




**BRIGHT
GREEN
FUTURE**

OUTCOMES REPORT

2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR



Supporting projects that inspire K-12 students to become lifelong environmental stewards.

BACKGROUND

114,000 students have participated.

Launched in 2012 by the City of Austin's Office of Sustainability, the Bright Green Future Grants Program recognizes and supports innovative projects that inspire K-12 students to become lifelong environmental stewards. Through a competitive selection process, school-based sustainability projects are awarded up to \$3,000. Grant recipients are selected each year by a panel of judges.

Initially, the program funded three projects at Austin-area elementary, middle, and high schools that offered environmental benefits, provided hands-on educational opportunities for students, and added value for the broader community. Based on the success of these first projects, the program was expanded with additional funding from Austin Resource Recovery, Watershed Protection, Public Works, Austin Transportation, the Urban Forestry Program of Development Services, and Austin Water. In 2014, the program was expanded again through a partnership with local nonprofit EcoRise to fund projects identified through student-led campus Eco-Audits.

70% of Title 1 Schools in Austin served.

Grant-funded projects include composting systems, rainwater harvesting, vegetable gardens, rain gardens, bike clubs, tree planting, chicken coops, beekeeping, wildlife habitats, outdoor classrooms, and more. From those three initial projects in 2012, the number has grown to 453.

We estimate that **around 114,000 students have participated** in creating and implementing Bright Green Future Grant projects, which are located in every Austin City Council District, including Austin, Round Rock, Georgetown, Leander, and Del Valle Independent School Districts. Several private schools, the Travis County Juvenile Justice Center, and the Texas School for the Deaf have also received funding. To date, the program has **funded 129 projects at 46 Title 1 schools** in the Austin Independent School District, which is **over 70% of all Title 1 schools in Austin**.

CONSERVING WATER & PROTECTING WATER QUALITY



Water Conservation Projects

Anderson Mills Elementary
Eco Rain Garden

Cunningham Elementary
Rain Garden

Grandview Hills Elementary
Garden Irrigation Project

Lee Elementary
Rainwater Harvesting for
School Garden

Magnolia Montessori for All
Drainage Garden

Mills Elementary
Rainwater Harvesting
and Organic Garden

Sunset Valley Elementary
Rain Garden

Whole Life Learning Center
Pavillion Rainwater Catchment

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: **Drainage Garden** Magnolia Montessori for All

**“It’s nice my shoes don’t get wet
when it rains anymore because
the flooding stopped.”**

Anabel
4th Grader at Magnolia Montessori for All

Students and staff recognized that the courtyards at Magnolia Montessori had the potential to be a beautiful space for outdoor learning and community gathering. However, the school’s drainage system caused water to collect and flood the area when it rained.

With funds from the Bright Green Future Grants Program, students, their families, staff, and landscapers created a drainage garden that beautifies the campus, stops the flooding of classrooms, and directs water away from walking and play spaces.

Everyone who sees the results has the same response. They can’t believe it’s the same space!



CARING FOR TREES & PRESERVING HABITAT

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:
Campus Bee Guardians
Govalle Elementary

“Some people are scared of bees, but you shouldn’t be because they can do so many good things.”
Lorenzo
5th Grader at Govalle Elementary

It’s not every day that your school receives a bee apiary donation! When Brooke Elementary closed during the 2020-21 school year, they donated their apiary to Govalle Elementary. Using a Bright Green Future Grant, teachers developed a more extensive bee education program for 5th-grade students that will serve the entire school community.

“Bee Guardians” will learn about honeybees, earn special badges, and develop community awareness campaigns around bees. The Guardians will even learn how to make products using honey and beeswax!



Green Space & Habitat Projects

Barton Creek Elementary
Blue Jays Bettering the World

Brentwood Elementary
Monarch Butterfly and Sensory Garden

Govalle Elementary
Campus Bee Guardians

St. Ignatius School
Butterfly and Pollinator Garden



OUTDOOR LEARNING SPACES

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:
Outdoor Development & Community Involvement
Northeast Early College High School

“It was kinda cool to step back and think, ‘Hey, we did this. We transformed this space into a place where we can take care of our bodies and the environment.’”

Julia
11th Grader at Northeast Early College High School

Having installed a community food garden a few years ago, Northeast High students sought ways to garner community support. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted a need for safe outdoor learning spaces during school hours. In exploring solutions, the big idea was to transform the area around the garden into an outdoor learning space that also served as a spot to host community events.

Using a Bright Green Future Grant, students were able to design, build, and paint the area in a way that reflected their needs and personalities.



Outdoor Learning Space Projects

AHB Community School
Outdoor Classroom for a Sustainable Community

Austin Achieve Elementary School
Polar Victory Classroom

Blazier Elementary
Watch Them Grow Outside

Boone Elementary
Early Childhood Nature Play

Highland Park Elementary
Outdoor Classroom

Linder Elementary
Nature Space for Outdoor Learning

Menchaca Elementary
Outdoor Learning Lab

Northeast Early College High School
Outdoor Development and Community Involvement

Patton Elementary
Treeline and Outdoor Appreciation

Rodriguez Elementary
Enhancing Outdoor Education

BIKE CLUBS & RODEOS

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Ghisallo Cycling Initiative

**"Everyone should ride a bike.
It gets you where you want to go,
it's good for you, and it's good
for the planet."**

Molly

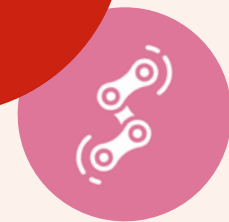
Ghisallo Bicycle Academy Graduate

Since 2013, Bright Green Future Grants have funded over 75 Bicycle Clubs and Rodeo events at Austin-area schools through the Ghisallo Cycling Initiative. Ghisallo is a local nonprofit that provides youth with supervised access to outdoor physical activity while helping them develop into self-sufficient bicycle riders.

Learning about how to ride bikes safely, the positive impact bicycling has on the world, and applying those skills opens doors for kids to explore the city in a way that positively addresses climate change. This year, around 1,800 students participated in Ghisallo's free bicycling education program during Bike to School Week, and the grant allowed Ghisallo to distribute 108 bikes to students so they could participate.

Bike Club & Rodeo Projects

Allison Elementary
Langford Elementary
Sanchez Elementary
Hart Elementary
Perez Elementary
Houston Elementary
Rodriguez Elementary
St. Elmo Elementary
Reilly Elementary
Harris Elementary
Oak Springs Elementary
Ortega Elementary
Overton Elementary



GROWING HEALTHY FOOD

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:
**Campus STEM Academy
Community Garden**
Mendez Middle School STEM Academy

“I tried a strawberry from the garden, and it was the sweetest strawberry I ever had.”

Tayveon
8th Grader at Mendez STEM Academy

Located in Dove Springs in East Austin, many students at Mendez Middle School face systemic barriers to accessing healthy, affordable food. With the help of a Bright Green Future Grant, the school expanded its garden by 15 beds to help students learn how to grow food. They also used the money to double their butterfly garden!

Since the expansion, Mendez has been able to share its harvest with the surrounding community. Students are also learning about caring for the land and have a more profound respect for farmers. Educators at Mendez describe the project as a “unique gem” in the heart of Dove Springs.



Garden Projects

Bailey Middle School
Biodiversity Garden

Bowie High School
Building and Refurbishing
the Campus Garden

Campbell Elementary
Campus Community Garden

Linder Elementary
Vegetable Garden and
Protection Fence

**Mendez Middle School
STEM Academy**
Campus STEM Academy
Community Garden

Zilker Elementary
Jabo Edible Garden





REDUCING WASTE

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:

Food Recovery with Animals

Austin Discovery School

“They’re like vacuum cleaners with tails. There’s a big pile of scraps, and then it’s just gone!”

Paige

6th Grader at Austin Discovery School

When exploring food waste and recovery systems, students at Austin Discovery School took a closer look at their school’s compost system. Soon, they reached a consensus: they could improve how they handled food waste at school.

After noticing their little flock of chickens and turkeys hanging out in the compost area, scratching for bugs, and eating food scraps, students thought expanding the animal setup could help them divert waste. Bright Green Future Grant funding enabled the school to expand its animal area to include a feeding station and more animals.

Using materials from a recent renovation, students, staff, and volunteers designed and built a new learning space with more animal housing, improving how food waste is handled at the school.



Waste Reduction Projects

Alternative Learning Center
SEL Garden and Composting

Austin Discovery School
Food Recovery with Animals

Grandview Hills Elementary
Garden Irrigation Project

Maplewood Elementary
Landfill Diversion at the Outdoor Cafe

ECORISE ECO-AUDITS

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:

Peace Garden

Bedicheck Middle School

In the words of students at Bedicheck Middle School, the area near the portable buildings were “old, dry, and ugly” so they decided to do something about it.

Their solution was to design and build a habitat garden where students could enjoy nature and learn more about butterflies, while providing a safe place for pollinators to live.

Christy Mederos, a teacher at Bedichek, helped make this dream a reality by incorporating the Eco-Audit Grant Process into her language and ESL classes. She expressed that many of her students developed important soft skills and language skills throughout the process.



Eco-Audit Projects

Bedicheck Middle School
Home of the Monarchs

Bedicheck Middle School
Peace Garden

**Del Valle
Opportunity Center**
Reducing Water Waste

IDEA (Rundberg Campus)
Reusable Water Bottle
Distribution Project

Kealing Middle School
Let’s Clear the Air

Langford Elementary
Langford’s Pizza
Vegetable Garden

Overton Elementary
Sustainable Water Solutions

Pleasant Hill Elementary
Reshaping our Plastic
Consumption Habits

T.A. Brown Elementary
The Case of the Missing
Trash Cans

Whole Life Learning Center
Public Garden Space



About Eco-Audits

Since 2014, the Office of Sustainability has partnered with local nonprofit EcoRise to provide funding for their Eco-Audits Program. The funds can be used for a wide range of sustainability-themed projects, such as outdoor learning spaces, recycling and composting, and chicken coops. The student-designed projects must either reduce the campus environmental footprint or create public awareness around environmental issues.

Partnership Impact

For the 2021-22 school year, **ten projects at nine different Austin-area campuses** were awarded funding. To date, **158 projects have been funded through this partnership.**

**2021-2022
PROGRAM
IMPACT**

46
grants
awarded

41
schools served,
representing all
Council districts

50%
of awarded
grants were to
Title 1 schools



31,265

**Miles
Biked**



27

**Native Species
Planted**



8,000

**Bees Saved
or Relocated**



169,000

**Gallons of
Water Saved**



15,750

**Students
Reached**





A MESSAGE FROM OUR PROGRAM MANAGER

This program has succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. Through the dedication of educators, students, and partner City of Austin departments, Bright Green Future Grants have reached an estimated 114,000 students since its humble beginnings in 2012.

Even with the major challenges facing our schools over the past few years, including COVID-19, staff shortages, and supply chain issues, this program has continued to provide value to youth across the Austin area. In particular, this school year saw significant price increases for materials and nationwide shortages of lumber, which greatly impacted schools and their projects. While several schools had to adapt their projects to changing conditions, we're proud to say that all were able to complete them.

We'd also like to express the deep gratitude we feel for our Austin-area educators, who believe in the power of sustainability education — we couldn't do this program without you. Here's to building the next generation of sustainability leaders together.

Warmest regards,

Mary K. Priddy, Program Manager

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

Austin Resource Recovery

**Austin Transportation
Department**

Austin Water

**Development Services
Department's Urban
Forestry Program**

Office of Sustainability

**Watershed Protection
Department**

BRIGHT GREEN FUTURE
GRANTS IS A PROGRAM OF THE

**Office of
Sustainability**



Learn more at:
AustinTexas.gov/BrightGreenFuture



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