Learning about food

A school in California finds a new way to teach students about healthy eating

School where students grow vegetables

Alice Waters – chef and restaurant owner – is sitting in the kitchen garden of the Martin Luther King School in Berkeley, California. The kitchen garden is called the Edible Schoolyard, and students at this public school are preparing a vegetable bed as part of a lesson. Later, they will cook what they pick as part of their school lunch. 1 Each student receives between 18 and 40 hours' tuition a year in the Schoolyard, and as a result, what they eat at school has changed. A good part of the food grown here is used in the school's daily meals.

Waters has been fighting to improve children's diets for a decade, and in 1996 she started a campaign to raise funds for the Edible Schoolyard and the School Lunch Initiative. 2 And Waters hopes that they will set an example for other parts of the country as well. "We have such a huge problem of bad eating habits in the United States that teaching about food cannot be left to parents," she says. "So many children generally are eating fast, cheap, easy food that something has to be done."

Marsha Guerrero, director of the School Lunch Initiative, explains how it all works. "This is mainly a teaching garden," she says. " 3 " Nearby farms therefore also supply food as part of the regular lunches at the school. These are prepared using fresh organic ingredients when possible.

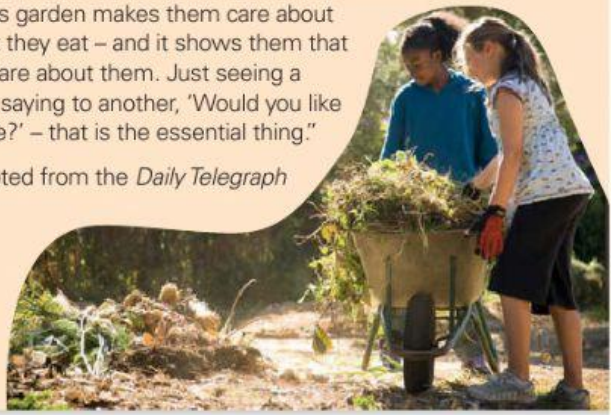
Typical classes in the Edible Schoolyard involve plenty of gardening activity. However, they are not a break from normal school work, as academic projects are always attached. In one lesson, the students are asked to choose one part of the garden as their personal spot for the entire year. They then observe and record in a journal what happens in this spot as time progresses. They record their observations of insect life, the soil and changes to the plants. 4

Classes in the kitchen involve cooking lunch, but also link into classroom academic subjects. The food cooked here includes a range of dishes from pasta to stuffed vine leaves and delicious Italian omelettes filled with herbs and vegetables. The recipes are dictated by what vegetables are available. Science is taught through nutrition and cooking technique; geography through the effects of the seasons and eating habits around the world. 5

Today's midday meal consists of homemade pesto and tomato sandwiches, with a big vegetable salad. Everyone is eating. Teo Hernandez, 13, says he has changed the way he eats. "I can now cook and grow things," he says. "I don't know yet if I will continue doing so in the future, but I know I can. I have changed my attitude to food; I like some herbs and lettuce and I use less salt. It's been fun, the teachers are nice – and there's no homework." Teo has been in the US for only three years, but his teachers say he has learned to speak perfect English in such a short time because he is so happy at school.

But has Alice Waters succeeded? Is the Edible Schoolyard model the way forward? 6 "When kids become unhealthy due to bad diet, they become isolated," says Waters. "But eating such good food and picking, smelling and cooking the vegetables and fruit in this garden makes them care about what they eat – and it shows them that we care about them. Just seeing a child saying to another, 'Would you like some?' – that is the essential thing."

Adapted from the *Daily Telegraph*



Choose from the sentences A–G the one which fits each gap (1–6).

A. Judging by the happiness in this garden among a mixed bunch of ordinary children, the answer would have to be yes.
B. Keeping notes in this way is viewed as an essential part of experimental learning.
C. One lesson, on European diets in the Middle Ages, ends with the children cooking roasted vegetables with herbs and garlic.
D. The problem, according to some critics, is that these projects may be just too expensive to run.
E. These two projects aim to provide all 10,000 students in Berkeley's public schools with good food while also placing food at the heart of the curriculum.
F. We couldn't possibly produce enough food in this small space to feed all 300 children.
G. Lessons like this one take place in the garden and kitchen and they form part of the curriculum.

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