

Berkeley, California, USA

The Edible Schoolyard: An educational seed-to-plate system for the students and the community

A 'delicious revolution' has transformed public education using a food-health-education NEXUS to empower students to make healthy and environmentally-conscious lifestyle choices.

Urban NEXUS Case Story 2014 - 23

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The project in brief

The Edible Schoolyard Berkeley (ESY) engages students, teachers and the local community around an organic garden and kitchen classroom, altering the way public education is delivered in the USA through the integration of a seed-to-plate system with an interdisciplinary educational curriculum. In turn, students learn about the food system and life-long behavioral practices for sustainable consumption and healthy lifestyles. Founded in 1995 by local resident, Alice Waters and then-Principal Neil Smith of the Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, the Edible Schoolyard Berkeley has welcomed 7000 students and extends across 3770 schools around the world, including countries such as Brazil, Australia and the United Kingdom. In Berkeley, nine dedicated staff and some 30 volunteers welcome more than 1000 visitors a year. Five years ago, the Edible Schoolyard Academy was established as an intensive professional development program for individuals interested in engaging in the initiative. To date, teaching staff from 143 schools, representing more than 150,000 students from around the world, have participated in the Academy.

What makes it "Urban NEXUS"?

The Edible Schoolyard Berkeley program utilizes communications to shift user behavior to positively impact student learning, health and the environment. For example, healthy students attend school more regularly and are less likely to experience learning difficulties. While onsite gardening additionally reduces emissions for transport and improves stormwater management and air quality. The program also serves as an example of the way services and facilities can be re-integrated, through the utilization of the school as a resource to deliver educational opportunities to students and the community outside of school hours.



Date	1995-ongoing
NEXUS Sectors	Food-Education-Health
NEXUS Innovations	Communications + User Behavior
Scale	Facility (Martin Luther King High School), 3770 schools
Budget	\$600,000/year

Urban NEXUS Definition

The Urban NEXUS is an approach to the design of sustainable urban development solutions. The approach guides stakeholders to identify and pursue possible synergies between sectors, jurisdictions, and technical domains, so as to increase institutional performance, optimize resource management, and service quality.

It counters traditional sectoral thinking, trade-offs, and divided responsibilities that often result in poorly coordinated investments, increased costs, and underutilized infrastructures and facilities. The ultimate goal of the Urban NEXUS approach is to accelerate access to services, and to increase service quality and the quality of life within our planetary boundaries.

ICLEI / GIZ 2014

Further Reading

Edible Schoolyard Official Website:
www.edibleschoolyard.org

Center for Eco Literacy: <http://www.ecoliteracy.org>

GIZ and ICLEI, 2014, Operationalizing the Urban NEXUS: towards resource efficient and integrated cities and metropolitan regions, GIZ Study: www.iclei.org/urbanexus

Scope for improvement

The scope of the Edible Schoolyard could be increased through further institutional and policy integration. For example, government support for all schools seeking to take up the initiative, could be especially beneficial to under-privileged areas, as the initiative focuses on public health and education, but not marginalized sectors of society. At the moment the program does not provide any school lunches beyond the meals prepared in the kitchen classroom, therefore cultivation and the expansion of the gardens outside school hours would allow more produce to be grown via community involvement. This would in turn boost behavioral change within the community and the excess fruit and vegetables could be incorporated into school meals or sold to assist fundraising.

Replication

The Edible Schoolyard has been successfully replicated in schools across the United States and the globe. While this is a project with a readily implementable, institutionalized format, it is also flexible enough to be able to suit the local needs of differing geographic and cultural settings. To support this, the Edible Schoolyard Berkeley has also launched the Edible Schoolyard Project (ESP) to provide further support and resources online while also continuing to its annual Edible Schoolyard Academy, to show how the initiative can be brought to new school communities.

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