

# Vandyke Elementary School

300 Cole Avenue  
Coleraine, MN 55722



JeffersFoundation.org

## Summary

- Large 40' X 40' garden space
- Uses "evidence based curriculum" from USDA
- Serves students in summer programs
- Partners with community organizations
- Has an edible garden, a corn nook and 12 raised beds
- Uses the garden as a learning laboratory
- Has chain link fence around garden

## Photos



A sturdy fence is an important part of the formula for garden success.



A flop-eared bunny, with his own bunny hutch are welcome in the garden, too.

Straw-bale gardening is also part of the mix.



Square-foot gardening works for many schools. Vandyke's gardens raise this technique to an artform.



## Details

### General Information:

The vision at Vandyke Elementary School was to implement a garden program that would help contribute to the reduction of chronic illness in the younger population. The goals were to: (1) increase knowledge of the health and nutrition benefits associated with healthy eating; (2) increase fruit and vegetable consumption by making produce easily accessible and (3) increase the amount of time children spend outside being physically active.

### Garden Site:

Vandyke's garden site is approximately 40' X 40'. This large space allows a garden space for Vandyke Elementary School as well as the Bovey Coleraine Youth Center (BCYC) garden. The garden consists of both surface and raised bed gardens.

### Garden Product:

Because of the nutrition education program and the value that the garden has for children in the area, it consists largely of edible products. Some of the space is used for a bean tepee and a corn nook.

Some of the produce is incorporated into the school lunch program.

### Education:

There is a Master Gardener and SNAP Educator dedicated to the growth of the garden. They are primarily responsible for the implementation of nutrition education in the garden. The nutrition education program uses an evidence-based curriculum chosen by a committee from the U of M. The lessons for 2015 came from the California Department of Education Nutrition Services Division: Nutrition to Grow On; "A Garden Enhanced Nutrition Education Curriculum for Upper Elementary School Children." School staff has the opportunity to use the garden as a learning laboratory. This includes starting seeds in the spring and harvesting in the fall.

### Student Involvement:

The garden programming has the potential to reach over 450 kids during the summer. It is the site for the district's Summer Learning Academy (50-75 children) and Children's Mental Health REACH

program (350 children). BCYC has sustained a youth-led garden for years and fosters older youth involvement and mentoring (50-75 kids). A special education teacher is available to provide accommodations for students with special needs. In the summer of 2015, each Wednesday served as a dedicated programming day. The students on-site were able to work in the garden, receive a lesson on nutrition and taste a snack from the garden.

**Supervision and Maintenance:**

Each organization on the planning committee plays a role in the maintenance of the garden. A Master Gardener instructs the children how to plant, weed, and harvest produce. Get Fit Itasca, Vandyke Elementary Staff, Master Gardeners, and the BCYC share garden responsibilities throughout the year. The garden is enclosed with a chain link fence, and is left unlocked to embrace its role as a community youth garden. The garden site is adjacent to the school and residential area with many eyes on it at all times.

**Sources of Funds and Assistance:**

The U of M Extension North Central Research and Outreach Center donated starter plants, and several local sources funded the construction of the fence. The money from the Jeffers Grant was used to purchase equipment for the children to use in the garden (hand trowels, hand rakes, garden gloves, watering cans) as well as materials used for raised their bed gardens.

**Sustainability:**

Vandyke has the support of the planning committee and partners from various organizations with a vast number of community relationships. "Get Fit Itasca" has previously started two other youth gardens in the community and will continue to support this project

**For more information contact:**

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