



BRIGHT GREEN FUTURE GRANT

OUTCOMES REPORT

SCHOOL YEARS 2019-2021





Recognizing and supporting innovative projects that inspire K-12 students to become lifelong environmental stewards.

BACKGROUND

Launched in 2012 by the City of Austin's Office of Sustainability, the Bright Green Future Grants Program is designed to recognize and support innovative projects that will inspire K-12 students to become lifelong environmental stewards. Through a competitive selection process, school-based sustainability projects can be 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 tangible environmental benefits, provided hands-on educational opportunities for students, and created positive benefits for the broader community. Based on the success of these first projects, the Bright Green Future Grants Program was expanded with additional funding from the following City of Austin departments: 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 Youth Innovations to fund projects identified through student-led campus Eco-Audits.

Composting systems, rainwater harvesting, vegetable gardens, rain gardens, bike clubs and rodeos, tree planting, chicken coops, beekeeping, and wildlife habitat projects have received Bright Green Future Grant funding. From those three initial projects in 2012, the number has grown to 411 funded to date.

We estimate that more than 100,000 students have participated in creating and implementing Bright Green Future Grant projects. Grant-funded projects are located in every Austin City Council District and cover 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, 108 projects have been funded at 46 Title 1 schools in the Austin Independent School District, which is 70% of all Title 1 schools in Austin.



THE CHALLENGE OF COVID-19

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and local Stay-At-Home Orders caused schools to close to in-person learning, and the Bright Green Future Grants Program was forced to pause. As students, teachers, and parents learned to navigate the virtual world, it was clear that schools would need additional time to complete the previous year's projects. Because the situation was so uncertain, all 2019-20 grant recipients were given additional time.

For the 2020-21 school year, students would be attending in-person or virtual classes. In response, we pivoted the program to offer a "menu" of options to schools, rather than requiring them to develop original project ideas.

These options were sustainability-themed curriculums offered through local nonprofit organizations. The main benefit of this change was that all curriculums could be completed whether students were meeting in the classroom or virtually.



CONSERVING WATER & PROTECTING WATER QUALITY

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: DAVIS ELEMENTARY RAINWATER HARVESTING SYSTEM

Students at Davis Elementary know that Austin doesn't get enough water for much of the year — and then suddenly, we get too much. They wanted to use their grant funds to capture excess rainwater to use during the driest times.

Students identified a prime location for the collection system that uses an existing gutter in an area prone to runoff during storms. By capturing rainwater that would have otherwise been lost and using a rain garden for filtration, Davis now has plenty of water for its rain garden. The location is also highly visible for everyone on campus. The students also plan to add signage to the project to increase awareness about water conservation and watershed protection.

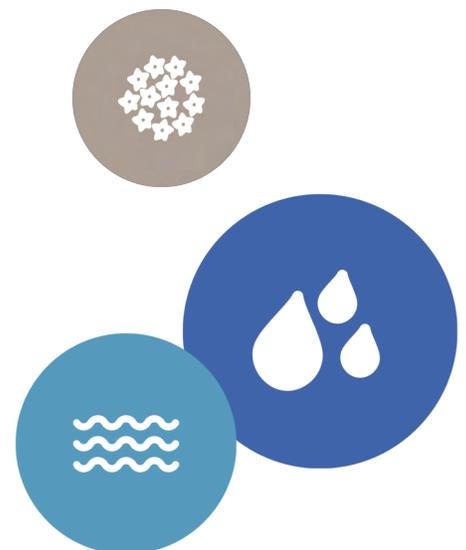


I like getting fresh air and having less screen time.

Julia, 5th grade student at Davis Elementary

SCHOOL YEAR 2019-2020 WATER CONSERVATION PROJECTS:

- Academia Prescholar — *Water For Us*
- Davis Elementary — *Rainwater Harvest*
- Galindo Elementary— *Rain Barrel*
- Highland Montessori — *Erosion Control*
- Hill Elementary — *Native Plants*
- Mariposa Montessori — *We Love Rainwater*
- St. Stephens — *Rainwater Collection*
- UT Early Childhood Development — *Rainwater Collection*





CARING FOR TREES & PRESERVING HABITAT

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: BECKER ELEMENTARY BUTTERFLY GARDEN

Becker Elementary used grant funds to create a natural habitat and migration station to teach students about butterflies, their role in the garden, and migration patterns. A big goal of the project was to foster a more sustainable environment for people, insects, and plants.

The butterfly garden was installed near the school's vegetable garden and outdoor classroom. The garden will encourage students and community members to learn about biodiversity and how to select plants that provide feeding spaces for insects.



“ ”

Milkweed doesn't sound like it would be very good, but it's a butterfly's favorite food. I hope people plant it in all their yards.

David, 5th grade student at Becker Elementary



SCHOOL YEAR 2019-2020 GREEN SPACE & HABITAT PROJECTS:

- Alternative Learning Center — *Grove Trees*
- Austin Achieve — *Outdoor Classroom*
- Becker Elementary — *Butterfly Garden*
- Boone Elementary — *Outdoor Learning Area*
- Brooke Elementary — *Tree Trail*
- Davis Elementary — *Outdoor Classroom*
- Little Tiger Chinese Immersion — *More Trees!*
- Murchison Middle School — *Outdoor Classes*
- River Oaks Elementary — *Let's Learn Outside*
- Summit Elementary — *Pollinator Garden*
- Sunset Valley Elementary — *Saving Bees*





BIKE CLUBS & RODEOS

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: GHISALLO CYCLING INITIATIVE

Since 2013, Bright Green Future Grants have funded over 60 Bicycle Clubs and Rodeo events at Austin-area schools through the Ghisallo Cycling Initiative. Ghisallo is a local nonprofit organization that provides youth with supervised access to outdoor physical activity while also helping them develop into self-sufficient bicycle riders.

The goal is to teach kids the skills and knowledge to use their bicycles for transportation without depending on adults. In addition, Ghisallo works with a variety of underserved populations to create an immediate quality of life improvement by enabling self-directed mobility and access to new opportunities.



“ ”

It's so cool to be able to bike ride with my friends to go somewhere and not make my mom my mad when I ask for a ride.

Anthony, Ghisallo Bicycle Academy Graduate



SCHOOL YEAR 2019-2020 BIKE CLUB & RODEO PROJECTS:

- Allison Elementary
- Brooke Elementary
- Harris Elementary
- Hart Elementary
- Houston Elementary
- Langford Elementary
- Metz/Sanchez Elementary
- Oak Springs Elementary
- Perez Elementary
- Wooten Elementary
- Zavala Elementary
- Kealing Middle School
- Eastside Memorial High School



GROWING HEALTHY FOOD

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: CEDAR CREEK VEGETABLE GARDEN

The pandemic may have postponed the installation of Cedar Creek Elementary’s vegetable garden, but it certainly didn’t stop the community from coming together to finish what they started.

With the garden in place, students will learn basic gardening skills and how to prepare the food they grow — information they can take home to share with their families. More than that, the new garden offers more green space on campus and an area for students to thrive.





I love the space out here, now that the ground isn't washing away!

Sam, 5th grade student at Cedar Creek Elementary

SCHOOL YEAR 2019-2020 GARDEN PROJECTS:

- Bedichek Middle School — *Community Garden*
- Blackshear Elementary — *Garden Club*
- Cedar Creek Elementary — *Vegetable Garden*
- Del Valle Elementary — *Garden With Us*
- Round Rock Opportunity Center — *Food Garden*
- Summit Elementary — *Pollinator Garden*
- Sunset Valley Elementary — *Saving Bees*



REDUCING WASTE

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: BROOKE ELEMENTARY WATER BOTTLE STATION

Brooke Elementary students used grant funding to install water bottle filling stations near the entrance to their playground. The water stations encourage students to drink more water and less soda while cutting down on single-use plastic waste.

With over 300 students using the filling station every day, for the 176 school days each year, Brooke pledges to keep over 52,800 water bottles out of area landfills each year.

SCHOOL YEAR 2019-2020 WASTE REDUCTION PROJECTS:

- Blanton Elementary — *Blanton Composters*
- Brooke Elementary — *Water Bottle Station*
- Canyon Vista — *Let's Recycle*
- Ridgetop Elementary — *EcoBrick*
- Round Rock Elementary — *School-wide Recycling*
- Uphaus Childhood Development — *Compost*



“ ”

I can't wait 'til the
counter says a MILLION
bottles filled!

*Devon, 3rd grade student at
Brooke Elementary*



ECO-AUDIT PROJECTS

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: RIDGETOP ELEMENTARY “SECRET GARDEN”

A group of students, teachers, and parents from Ridgetop Elementary school conducted an Eco-Audit in the courtyard of their library to brainstorm ways to transform the space into a great outdoor learning and private meeting space.

During the audit, the adults were surprised by how everyone shared a feeling of quiet peacefulness and possibility. One student said, “It feels like a secret garden!” All the participants wanted to make it more colorful and livelier and suggested various ways to make that happen.

The area is a small gated space enclosed by walls and is only accessible through the library. Despite the neglected appearance, it felt restful and full of potential. To complete the secret garden, the project team planted planters, installed a picnic table, and assembled an outdoor storage box for flexible seating. They plan to unveil the project in fall 2021.

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.

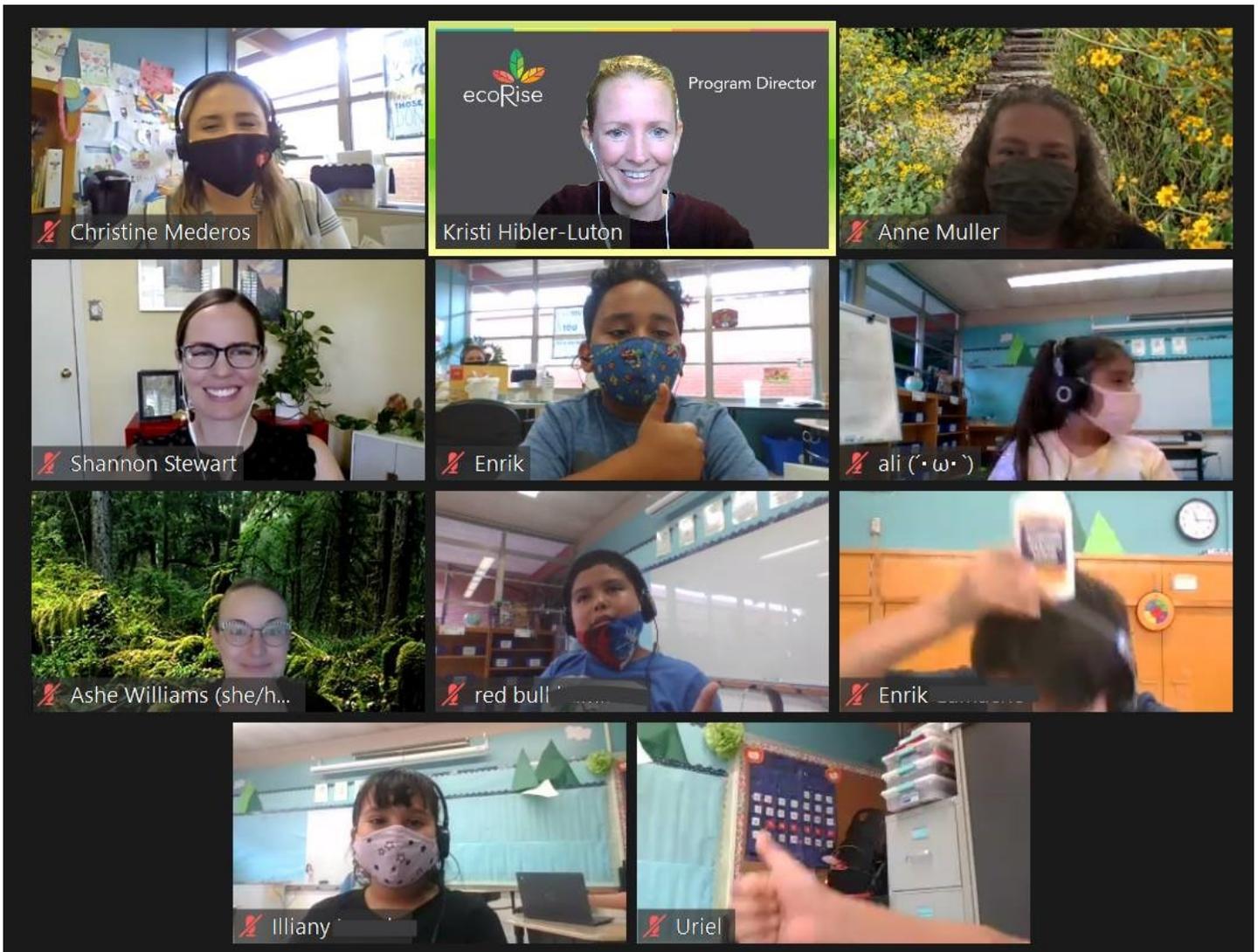
For the 2020-21 school year, 14 projects at eight different Austin-area campuses were awarded funding. To date, 148 projects have been funded through this partnership.



SCHOOL YEAR 2019-2020 ECO-AUDIT PROJECTS:

- Boone Elementary School – *Outdoor Garden Seating*
- Eastside Memorial High School – *Chicken Coop*
- Govalle Elementary School – *“What exactly are we throwing away?”*
- IDEA Health Professions – *Vegetable Garden*
- IDEA Health Professions – *Mental Health Project*
- Martin Middle School – *Reducing Plastic*
- Martin Middle School – *Reducing Plastic for 7th & 8th Grade*
- Martin Middle School – *Courtyard & Outdoor Learning (Part 2)*
- Martin Middle School – *Go Green at Martin Middle School*
- Martin Middle School – *Courtyard & Outdoor Learning (Part 1)*
- Ridgetop Elementary School – *Secret Garden*
- St. Elmo Elementary School – *We Love Our Playground & Want to Make it Better*
- St. Elmo Elementary School – *Save Some Water for the Fish*
- Wooldridge Elementary School – *Vermicomposting for the Kinder Classroom*





SCHOOL YEAR 2020-21

With the uncertainty of whether students would be attending classes at home due to COVID-19, the Bright Green Future Grants Program shifted to a “menu” of options rather than accepting original project ideas. These options were sustainability-themed curriculums offered through local nonprofit organizations. This shift in the program meant that all curriculums could be completed in person or virtually, which provided schools with a lot of flexibility during a challenging year.

ECORISE SUSTAINABLE INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM

EcoRise’s curriculum introduced students to challenges and opportunities surrounding seven distinct eco-themes – water, waste, air, energy, food, transportation, and public spaces. The program engaged youth in developing real-world solutions in their communities through project-based activities, design labs, and campus Eco-Audits.

The Sustainable Intelligence Program also included access to virtual and in-person professional development for educators, support for program implementation, Eco-Audit Grants, and best practices.



2020-21 ECORISE GRANT RECIPIENTS:

- Becker Elementary
- Govalle Elementary
- Walnut Creek Elementary
- Andrews Elementary
- Dawson Elementary
- Gullet Elementary
- Anderson Elementary
- Austin Discovery School
- Foundation Communities
- IDEA Austin

GHISALLO CYCLING INITIATIVE



Ghisallo’s curriculum enabled students to become confident and knowledgeable riders through hands-on bicycle instruction and community rides. Since most students were learning at home, Ghisallo’s curriculum served as a replacement for PE classes and helped keep the kids active.

2020-21 GHISALLO CYCLING GRANT RECIPIENTS:

- Brown Elementary
- Maplewood Elementary
- Walnut Creek Elementary
- Bailey Middle School
- Burnet Middle School

WATT WATCHERS



Watt Watchers of Texas is a state-sponsored STEM program to help boost energy literacy for K-12 students and help schools save money by saving energy. Students, teachers, and families had access to energy saving tips, activities, and lessons through the program.

Classrooms that participated in Watt Watchers used the online, self-paced curriculum to discuss energy, sustainability, and conservation in the classroom. They used grant funding to purchase supplies to help them complete the lessons.

2020-21 WATT WATCHERS GRANT RECIPIENTS:

- Pillow Elementary
- Lee Elementary
- Dawson Elementary
- Lively Elementary
- O’ Henry Middle School

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE, AND SUSTAINABILITY (PEAS)

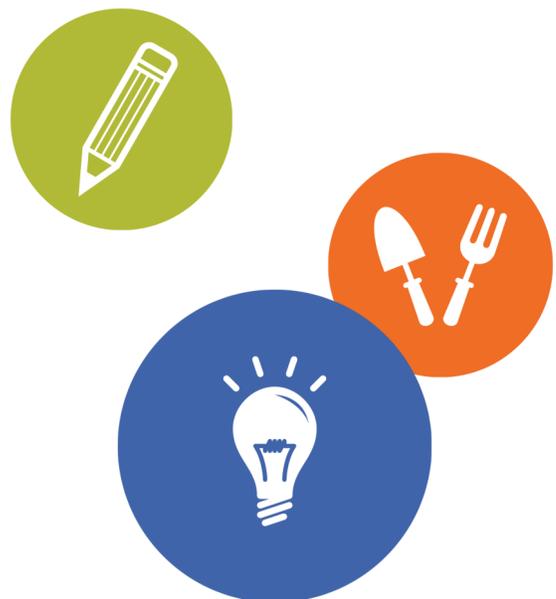
PEAS used a partner-teaching model, which provided professional development for teachers to ease their workload. PEAS brought lesson plans and materials, and teachers helped co-teach the lesson with a PEAS educator. Teachers stayed with classes for the entire activity to bridge connections between the classroom and the outdoor learning environment.

The curriculum included tree care, water quality and conservation, garden maintenance, and nutrition.



2020-21 PEAS GRANT RECIPIENTS:

- Cunningham Elementary
- Boone Elementary
- Metz Elementary
- Rodriguez Elementary
- Sanchez Elementary
- Sunset Valley Elementary
- Govalle Elementary
- Pillow Elementary
- Walnut Creek Elementary
- Whole Life Learning Center







FUNDING DEPARTMENTS:

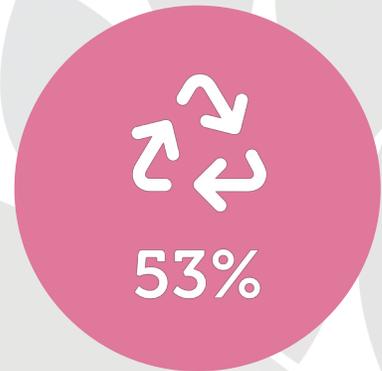
Austin Resource Recovery
Austin Transportation
Development Services Urban Forestry Program
Office of Sustainability
Watershed Protection

2019-2021 PROGRAM IMPACT



MILES

BIKED



CAMPUS WASTE

DIVERTED



GALLONS OF

WATER SAVED



NATIVE PLANT

SPECIES PLANTED



**BEES SAVED
OR RELOCATED**



**STUDENTS
REACHED**



The Bright Green Future Grants Program is successful due to our funding partners' continued support and the dedication of teachers, educators, and students. Thank you for all you do for our students and our community.

I look forward to seeing what we can do together in the next school year.

Warmest Regards,

Mary K. Priddy, Program Manager

**BRIGHT GREEN FUTURE GRANTS IS A PROGRAM OF
THE OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY. LEARN MORE AT:
www.AustinTexas.gov/BrightGreenFuture**



OFFICE OF
SUSTAINABILITY

CITY OF AUSTIN