



The Greening of Detroit --- TreeKeepers Kids

Plumb, S., Becker-Klein, R., Duffin, M., and PEER Associates. (2007). The Greening of Detroit -- Tree Keepers Kids: 2006-2007 Evaluation Report, Executive Summary. Retrieved September 28, from: http://www.pecworks.org/PEEC/PEEC_Research/S02CB4A22-030472A8

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Program Profile	
Program Description:	TreeKeepers Kids (TKK) is an educational program provided by The Greening of Detroit, a non-profit organization dedicated to creating a 'greener' Detroit through planting and educational programs, environmental leadership, advocacy, and increasing community-building capacity. TKK is designed for Detroit Public Schools (DPS), providing access to place-based curriculum and training for educators. Each participating school is provided with resources to assist in the construction of an Outdoor Classroom (OC) specialized to each site's particular needs (i.e. a garden, native wildlife habitat), and training and resources to support teachers in utilizing their OC. It is in the OC that TKK situates much of its curriculum, aimed at providing first-hand experiences with nature that strengthen students' science skills and environmental responsibility. TKK offers in-school, after-school, and summer programming.
Program Goals:	The primary program goals for The Greening of Detroit's TKK are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a site for place-based education at DPS - Foster behaviors of environmental stewardship in students through first-hand experience with nature in a local setting - Strengthen science knowledge and skills of students through interaction with and observation of nature - Contribute to the overall 'greening' of Detroit
Program Funding:	TKK receives funding from foundations, corporations, individual donors, and program revenue. The Toyota USA Foundation Grant provided a significant portion of TKK funding for this evaluation.
Program Links:	http://www.greeningofdetroit.com/4_1_youth_education.php
Evaluation Profile	
Evaluation Goals & Questions:	<p>Evaluation Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a resource of information for The Greening of Detroit staff to use in carrying out the TKK program 2. Determine how best to implement the three versions of TKK 3. Assess the impact of TKK on teachers and students 4. Identify what was successful in TKK's implementation (best-practices) at five participating schools 5. Suggest ways that TKK could improve their programming <p>Evaluation Questions:</p> <p><i>Main Questions</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does TKK impact students and teachers? 2. Are particular TKK programs most successful (in-school, after-school, summer) in concert with one another or individually? <p><i>Sub-questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is TKK incorporated into class curricula?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what subject areas was TKK incorporated? • How do educators/students value the TKK program? • How did the hands-on teaching methods of TKK work for students? • In what capacities did educators find TKK useful? • Did TKK impact educator or student attitudes towards science or the outdoors? • Did TKK contribute to the professional development of participating teachers as educators? • What elements of TKK were most useful? • How did TKK affect participating schools? • Did educators notice any change in student behavior they attribute to participation with TKK? • How can TKK be improved? • What are challenges with implementing TKK? • How did involvement with DPS affect the success of TKK?
Evaluation Methods:	<p>The Greening of Detroit chose to hire an outside evaluator, PEER Associates (www.peerassociates.org). PEER Associates used mixed methods to assess TKK, including site visits, focus groups, surveys, interviews, and monthly trackers. These efforts were conducted with people involved with TKK in various capacities, including students, teachers who used TKK, teachers who did not make use of TKK at participating schools, principals, and DPS members. PEER Associates evaluations are utilization-focused and as such are participatory and collaborative in nature. In this case, PEER Associates collaborated extensively with TKK/Greening of Detroit staff.</p> <p>Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus groups included 43 educators and 45 students. - Interviews were conducted with 14 educators, 4 principals, 4 staff members from TreeKeepers Kids and 3 from The Greening of Detroit, and 2 personnel from Detroit Public Schools. Interviewees and focus group participants were asked questions relevant to four main categories: program structure and participation, educator change, student outcomes, and school environment & social change. - Monthly trackers, including standard charts and questions, were filled out by teachers each time they use the TKK Outdoor Classroom. This recorded teacher impressions and observations while they were fresh in their minds. - Surveys were collected from students and educators who used TKK and educators who did not (n=90 educators; n=591 students). Surveys listed 18-20 statements, each followed by the numbers 1-4, representing strongly agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, and strongly disagree. A “0” option was also provided for “Not sure” or N/A. Other questions used the same scale to measure frequencies of activities, with choices ranging from “two days per year or less” to “one day a week or more,” and also including an option for “not sure” or N/A. Surveys included an area for unstructured responses, opinions, and comments about TKK or learning about the environment or community. Educator surveys included a section asking them to write the two or three of the most important factors impacting the success or failure of TKK.
Instruments:	No instruments are available at this time
How were results used?	The Greening of Detroit distributed results of the evaluation to TKK schools and the project’s funder, the Toyota USA Foundation. In addition, The Greening of Detroit used the results in securing additional funding for the program. They found that the evaluation’s evidence that their practice of modeling the OC makes teachers more comfortable using it themselves was especially useful. This remains a strong part of TKK’s programming. PEER Associates suggested that the school-selection rubric they compiled for TKK, based on the results of their research, was very helpful as well. This rubric allowed TKK to select schools that have characteristics that have been found in schools where TKK is most successful, allowing TKK to most effectively use its time and resources for education in the community. PEER Associates has also used the rubric as a model when working with other clients.
Evaluation Cost:	The evaluation conducted between Fall 2006 and December of 2007 had a budget of \$25,000.

<p>Evaluation Insights:</p>	<p>What worked well? By hiring an external evaluator, The Greening of Detroit was able to receive more honest feedback from interviews and focus group sessions, because they were not conducting these themselves. External evaluators also calculated results and provided concrete data, which The Greening of Detroit staff did not have the time or expertise to carry out. In addition, PEER Associates provide insight into what has been successful for other organizations doing similar work.</p> <p>What were important evaluation “lessons learned”? PEER Associates conducted surveys with students as young as third-graders for this evaluation, and the reliability of this remains inconclusive. Due to the time and resources involved in conducting surveys with any group, including young students, PEER Associates has since conducted surveys only with participants above third-grade.</p> <p>What could have been done differently? When beginning this evaluation, PEER Associates staff decided to do interim reports throughout the process. In this case, interim reports proved to be more time consuming than beneficial to the evaluation project, and would not be undertaken if this project were to be repeated.</p>
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