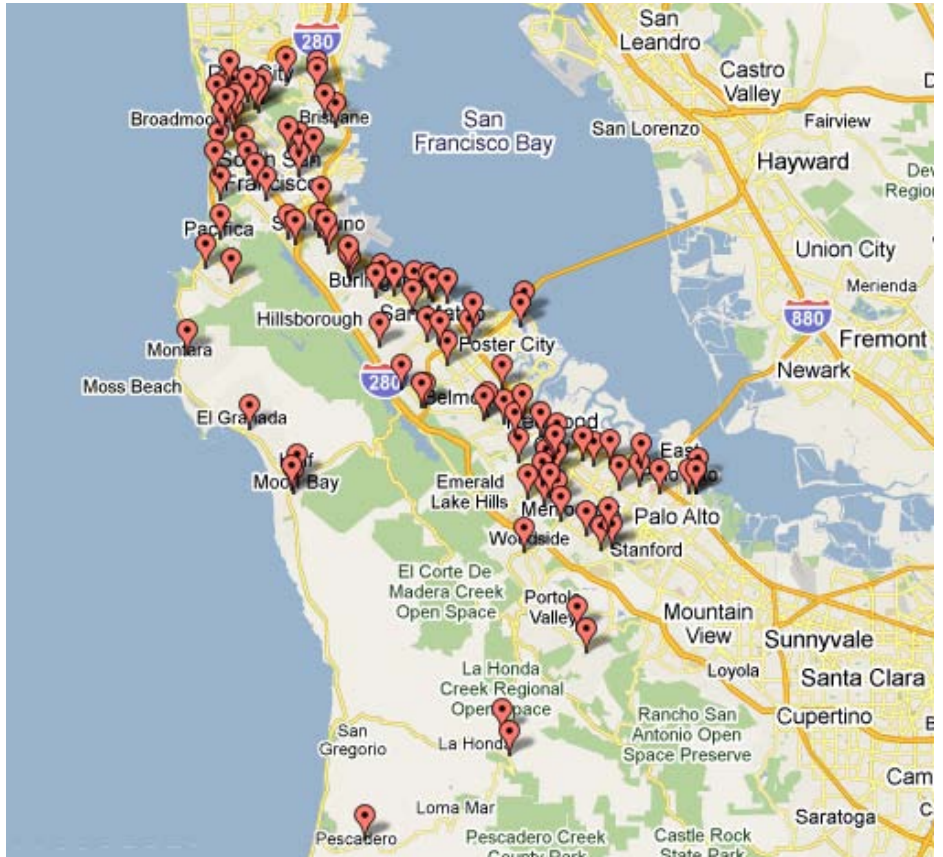
Observing, recording, analyzing.

“The rewards of our garden-based learning program and noon sports for our kids lies not just within the physical, but our data shows that significant academic gains can also be traced back to the Health Environment Agriculture Learning program.”

— Dr. Mark Loos,  
Principal, Hatch  
Elementary

# Which San Mateo County Schools have Gardens?

Sixty-three percent of public elementary schools in San Mateo have gardens. Go to <http://sanmateocofsa.org> to use the interactive map and find a school garden near you.



Connecting to the earth.



San Mateo County Food System Alliance.



Get Healthy *San Mateo County*

## About Us

The San Mateo County Food System Alliance is part of a statewide network of alliances convened by Ag Innovations Network (AIN), linking efforts to more effectively improve local, state and federal policies that impact agriculture, the food system, and the environment. The San Mateo County Food System Alliance has been breaking ground for the Food System Alliance movement since its formation in November 2006. As the first Food System Alliance in California, the group has sought to bring together all the parts of the San Mateo County food system into a cohesive group capable of creating an ever healthier and more vibrant local food economy. More information on the Alliance can be found at <http://sanmateocofsa.org>.