

## The John Muir Learning Garden Brightens San Francisco Schools

### Purpose of the Learning Garden

The John Muir Learning Garden is designed to give San Francisco Schools students a chance to take learning further outside of the classroom. The Garden builds on the fundamental curriculum concerns of the elementary school and provides an opportunity for students to gain real life experience that complements their academic studies. San Francisco school students are able to integrate classroom literacy, mathematics, science, history, and language arts instruction through their participation in activities in the Learning Garden.

The Learning Garden reaches out to the community in providing outreach services for parents, neighbors, and interested volunteers. Mentor gardeners work with teachers and students to design educational opportunities. One of the interesting projects going on now is the sustainable composting program that takes organic waste from San Francisco school lunches and uses it for fertilizing garden projects instead of filling landfills. This is just one of many projects that combine garden training with practical real world environmental concerns. The events organized in the park help students and the community learn about how to protect the local environment while studying nature in an urban setting.

### Partners of the Learning Garden

The Learning Garden would not be possible without the support in terms of time and money from a variety of neighborhood partners. San Francisco area businesses, organizations, and volunteer groups have all played a role in establishing the Learning Garden. Located in Daniel E. Koshland Park, the Learning Garden has benefited from the dedication of two part-time garden mentors provided by the Hayes Valley Neighborhoods Parks Group. These two women, Rebecca and Aubrey, have become part of the local community as they organize activities that raise local awareness about the environment.

Further assistance has come from the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, the Center for Ecoliteracy, the Recreation and Park Department, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and the San Francisco Zen Center. All of these organizations have devoted time and money to helping the John Muir Learning Garden become an environmental center for the San Francisco community, especially the children that attend John Muir Elementary School. In particular, the John Muir Learning Garden is indebted to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, which donated the initial funds to start the Learning Garden and remains an active community partner with John Muir Elementary School.

### A Look at John Muir Elementary School

John Muir Elementary School has a unique place within the San Francisco Public School System. Located in the Western Addition of San Francisco, it operates as a professional development school where education students from the San Francisco State University's Muir Alternative Teaching Program are able to hone their skills in a real world environment, learning how to specially adapt course for the urban classroom.

John Muir students come from a rich cultural background and are supported within the school community with language and literacy programs beginning in infancy. The programs also extend to the parents and families of John Muir Elementary School students. Within the San Francisco school district, John Muir Elementary School acts as a BASRC (Bay Area School Reform Collaborative) leadership school with a clear focus on literacy for the whole community

### About the Author

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