

LFS 350 Proposal Report
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Riley Park Community Garden
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Introduction

The goal of this project is to integrate food-literacy and place-based education in the Riley Park Community Garden by creating a selection of workshops that members of the garden can carry out with students from local elementary and high schools. BC's Ministry of Education has recently changed their curriculum to incorporate community based education that extends outside the classroom as a way of diversifying learning experiences (Government of British Columbia, 2018). As a result, the Riley Park Community Garden is not only an asset for educating youth, but also a resource to reconnect the Little Mountain neighborhood with their ecological surrounding.

The construction of Riley Park Community Garden was established in 2012 when the old community center and curling rink were replaced by the new Olympic facility—Hillcrest Community Centre—in 2010. The garden, located in the heart of the Little Mountain Riley Park Community, covers 1065 m² of land and is comprised of a selection of garden beds, plots and fieldhouse to support the growth of biodiversity in plants and animals in the area (Garden & Shed, 2018). In addition, special events such as work parties, farmers markets and workshops are also hosted in the garden to provide community members with a space to reconnect with food and sustainability.

Since the community garden has only been functioning for a year, members of the park are working on building projects that support their vision of reconnecting the community with the food system. Each member of the community garden brings a unique set of assets into the space and these individuals volunteer their time in order to support the growth and operation of this garden (Garden & Shed, 2018). Thus, the main focus for 2018 is to utilize this space as a teaching facility to help increase food literacy and have students experience new ways of learning. The emphasis on educating youth is important as they will have the power to influence future communities and create positive change in the food system (Sadegholvad, Yeatman, Parris & Worsely, 2017).

Significance

The Riley Park Community Garden's mission is "to create community space and social cohesion through participation, education and events" and "promote food security by supporting neighborhood organizations and charities with the food grown by our volunteers" (Garden Beds and Commons Garden Access, 2015). While the Riley Park Community Garden views their

initiative as being centered around food security, we are tasked with creating a place-based education curriculum and are thus operating in the unique intersection of community food security and food literacy initiatives. Hamm and Bellows define community food security as “a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (Hamm, 2003, p.37). In the article “Food Literacy: Definition and Framework for Action”, food literacy is defined as “the ability of an individual to understand food in a way that they develop a positive relationship with it, including food skills and practices across the lifespan in order to navigate, engage and participate within a complex food system” (Cullen, 2015, p.143). We believe that integrating food literacy curriculum will increase the strength and resiliency of the surrounding community and help the garden promote food security. We do not believe that creating food literacy curriculum in of itself creates food security, but rather believe that by emphasizing the importance of food to a younger generation, the Riley Park Community Garden can create a foundation for future community mobilization around equitable access to sustainable food options.

While each community garden offers unique opportunities for learning, a report of community gardens in California identified three key elements for success: commitment of local leadership and staff, volunteer and community partner involvement and the availability of skill-building opportunities for participants (Twiss, Dickinson, Duma, & Kleinman, 2003). For our project, we are focusing on the third aspect of community garden success by creating interactive learning opportunities for elementary school students. The process of integrating the local community and environment as a foundation in teaching school subjects is known as place-based education (Sobel, 2004). Place-based education focuses on hands-on learning experiences and has been shown to increase academic achievement (Sobel, 2004). While the impact of the workshops we create may be limited by the number that we can feasibly carry out and our lack of expertise in education, we are hopeful that the Riley Park Community garden will be able to keep our lesson templates as a teaching resource to be used with student groups in the future.

Objectives

The three main objectives of our work with the Riley Park Community Garden are to:

1. Create a virtual calendar of all events that the garden hosts in 2018.
2. Create five lesson plans that will be catered to students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and will meet important objectives outlined in the B.C. curriculum. The lesson plans will focus on place-based learning at the Riley Park Community Garden. Each member of our group will create one lesson that is based on the field that they are currently studying at UBC. For example, one lesson could include finding different vertebrate and

invertebrates around the garden and learning about their impacts on the garden from a biological standpoint catered to second graders.

3. This term, our group plans to carry out one of these lessons with an audience whether that be a local school classroom, a group of volunteers, or simply a few garden representatives. We plan to have volunteers and professionals within the community teach the lessons to grade school students.

Methods

1. Develop 5 age appropriate lesson plans for local students from kindergarten to grade 12.
 - a. Conduct an asset inventory at a future meeting with our community partner to determine what assets the Riley Park Community Garden currently has that can be leveraged in specific lessons. Assets might include composting facilities, existing biodiversity within the garden and seeds that are available.
 - b. Review three other educational programs situated around learning in a garden setting to determine what works well and can be adapted to the Riley Park Community Garden. The following programs all have lesson plans and teaching resources available online for public use.
 - i. The Edible Garden Project through North Shore Neighbourhood House includes online teacher resources that are organized by seasonally appropriate activities. These activities can be easily adapted to work at the Riley Park Community Garden specifically due to similar environmental conditions.
 - ii. The School Garden Resources from Life Lab is a useful tool because the Life Lab School Garden Program is a large-scale initiative that offers extensive resources for developing lesson plans, including educator guides and curriculums.
 - iii. The Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC) School Gardens Program is an initiative that facilitates learning in a garden setting directly at select schools all across Vancouver. This resource will likely give insight into activities that align well with the BC school curriculum.
 - c. Review the British Columbia Curriculum and the Vancouver School Board Garden Policy to ensure that our lesson plans align with the appropriate guidelines and policies.
2. We will work with our community partner to find an appropriate audience to pilot one 45 minute workshop and receive feedback, if feasible. Our audience might include a local school classroom, a group of volunteers, or simply a few garden representatives.
3. In order to create a calendar for the Riley Park Community Garden, we will collect dates for all planned events from our community partner, then organize events into a calendar

for the use of garden organizers and community members. The format of the calendar and accessibility will be discussed and clarified in future meetings.

Outcomes

By the end of the term we will have created a virtual calendar showing all the events that will be hosted at the garden in 2018. We will have created five workshops each with a lesson plan following an accredited template so that they are ready to be taught when the students are available. Together we will carry out one of these lessons with an audience.

Budget

The Riley Park Community Garden has been granted funding in 2018 to develop and facilitate place-based education curriculum. That being said, it is unlikely that our deliverables will require any financial support and we will thus probably not need access to this funding.

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