A Case Study of the Mighty Morris Blooms: Quantitative and Qualitative Program Assessment of a Youth Gardening Program in a 3rd Grade Classroom.

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Abstract

Research has shown that hands-on, experiential learning is very effective in the classroom and school gardening utilizes this method of learning. Gardening has been shown to have many positive effects on children including in academic areas. Of the youth gardening programs that exist, little research has been done with the Junior Master Gardener® program to evaluate it for its use in the classroom. JMG® is a youth gardening program designed to teach aspects of horticulture and environmental science through hands-on activities in both informal and formal learning environments. A case study of one particular classroom evolved from a larger evaluation study of the JMG® program in Indiana third grade classrooms. Research with this classroom utilized a mixed approach to acquire quantitative and qualitative data of knowledge and attitudes towards science, horticulture, and the environment. Quantitative measurements were made pre, post, and post-post (after summer break) the program. Qualitative methods included weekly classroom observations during the study, student post and post-post program evaluations, and post program teacher evaluations. Results indicated that students had significant levels of knowledge and positive attitude gain from pre to post tests. Observations and evaluations supported the quantitative results showing that the students and teacher found the JMG® program to be valuable in the classroom, as well as enjoyable which may lead to more student interest in science. Through this case-study post-post program assessment showed that the students retained a significant amount of positive attitudes towards science, horticulture and the environment.