



PVUSD

PAJARO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Alianza Charter | Amesti | Ann Soldo | Aptos High | Aptos Jr. High | Bradley | Calabasas | Cesar E. Chavez
Diamond Technology Institute | E.A. Hall | Freedom | H.A. Hyde | Hall District | Landmark | Lakeview | MacQuiddy
Mar Vista | Mintie White | New School | Ohlone | Pacific Coast Charter | Pajaro Middle | Pajaro Valley High
PVUSD Virtual Academy | Radcliff | Renaissance High | Rio Del Mar | Rolling Hills | Starlight | Valencia
Watsonville/Aptos Adult Education | Watsonville Charter School of the Arts | Watsonville High

Press Release | For Immediate Release | December 8, 2022

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Garden Leaders from Across the Country Visit PVUSD

Watsonville, CA - On Tuesday, December 6, Superintendent of Schools Michelle Rodriguez, Starlight Principal Jaclynne Medina, District Impact and Resource Development Officer Andrea Carlos Willy, Afterschool Program and Food Services Liaison Patrick Littleton of Pajaro Valley Unified School District and Life Lab Partner Schools Program Leader Aisling Mitchell participated in a panel before 44 school garden leaders from across the country attending Life Lab's School Garden Support Organization Leadership Institute. The 4.5-day Institute includes teams from 22 organizations and agencies advancing district-level garden-based learning programs across 11 U.S. states to convey, learn, and share best practices. PVUSD was proud to speak of valuable experiences and benefits of the exemplary school garden programs that students enjoy and that support learning.

Starlight Elementary's recent completion of Emeril's Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen (CGTK), founded by PVUSD, foundations, agencies, businesses and donors across our community, offered the perfect backdrop to welcome school garden leaders from around the U.S. PVUSD students, staff, and Life Lab representatives spoke about the wonderful journey the community shared to bring to fruition a meaningful program designed to elicit joy in student learning.

A 3rd grade student from Amesti Elementary participating in the Engineering in the Garden project learned about teamwork and building skills and said, "We built a prototype for our trellis, we thought it would be strong, but when we tried it in the big garden, the rain knocked it down. Then, we had to use teamwork to change our design to make it stronger." Another student, one in 2nd grade from Starlight Elementary, was inspired to express, "I love nature. AND nature loves me!" The appreciation students have for the teamwork skills and the love for the environment being fomented in the garden classroom are key lessons that we know our students are learning that will help them now and throughout their educational journey.

"We at PVUSD know that students deserve the best learning spaces where they can uncover their passions, interests and talents. Our partnership with [LifeLab](http://www.lifelab.org) allows us to offer garden-classrooms as a meaningful and exciting way for students to engage in their education. We are honored to celebrate and showcase these programs with garden leaders from across the Nation because PVUSD has seen how this unique and proven way to learn Next Generation Science Standards has positively impacted our students' academic and social-emotional learning. Garden-classroom learning environments are tightly aligned with PVUSD's steadfast commitment to the Whole Child, Whole Family, Whole Community to deeply impact student achievement and it merits to be replicated throughout the Nation's schools," said Dr. Rodriguez.

Garden Leaders from Across the Country Visit PVUSD

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“We are inspired to be able to work with the PVUSD community to build nationally replicable models to create garden-based learning opportunities for every child, family, and community. Together we are proving the potential of garden classrooms as core school assets and growing robust integrated school garden classrooms and programs that nurture empowered young learners and scientists.” - Life Lab Co-Executive Directors Don Burgett and Judit Camacho and Life Lab’s Board President Katy Stonebloom.

Aisling Mitchell, Life Lab Partner Schools Program Leader, added, “Our goal is for every child in PVUSD to have the self-empowerment to exclaim, ‘I am a Scientist!’ and ‘I am a Chef!’ and that each of these students have the self-confidence to know they, themselves, can use these skills to positively impact our community.”

The panel was the culmination of a day dedicated to visiting garden leaders meeting with PVUSD students who showcased their gardens at MacQuiddy Elementary and Amesti Elementary, followed by a lunch at Starlight’s new Teaching Kitchen where they heard about the CGTK project, and the promising practices students are already enjoying in this special learning space. Click on the link below to see photo highlights of garden leaders enjoying PVUSD school gardens: [SGSO 2022 Visits PVUSD!](#)