



# SCHOOL GARDEN BENEFITS DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many hardships to schools and families. At Rogue Valley Farm to School, we understand the immense pressure our local schools are under to continue to provide high quality education to our children, as well as opportunities for students to continue to have meaningful connections with their teachers and peers. For decades, research has shown that hands-on gardening and nutrition education increases student engagement and academic achievement, promotes healthy lifestyles and provides children with opportunities for social and emotional growth. Our educators at Rogue Valley Farm to School have the training and expertise to provide safe and fun environments for students to socialize, learn and grow during these times of isolation and uncertainty.

## Student Engagement & Academic Achievement

- Increase in school engagement and positive attitudes about school and learning. 1-6
- Greater opportunity for necessary experiential and hands-on learning. 7-9
- Increase in knowledge in science and STEM concepts (in early childhood and K-12 settings). 1,2,7,10-14
- Enhanced overall academic achievement in K-12 settings, including grades and test scores. 2,8,15

## Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

- Improved student knowledge and attitudes regarding food literacy, nutrition, health behaviors, and fruit and vegetable consumption. 16-28
- Studies show that receiving adequate nutrients is essential for the prevention and management of viral infections and nutritional deficiency or inadequacy can impair immune functions. 29-32
- Researchers have found evidence of a significant relationship between unhealthy dietary patterns and poorer mental health in children and adolescents. 33

## Social-Emotional Wellbeing

- Garden education provides children with opportunities for social and emotional growth; improves life skills, self-esteem and sense of self, social skills and behavior. 4,5,7,11,12,15,16,28,34
- For students experiencing stress and trauma associated with isolation, uncertainty and illness, outdoor spaces can provide therapeutic places to unwind and relax. 35,36
- Spending time in nature is linked with decreased stress, anxiety and rumination. 36-39
- Physical activity in a natural environment is more beneficial to mental wellbeing than physical activity indoors. 40
- School garden spaces provide equitable access to safe natural areas for all students. 41

## Outdoor Spaces as Safe Learning Environments

- Researchers are finding increasing evidence that the risk of COVID-19 transmission is much lower outdoors than in indoor environments. 42-44
- The COVID-19 virus is primarily spread from person to person through respiratory droplets released into the air when talking, coughing, or sneezing. In outdoor environments, fresh air is constantly moving, dispersing these droplets, making it less likely to breathe in enough of the respiratory droplets containing the virus to become infected. 45

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