



# GWENDOLYN BROOKS COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY



## THE PROJECT: REVIVING SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING

The Gwendolyn Brooks green team focused on sustainable landscaping and green spaces, given that their campus covers 40 acres of land on the South Side of Chicago. They applied an integrated pest management (IPM) plan to their grass athletic fields and worked to expand their native landscaping projects. The plan includes resiliency techniques like core aeration, compost topdressing, seeding and straw covering. The school is now implementing these strategies and constructing an interactive curriculum to educate their students and community about the updates and include students in developing a management plan for the school's retention pond. Their overarching goal is to make their campus a showcase for what sustainable landscaping on the South Side looks like.

**Project Type:** Pest Management

**Students Involved:** 10

**Staff Involved:** 3

**Location:** Chicago

**Grade Levels Involved:** 10-12th

**Number of Students Impacted:** 300



We are unique among Chicago Public Schools on the South Side in that we have a 40 acre campus. We are picking up from efforts that began in the late aughts and early 2010s to make our campus a showcase for what sustainable landscaping on the South Side looks like. This will prevent runoff, build healthier soils, store more carbon, and increase biodiversity, ideally not just on our campus but in the broader community.

- William Reed



## PROCESS

To develop their school's plan, the Gwendolyn Brooks Green Team collaborated with many partners including their Green Schools Project mentors, Jason Meyering, Jason Meyering Architecture, and Ryan Anderson, IPM Institute, soil scientists and contractors through the Midwest Grows Green (MGG) initiative, Kids in Action for Biocontrol, and the school's administration. Through analysis of the campus ecosystem, they determined that increasing the fields water retention and soil health through core aeration and topdressing would increase biodiversity, reduce their pesticide, fertilizer, and water use, and reduce runoff to surrounding ecosystems. On top of collaborating on the IPM plan, students headed sustainability efforts on the campus's outdoor spaces, identifying which native plant species to add to benefit the land and natural ecosystem.

## OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Concluding their project year, Gwendolyn Brooks now has a campus integrated pest management plan for the fields on their 40-acre property, a more engaged gardening club, a soon-to-be planted native plant garden, and upcoming community workshops on sustainable landscaping. They expect the momentum built through this work to carry over into future years as they implement their IPM plan, further expand their native gardens, and eventually work to remove invasive reeds from the school's lagoon. These actions will reduce runoff, build healthier soils, store more carbon, and increase biodiversity, ideally not just on their campus but in the broader community as well.

