



ST. PAUL LUTHERAN SCHOOL

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER



THE PROJECT: FOOD, NUTRITION, COMMUNITY!

Partnering with the local Chicago Park District and high school apprentices from the After School Matters AfriCaribbean Arts Connections program, St. Paul adopted a previously neglected community garden at Columbus Park in South Austin and developed a small teaching garden on their school grounds as well. The mission is to incorporate sustainability lessons and school waste reduction goals into a student-led community produce garden. The culmination of this year's work was a successful garden clean-up day in which students, community members, the Friends of the Park group, and their local alderperson came together to transform the space and make it once again beautiful, functional, and nutritional.

Project Type: Garden

Students Involved: 45

Staff Involved: 5

Location: Chicago

Grade Levels Involved: PreK - 8th

Number of Students Impacted: 65



As the 'first', St. Paul has introduced the Illinois Green Alliance and Illinois Green Schools Project efforts to other Lutheran Schools in the state, has inspired and exposed the Board of Directors, and the building upgrades anticipated in the next 3 years will include a new sustainable, green focus as a direct result of this project. - Dr. Vickie Casanova-Willis



PROCESS

St. Paul's goals were to find ways to divert waste from landfills, engage with their communities, and center environmental education in their curriculum through inquiry-based interdisciplinary lessons. Taking lessons learned from a field trip to Sweet Water Foundation's urban ecology campus, students studied pumpkins, learning about their life cycle and harvesting and germinating the seeds in their new nurseries to plant the seedlings in their new garden. During the garden clean-up day, the team leveraged partnerships with other Lutheran schools and local organizations to gain community support, and found creative ways to divert the school's waste materials by repurposing discarded cardboard to create weed barriers for their greenspace.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

After a year of sustainability work through the Illinois Green Schools Project, St. Paul now has an established green team, a curriculum more focused on sustainability, and two outdoor learning spaces to provide hands-on educational experiences for the students. These efforts laid the groundwork for the development of a strong culture of sustainability and stewardship at their school. Their work will continue into the future, with goals of producing and distributing food from their garden and finding more ways to incorporate sustainability into their school's policies and practices. Their efforts to share their work with their communities have helped them to develop stronger community partnerships to support their work. See their clean up day video [here](#).

