

Inspiration

Two Indian Principals Raise Kitchen Garden To Cultivate Peer Learning

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| Apoorva Chakravarty



While many world-class schools are outgrowing the regular school curriculum and introducing gardening as one of the resorts to give youngsters a hands-on experience on co-existing, there are a handful of schools that are using the power of farming/gardening in a more meaningful manner - to fight the issue of malnourishment among their students.

Majorly to make up for the incapacity of predominantly low-income families, that, unfortunately, fail to provide their kids with at least one healthy meal a day, there are some commendable government schools in India that have taken the baton in their hands to

ensure nutritional value in midday meals every day.

Whatever the mission or agenda may be, we think kitchen garden initiatives not only help students reconnect with the Mother Nature that provides us with fresh food and shelter but also inculcates a sense of teamwork and social responsibility in them. Having said that, we strongly believe that this concept has made another remarkable progress in the form of school management becoming more efficient than ever as they automatically learn about Peer Learning while getting their hands dirty.

To recognize the evolution closely, ScooNews spoke to a couple of Principals working in govt. schools who've deliberately chosen to create a kitchen garden in their respective premises and grow organic vegetables there. Of course, this indicates combining the force of fellow teachers and students in the kind act and working as a team to achieve health goals set for the latter's healthy midday meals.



(Shaheed Jagsir Singh Govt Senior Secondary Smart School Boha)

One such example is **Shaheed Jagsir Singh Govt Senior Secondary Smart School Boha** in Punjab. Under the Government's NSQF (National Skill Qualification Framework) program, this school started a kitchen garden back in October 2019, in order to teach students organic agriculture and thereby, provide fresh vegetables for the mid-day meals.

"The vegetables are grown organically, without the help of any chemical or synthetic components," Mr. Balwinder Singh, Teacher and Head of Commi Seva Yojana Program of the school, told ScooNews. To kickstart this noble initiation, the school hired an instructor

who guided the kids about various agricultural methods. The management also held seminars with the support of the Government Agricultural Department to train educators about the dos and don'ts of organic farming.



(Shaheed Jagsir Singh Govt Senior Secondary Smart School Boha)

What we found inspiring was the spirit of the students who have taken full responsibility for their kitchen garden. They coordinate among themselves and make sure someone is always there during the holidays to maintain the space. Mr. Balvinder specified how these

students work together enthusiastically, teaching each other to care for the farm. He also mentioned that a tremendous change has been noticed in the conduct of his teachers, as well.

Another name in the list is K Khel Government Middle School (GMS) in Viswema, Nagaland. This school is setting altogether a different trend by selling the leftover raw vegetables and fruits in the market so they can raise money to buy snacks for its underprivileged students. Seriously, who doesn't love themselves a pack of potato chips?



(K Khel Government Middle School (GMS) in Viswema)

In another inspiring case in Uttar Pradesh, The Ministry of Human Resource Development has issued firm instructions to all the government schools, up to Class 8, to include the produce from the kitchen gardens in the mid-day meal. Those schools which do not have sufficient land for farming have been asked to start terrace gardens instead!





(DKZP Bokkapatna-3 Higher Primary School in Mangalore)

Clearly, there is no shortage of examples of educational institutions that are doing such a commendable job in providing their students with high nutritious value meals from their kitchen garden. Another school named **DKZP Bokkapatna-3 Higher Primary School in Mangalore**, too, is using gardening as a means to strengthen its peer-bonds. Under Headmistress D'Souza's guidance, both the teachers and the students have been growing organic vegetables for the last 3 years now.

Ms D'Souza shared with us how she and her guild faced many challenges in the initial days. That was when she asked Outreach Program (designed to help and encourage disadvantaged members of the community) volunteers to support the cause. She spoke of the unhappy days of the year when the crops get destroyed due to heavy rainfall in the region and often disappoint the teachers and students involved. "However, never did we think of giving up on this garden that lives happily in our school's backyard," she said.

The Headmistress added that the excitement is such that some of her youngest students are forever eager to water the plants as soon as they reach the school. “We’re teaching them about weather-controlled farming also. Topics like these ultimately help them clear the basics of regular subjects like mathematics, science, geography, etc. By teaching them young, we can bring about a positive change in the K12 education system,” she signed off.



(DKZP Bokkapatna-3 Higher Primary School in Mangalore)

Scoonews believes that kitchen-gardens are a revolution in themselves. These beautifully grown and maintained green spaces are achieving what many experts fail to learn even after attending a number of educational conferences. As Mr. Balvinder of Boha Senior Secondary School puts it – “Our teachers, even after being highly qualified, are as eager to learn as the students are. I think this approach of educating oneself irrespective of what position you hold can take our country’s education standard places.”

Are you ready to sow the seeds of Peer Learning in your school?

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