

GROWING CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND CURIOSITY THROUGH GARDENING

Sara Runions, Dr. Nicole Yantzi, Dr. Yovita Gwekwerere & LCFC

BACKGROUND

- The early childhood learning policy in Ontario requires that the environment is part of play-based inquiry (Chiarotto, 2011).
- The LCFC wanted to improve their level of environmental engagement.

In 2016
children:

- Prepared soil
- Planted seeds
- Tended garden
- Harvested vegetables



RESEARCH DESIGN

- A focus group was conducted with LUREB approval 6 months after the last gardening activity
- Participants included 5 children, 6-8 years old,
- Questions included previous experiences and knowledge of gardening, what they learned and experienced, and suggestions for future gardens.

FINDINGS

Overall positive feelings and experiences during gardening:

"I feel happy because I love the garden."

"I drew emojis to show...I was feeling happy, hot."



Retained knowledge:

"...you need to take out all the weeds or else they'll ruin the garden and none of our plants will be able to grow, only a bit of them."

In the future:

"Broccoli and carrots..."

"I-I-I love broccoli!"

"Oh and peppers!"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DISCUSSION

- Children enjoyed activities and retained knowledge and enthusiasm months after.
- Growing vegetables can help improve nutrition in children (Libman, 2007).
- Engaging with the natural environment as a child promotes environmental stewardship later in life (Chiarotto, 2011).
- Activities embody "Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow" policy's vision (2009)
- Gardens can serve as informal areas to encourage development and learning through natural inquiry and curiosity.

REFERENCES

- Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow: A policy framework for environmental education in Ontario schools. (2009). Ministry of Education. Queen's Printer: Ontario.
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