



DECATUR CLASSICAL SCHOOL

1ST PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL AWARD WINNER



THE PROJECT: DECATUR CLASSICAL SPROUTING GREEN

Decatur Classical School is addressing sustainability holistically and on a large scale. This was the first year of their multi-year plan to incorporate sustainability curriculum and action into their school across grade levels, including students in the planning and implementation of large scale, school-wide goals. Watch their [video here](#) for a great overview of all the projects!

Project Type: Energy, water, garden

Students Involved: 320

Staff Involved: 20

Location: Chicago

Grade Levels Involved: 6-8th

Number of Students Impacted: 540



Our project, Decatur Classical Sprouting Green, will involve 105 junior high students, grades 6-8, and eventually grow to include our entire school of 328 students, from kindergarten through grade 8. Each grade level, 6-8, will design and spearhead various green initiatives that will positively impact our school and greater community.

- Gerard Kovach



PROCESS

Sixth graders spent their project year exploring electricity consumption and conservation, conducting an energy audit of the school and designing a plan for the eventual installation of solar panels at their school. Using the Solarize Your School Project opensource tool, Aladdin, students are finding the most efficient locations to install solar panels on their school grounds and neighboring community, and will present their findings to the Local School Council. Working with a Decatur alumni who teaches landscape design at the Illinois Institute of Technology, seventh grade students explored horticulture, maintaining raised garden beds and indoor growing systems, starting a compost program to reduce food waste, and developing a plan to transform a vacant stretch of land into an outdoor play area and native pollinator garden. Eight grade students explored the Chicago River's watershed ecology, working with ecologists from Urban Rivers and Friends of Chicago River to collect and publish data on local aquatic water quality. On a field trip to The Wild Mile, students learned how floating gardens help remediate pollutants in the river and also provide habitat for aquatic life in and around the river.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Several of our students were featured on Chicago news outlets for the environmental science presentations they gave at the Friends of Chicago River Annual Student Congress Day that was held at Northeastern Illinois University. While Decatur's goals are long-term, they have already noticed a shift in the school's attitude towards green initiatives. They plan to continue their work, and hope to add solar to their school within the next two years.

