



## What is Veggie U?

### Who we are...

Founded in 2003, Veggie U provides two evidence-based, indoor Classroom Garden programs that teach children in an engaging, hands-on way to make wise food choices. Veggie U Primary for elementary school, is a standards-based science, health and nutrition course that includes all the materials needed to grow a garden indoors. Launched in 2014, Veggie U A+ is designed to accommodate learning styles of children with special needs. Both programs give children the opportunity to grow and taste their own vegetables, increasing their willingness to try new foods. Since it began, Veggie U has placed over 8,300 indoor classroom gardens in 36 states.



**Veggie U** aims to spark curiosity and excitement that nurtures children's attitudes

towards vegetables in a healthy direction by educating them about the connection between growing food and making healthful eating choices. Children cannot be forced to eat healthy foods. But giving them the experience of growing food, tasting what they've grown and learning the lifetime benefits of eating healthy are the successful paths to changing attitudes to more healthful eating.

### What we do...

The Veggie U Classroom Garden is a complete, standards-based science course that engages elementary and special needs students in a hands-on, seed-to-planting-to-harvesting-to-eating experience. Since the garden grows in the classroom, students witness the day-by-day growth and development of their plants during the five weeks of lessons and learn first-hand how vegetables grow. Lessons on nutrition emphasize the importance of including vegetables in their daily diets (like the ones they are growing) and empower children with the knowledge needed to make wiser food choices for a lifetime. By the end of the program, we have raised each student's awareness of their own ability to make healthful food choices and increased their willingness to try new foods.

**Veggie U** relies on the expertise and training of teachers to deliver the Veggie U Classroom Garden program to their students when it is appropriate for them, no matter what the season. No outdoor space is required to participate in Veggie U's standards-based lessons.

### Why Veggie U is needed?

- The percentage of children aged 6–11 years in the United States who were obese increased from 7% in 1980 to nearly 18% in 2012. In some communities, that figure rises to above 30%.
- About 34% of all children and adolescents, aged 2 to 19, regardless of income, consume fast food on a given day.
- One quarter of all vegetables eaten by elementary students is French fries.
- Schools have expanded fruit and vegetable choices for students, yet only 8.1% of American children consume the recommended vegetable targets each day.
- Typically, elementary students today receive an average of only 3.4 hours of nutrition education in a school year.
- According to the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine, interactive, garden-based curricula can help increase preference for, and consumption of, a variety of vegetables and fruits.

The lessons and instructional videos are available online for teachers through a login page. We also maintain an organizational website, [veggie.u.org](http://veggie.u.org), which introduces the program, answers questions for teachers, parents and students, and engages students and their families with continuing educational opportunities through interactive games and healthy recipes.

## **Veggie U believes that every child deserves to understand that the foods they choose to eat will affect their health for a lifetime.**



Children today are often unaware of how their food gets to their plates and many have never planted a seed, watched a plant grow or eaten vegetables right from a garden. The concept that there is a direct connection between what they consume and how healthy they are is often unknown to them. The skyrocketing rates of childhood obesity and related diseases in communities across the country are testament to the need for programs that address these issues at a grass roots level.

In addition, placing Veggie U in urban and underserved communities makes a difference in the lives of many children who are often unaware of how food reaches their plates. Their exposure and engagement with learning about where their food comes from and the connection between that and the choices they have in selecting healthful foods are benefits that will affect their well-being into adulthood.

**Veggie U** is a one-of-a-kind program uniquely designed to reverse the adverse health effects of poor food choices by providing opportunities for children to learn and practice healthful eating behaviors. By creating environments that promote health and wellness, schools are in a unique position to make a positive impact on children.

## **Our program reaches children in a fun, engaging and interactive way, inspiring them to take responsibility for their own good health.**

**Veggie U** makes a big impression with both student and teachers. Since 2003, approximately 207,500 students have graduated from Veggie U. Year after year, we receive notes from teachers and students letting us know how much they enjoyed Veggie U and how much they have learned. At the end of Veggie U, not only are children excited about eating vegetables and making wise food choices, but they share that excitement with family, friends, and neighbors.



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