

CASE STUDY: OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Program Name: School Gardens

Agency Name: East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD)

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Contact Information:

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Number of Customers: About 200 educators have attended program workshops, and EBMUD has awarded 10 grants for school gardens.

Program Description:

EBMUD's School Garden Program is an interagency approach to educating teachers, students and the community about the role that water plays in the garden. Through training workshops, educators learn how to practice water conservation and integrated pest management techniques to reduce water and pesticide use in the garden.

EBMUD provides the following support for water-wise school garden projects:

- Sponsorship of educational workshops for teachers, covering a variety of gardening topics such as native plants, irrigation, composting and integrated pest management
- Garden and water-specific activities and resource materials
- Small grants for water-wise school garden projects located within EBMUD's service area, and selected for funding through a competitive process

Program Beginning:

EBMUD has offered support for local school garden projects for several years. Starting in 2000, EBMUD joined forces with other local agencies to expand its outreach to schools by offering a comprehensive school garden program.

Target Audience:

K-12 classroom teachers, environmental educators and others involved with school garden projects are the primary target audience. During the first two years of EBMUD's involvement with this program, over 200 educators will be reached through educational workshops on water-wise gardening. In turn, these educators have the potential to reach over 6,000 K-12th grade students each year.

Program Cost and Funding:

The cost of the program is directly related to the number and size of school garden grants awarded and the number of workshops held each year. During FY02, EBMUD will fund this program with \$19,500 (\$10,000 for small school garden grants and \$9,500 to sponsor four educational workshops for teachers.)

Staff Time: Due to the interagency approach, EBMUD staff time for running the program is minimal. However, more significant amounts of staff time were required for developing the program.

Funding Source: Water utilities, sanitary districts, clean water programs, and others in partnership with a non-profit environmental education organization, Aquatic Outreach Institute.

Program Objective/Driving Force:

To preserve and protect our water supply and the environment by educating and informing teachers about the importance of water and how to use it wisely.

Program Type:

This is a classroom, school and community-based program. The message is first given to teachers, who in turn pass it on to their students, who in turn pass it on to the community (through garden-related activities).

What Works Best:

The strength of this program lies in its interagency approach. By combining efforts with local agencies also interested in protecting the water supply and environment, we get a bigger “bang for the buck”. In addition, partnering with a local non-profit organization, known for its award-winning environmental education programs, has allowed EBMUD to benefit from this organization’s years of experience, existing programs, network of educational connections, and administrative experience.

What Would Change

Teachers are often very busy, and school gardens are rarely their top priority. It is important to give teachers a reasonable time period within which to complete their garden projects to qualify for grant funding. Based on our initial experience, it seems as if six months to one year is a reasonable time period.

Evaluation of Effectiveness:

All workshop attendees are given an evaluation form at the end of the workshop to provide feedback about their experience. Over 90 percent of workshop participants give the workshop the highest possible rating for overall satisfaction. Another indication of program success is the ongoing demand for its services. Numerous applications are received during each funding cycle for school garden grants, and workshops fill up quickly, often generating long wait lists.