

## **UBC TLEF Final Report: Learning to teach in an outdoor classroom**

February 23, 2014. Dr. Susan Gerofsky, Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, UBC.

*Learning to teach in an outdoor classroom* is a student-driven project that aims to cultivate a living outdoor classroom that invites learners across disciplines to explore and connect theory to practice through the relationships between teaching, learning, and growing. Our primary focus is on creating connections between UBC's teacher education and the living pedagogical spaces of The Orchard Garden (<http://theorchardgarden.blogspot.ca>). The Orchard Garden is recognized locally and internationally as an important educational space that advances UBC's Sustainability Academic Strategy and Community Engagement missions. It is closely affiliated with diverse outdoor classroom and gardening initiatives on campus and in the community in the emerging Cultivating Learning Network (CLN).

In our third year (April 2013-March 2014) of TLEF funding, we continued to implement and refine our outdoor education programs with student teachers developed in previous years (see previous reports), and solidify new partnerships to sustain the garden in the future. Currently, The Orchard Garden is moving to a new and permanent location on Totem Field as a result UBC's accelerated plans to develop the land around the MacMillan building (our location since 2005) for Vantage College. We are working with students in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (SALA) to develop a design for our new site. Furthermore, The Orchard Garden is now a key stakeholder in developing an educational production garden on the rooftop of the new Student Union Building, in partnership with the Alma Mater Society, Food Services, and UBC's SEEDS program (Social Ecological Economic Development Studies). In addition to our sites at Totem Field (opening Spring 2014) and on the new SUB roof (opening Spring 2015) and previous partnerships (such as Think&Eat Green@School), we have enhanced our campus network through partnerships with the Botanical Gardens and the Beaty Biodiversity Museum. These relationships allow us to connect, support, and collaboratively sustain unique garden projects on campus, offering students opportunities to explore diverse outdoor classroom spaces.

### **Summary of key educational events:**

*April 6, 2013:* Arts in the Garden, final workshop and celebratory event with local community artists, student teachers, faculty, staff, and community members.

*April 22-26/June 12-28, 2013:* Student teachers partner with Think & Eat Green and The Orchard Garden for their Community Field Placement (CFP). Students during June placement prepare & host summer celebration.

*June 7, 2013:* Student teachers in literacy education visit the garden, focus on developing signage for the garden.

*August 6, 2013:* Student teachers in Outdoor Environmental Education teach 20 children from the FUNS sustainability camp at the garden.

*October 6, 2013:* After presenting The Orchard Garden to all student teachers in the Faculty of Education in September, a wonderful group of 20 student teachers participated in a daylong workshop at the garden.

Workshop materials developed in previous years were compiled in a handbook for students, and all participants received a certificate of participation for their teaching portfolios. Evaluations from students were very positive:

• *So many great usable ideas!*

• *Working on curriculum connections using school gardens was helpful for brainstorming practical classroom connections for this workshop. It really got me thinking about the many possibilities.*

• *The presentation from the students from Windermere Secondary was so inspiring. I learned so much from them about passion for learning and teaching. It was amazing.*

• *I hope wherever I end up in my education degree, it has access to a school garden and I would like to be involved in some level.*

• *I really enjoyed today's experiential learning. I have learned how to engage students with gardening and the importance of supporting local food production and composting. I am looking forward to building a school garden in the future.*

• *Thank you for inviting these two awesome inspiring speaker. The resources package is very helpful as well. The garden visit is a good chance to practice trans-disciplinary learning.*

• *To watch such an engaging and fantastic project described by the creators who happen to be high school students is all my heart could wish for!*

*October 16, 2013:* Farewell Celebration and fall harvest at the garden. Speeches by LFS Dean Murray Isman and EDCP Department Head, Dr. Peter Grimmett. Faculty, students, and staff from across UBC participated.

*October 28, 2013:* Two education graduate students organized a class visit to the garden for their Adult Environmental Education course (EDST 588).

*November 6, 2013:* Large open house at Ike Barber Centre attended by students, faculty, and staff from across UBC to discuss the relocation plans for The Orchard Garden. Dr. Tracy Friedel attended with her students.

*January 9, 2014:* Presentation to Dr. Tracy Friedel's Place-based education course (EDCP 523). One education graduate student from the course is working with The Orchard Garden as part of her Community-Service Learning and final project requirements.

*February 4, 2014:* Orchard Garden PhD students' guest lecture in SALA graduate class on designing outdoor learning environments for the Vancouver School Board.

*Spring 2014:* Meetings with BEd students who will be partnering with the garden as part of their Community Field Placement, a 3-week enhanced practicum to explore alternative educational sites (in partnership with the Think&Eat Green@School Project).

We have documented the impact of our project on our blog (<http://theorchardgarden.blogspot.ca> - approx. 32,000 page views to date) as well as through six video recordings (<http://theorchardgarden.blogspot.ca/2013/11/more-videos-on-community-impact-of.html>) from students and alumni who have had significant learning experiences through The Orchard Garden. Filming is currently underway to document our move to a new garden location.

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