Background

- The Health Council of the Palo Alto School District (PAUSD) recognizes the link between healthy students and academic success. The Council’s focus is on the whole child, which includes the social, emotional and physical states as well as their engagement and motivation levels.
- Few spaces in a student’s academic day have a health component.
- PAUSD students reflect the national trend of children and adolescents falling short of the USDA daily recommended intake of 5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables.

Objectives

- Assess, Support and Create Gardens at willing elementary schools
- Evaluate current state of school gardens at local, district and national level
- Use results to inform a sustainable support system

Method

Local:
- Contacted principals of all 12 elementary schools to gauge interest in support or creation of a garden.
- 3 robust existing programs
- 3 schools at varying levels of need participated in internship

Barron Park:
- needs were instructional in support program
- created teacher survey to gauge involvement interest
- Stanford service learning undergrad assisted in class

Fairmeadow:
- attended parent interest meeting, presented at PTA meeting
- Nixon- researched garden bed dimensions, secured plantings, held garden meeting, posted information in newsletters, led K-2 classes in garden

District:
- Researched robust existing programs, collected qualitative data through key informant interviews
- Attended district functions related to social/emotional learning, healthy food initiatives
- Held Edible Education Community Brunch to organize key stakeholders

National:
- Reviewed previous School Garden Intervention results
- Attended 4 conferences related to school gardens and children’s health

Results and Conclusions

Local
- Barron Park- teacher survey unable to go out before end of year, in the process of working on support measures through creation of a central website and service learning interns
- Fairmeadow- PTA approved financially supporting garden beds, awaiting approval of incoming principal

District:

- 3 schools at varying levels of need participated in internship
- 3 robust existing programs
- 3 non-existent

District level support in the form of
- A Full Time Garden Education Specialist
- Funding programs, teacher training, website
- Inclusion of community partners in an organized system
- Increase Farm to School involvement
- more local procurement in school lunch
- further healthy eating education