Environmental Education in Botanic Gardens: Exploring Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Project Green Reach


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years of age and had participated in the program in the early 1990’s. It was assumed that they could best speak to these long-term effects. Interview guides, developed from site observations and program research, were used to prompt participants in recalling their experiences. For analysis, interviews and researcher notes were transcribed.

During data analysis, common topics from the transcribed interviews were coded and compared against observation and document analysis to identify the common themes of participants’ experiences.

**Instruments:**
A complete set of evaluation instruments is available in the report.

**How were results used?**
The results of this evaluation have not yet been utilized by Brooklyn Botanic Gardens (BBG). The BBG contact indicated that they currently lacked the staffing resources to fully implement the study, but that the recommendations do have the potential to help the program, as it is continually evolving. The common themes that emerged from participants’ experiences can be helpful for demonstrating the positive effect to potential funders.

**Evaluation Cost:**
Costs totaled approximately $4,000-5,000. This included the researcher’s stipend, travel costs to Brooklyn, long distance phone calls, and interview transcription fees.

**Evaluation Insights:**

**What worked well?**
- Working with a group of collaborators from a variety of disciplines provided a wide range of expertise and viewpoints from both qualitative and quantitative research backgrounds.
- The evaluator came from outside the organization, allowing her to have an unbiased, objective view and to analyze the program in a way that program staff may not have done.
- It was possible to modify the interview questions for this evaluation from two previous master’s theses done on the program.
- The positive program impacts that emerged from the evaluation can be useful when applying for funding.

**What were important evaluation “lessons learned”?**
- At the time of the evaluation, there was a shortage of research done on the effects of gardening on urban youth, so finding supporting literature was difficult.
- The evaluator found that qualitative data can be more challenging than quantitative data to explain and justify to others in the field. Qualitative data doesn’t allow for statistical analysis and so can be difficult defend to researchers accustomed to dealing with empirical data.
- A lack of reliable contact information, due to the transient nature of the participant population, made contacting alumni difficult. As a result, compiling a large study population was not feasible.

**What could have been done differently?**
- The evaluator had limited time on site at Brooklyn Botanic Garden and additional time may have yielded further useful information about the program.
- A follow-up with study participants after the interviews were transcribed could have proved valuable in clarifying their thoughts on the program’s effects.
- Although perhaps not feasible for this evaluation, observing the program during the school year may have yielded a larger participant sample size and further insight into the program. During the school year, teachers’ input on the impacts of the program could have also been evaluated.