

New school curriculum helps kids learn, grow, eat, and go

NEWS RELEASE

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Do you work with kids who could benefit from healthier eating and being more active? National research has shown that children who are more physically active have better school performance, which is a goal for every parent, teacher, and school district.

Now, Junior Master Gardener and Walk Across Texas present an evidence-based coordinated program that shows child preference for vegetables grown in their classroom garden, as well as increased physical activity through participating in an eight-week activity program. Junior Master Gardener and Walk Across Texas are programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Developed for the third through fifth grades but adaptable to other grade levels, “Learn, Grow, Eat & Go!” is a 10-week, 20-lesson curriculum that emphasizes science, math, language arts, health, and social studies. LGEG is now available for purchase at jmgkids.us/LGEG. The website also offers free resources such as videos, classroom materials, and family support pieces. When paired with Walk Across Texas, LGEG promotes a healthier school and home environment with significant health behavior changes.

“We want to encourage teachers and youth leaders to partner with AgriLife Extension to participate,” says Caren Walton, project coordinator for Texas Grow! Eat! Go!, the study that produced LGEG. “We also want to encourage AgriLife Extension folks to get on board and recruit schools and youth programs to participate, because this is a model of an interdisciplinary program for our agency.”

The culmination of the five-year research project (Texas Grow! Eat! Go!), LGEG consists of tested, teacher-created lessons that kids love, Walton says. In classes that completed LGEG, kids learned essential academic concepts through gardening and were more willing to try and like new vegetables. Through the Walk Across Texas component, children decreased their screen time and increased their levels of activity. Parents encouraged eating vegetables and increased gardening and physical activity with their children. What’s more, the study found weight stability for many of the overweight and obese children.

“When we saw how excited the students were when we built the garden, we knew this project was going to have a major impact on our students and community,” write several third-grade teachers from the research study’s pilot school in Corpus Christi.

The LGEG lessons fit with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards and help prepare students for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. The curriculum employs Walk Across Texas lessons and activities and coordinates with the eight-week Walk Across Texas program.

Junior Master Gardeners and Walk Across Texas invite school and community partners to register for free training in LGEG. Along with a 6-hour hands-on training course, participants will receive a printed copy of LGEG, the Walk Across Texas Starter Kit, and many other resources.

A few of the LGEG training registration links are below:

- Dallas – June 23: cvent.com/d/vrqzcn
- Amarillo – June 24: cvent.com/d/6rq28z
- Corpus Christi – June 29: cvent.com/d/jrq28z
- Conroe – July 16: cvent.com/d/7rq2jt

Additional trainings will occur throughout 2015 and are listed at jmgkids.us/LGEG.

Participants will learn how to

- Coordinate classroom learning (LEARN!) in science, math, language arts, and health with a school garden (GROW!)
- Incorporate tasting vegetables and vegetable recipe demonstrations (EAT!)
- Increase physical activity in children and their families through Walk Across Texas (GO!)

Participants will also learn best practices in recruiting and training LGEG schools and volunteers, engaging families, developing community support, and evaluating health outcomes.

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LGEG is part of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, a member of The Texas A&M University System.

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