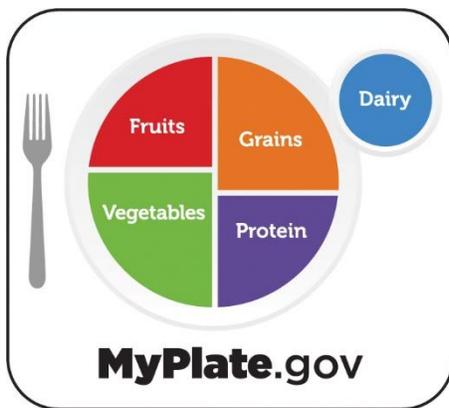


# Gardening in Schools

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By: Nikole Fuente, RN

Have you ever asked an elementary school-aged child where our food comes from? When I asked my 5-year-old half-brother he answered, “the grocery store” and “my mommy buys it”. I asked again, and I got the response “I don’t know”. I then peeked in the refrigerator only to find that the produce drawers were bare. I saw more processed apple sauce, juices, and snacks than I did fresh food. It got me thinking about kids not knowing what is fresh and healthy vs. what is processed and not healthy. I am a nurse and see the complications of unhealthy lifestyles daily.



The Live Healthy & Thrive Youth Foundation is a local nonprofit organization in Atlanta. Their [mission](#) is to help teach our kids how to make healthier choices in various ways. Their Gardens Are For Kids™ program donates a garden to an elementary school once a year. The program provides the supplies and resources needed to build a successful garden. The most recent donation makes it the 12<sup>th</sup> garden grant this organization has been able to provide. The [application](#) is available on their website for public elementary schools and other organizations.

Jay Bland is the principal of Morris Brandon Elementary School, which was the 2022 recipient of a garden donation provided by Gardens Are For Kids™. In a video provided on the LHTYF website, Mr. Bland explains how the program provides hands-on learning, initiation of a garden club, and skills that will correlate with their STEM program. This program also helps kids learn the importance of healthy food to prevent childhood complications such as diabetes and obesity. The kids will also be able to gain knowledge of where their food comes from. According to MyPlate.gov, fruits and vegetables should take up the most space on our plates which is why this program is so important.

## How does gardening help schools teach kids healthy habits?

As Mr. Bland said, there are many skills involved in school gardening. Below are examples of skills based on different subjects:

- **Math-** Counting seeds, measuring the distance between plants, measuring the amount of water or fertilizer
- **Science-** plant anatomy and cycles, weather, types of soil
- **Writing/Reading-** Keeping a garden journal, reading about different types of vegetables/plants
- **History-** history of gardening, how gardening has evolved, history of how people used to eat
- **Health-** an opportunity to taste produce they may have never had, encouraging intake of more fruits/vegetables, health benefits of vegetables/fruits as well as learning what foods are not healthy

Children are the future, and it is important now more than ever to get them on the right track to a healthy lifestyle. For more information about this incredible organization please visit <https://livehealthyandthriveyouth.org/> or check out their Facebook page.

Resources:

<https://livehealthyandthriveyouth.org/>

<https://www.prlog.org/12935459-axis-capital-the-home-depot-team-up-with-atl-non-profit-to-donate-school-garden.html>

<https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate>