

Uplift Community High School

2023 Judges Choice Award Winner



The Project:

This project follows up on a project from last year in which Environmental Science students documented that when students plant and nurture seeds to grow, they feel better about their classroom. This year's ES students produced a video on why plant stewardship is important and how to plant and nurture seeds, and in cooperation with cluster students, coached other students in the school through a planting process. They also developed a stewardship pledge for students and staff as part of a stewardship badging process.

Project Focus: Nature, Biophilic design

Staff Involved: 2

Location: Chicago, IL

Students: 10



Understanding the stress-relieving power of Nature as well as the many other benefits healthy ecosystems provide and consciously using it as a mental health intervention is [a] unique aspect [of the project]



The Process:

Uplift's first unit of the year was about sustainable food growing. The students began writing portions of a script for a bilingual informational video teaching other students a plant-positive philosophy, some technical information about photosynthesis, the benefits of plants, and the steps for planting and growing. The classroom will be exhibiting and giving guests the chance to take home a plant at an Earth Day event in their neighborhood and at their annual STEAM Expo. Uplift's project encourages students and staff to view plants and planting as meaningful in their lives and to begin to see more plants inside the school—an element of biophilic design is bringing nature inside. They also hope that it will be meaningful to students to earn a stewardship badge--Uplift is embarking on a STEAM badging process. Incorporating the humanities into their project, an Uplift student from Guatemala wrote a poetic ode to plants and planting as a tool to promote a plant-positive philosophy. The stewardship badge Uplift is developing includes a pledge written by students for caring for plants at school and in the community as well as promoting it among peers.

The Outcomes:

Uplift is looking to get students involved in several upcoming environmental projects. Their school is going to implement a Grow Room with hydroponic gardening. While working around some school construction, they expect to continue a community-friendly outdoor gardening project begun two summers ago. The team also looks to take steps to enroll in the Eat What You Grow program.

