**New school program helps kids learn, grow, eat, and go**

**NEWS RELEASE**

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[CITY OR COUNTY NAME]—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, the “Learn, Grow, Eat & Go!” program supports Coordinated School Health (CSH) to improve school health culture. The program consists of multiple components including a 20-lesson curriculum that emphasizes science, math, language arts, health, and social studies and simultaneous participation in Walk Across Texas. These program components are available as a set for purchase at [www.jmgkids.us/LGEG](http://www.jmgkids.us/LGEG). The website also offers free resources such as videos, classroom materials, and family support pieces. The LGEG program promotes a healthier home environment too 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 and evaluated the LGEG programs. “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 the LGEG programs, 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 maintenance 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 classroom 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 WAT program.

Schools and communities across Texas are joining the effort to improve child health. The LGEG program offers them an exciting, project-based learning opportunity that moves families and children toward healthier lifestyles!

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