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City of Boston  
Mayor Michelle Wu

## **MAYOR MICHELLE WU ANNOUNCES 10 NEW RAISED-BED GARDEN CLASSROOMS**

*Growing a green generation – an opportunity for children to learn about plants and nature – a part of Mayor Wu’s Connect, Learn, Explore commitment*

BOSTON — Tuesday, October 17, 2023 — Today, Mayor Michelle Wu, joined Superintendent Mary Skipper, Chief of Housing Sheila Dillon, and Boston Public Schools (BPS) students and staff to commemorate the launch of 10 new raised bed garden programs in various Boston Public Schools across the City. Additionally, they celebrated the grand opening of a new outdoor classroom at Boston Green Academy. All the new raised-bed gardens and outdoor classrooms received funding from the [GrowBoston](#): Office of Urban Agriculture, situated within the Mayor’s Office of Housing. This initiative is also a part of Mayor Wu’s ["Connect, Learn, Explore"](#) commitment, with the goal of cultivating a family-friendly Boston where every child has the opportunity to thrive. The partnership between the Mayor’s Office of Housing’s [GrowBoston](#): Office of Urban Agriculture and the Boston Public Schools (BPS) Sustainability, Energy, and Environment Program was specifically crafted to enhance students’ experiential learning experiences while promoting education in sustainability.

“Boston Green Academy’s new Outdoor Classroom and Community Garden is more than just a place for growing plants—it’s a transformative, empowering learning environment,” said **Mayor Michelle Wu**. “This space will help sow the seeds of knowledge, environmental expertise, and community among our students, and I’m grateful to [GrowBoston](#), BPS, and [Green City Growers](#) for their partnership in delivering a Green New Deal education to our young people.”

The following schools have been selected for the new school garden programs funded by GrowBoston:

1. Mather Elementary School (Dorchester)
2. Winship Elementary School (Brighton)
3. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. K-8 School (Dorchester)
4. Clap Elementary School (Dorchester)
5. Lee Academy (Dorchester)
6. Channing Elementary School (Hyde Park)
7. Tobin K-8 School (Roxbury)
8. Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School (Roxbury)
9. Ellison Parks Early Education School (Mattapan)
10. Roosevelt K-8 School (Upper Campus) (Hyde Park)

To provide these spaces, GrowBoston and BPS have partnered with Green City Growers, a mission-driven company focused on transforming underutilized spaces into biodiverse food production landscapes. They are providing comprehensive services, including the creation of the school gardens, weekly education classes, and ongoing maintenance.

"I am deeply grateful for the remarkable partnership between GrowBoston, Boston Public Schools, and Green City Growers," said **Superintendent Mary Skipper**. "The Boston Green Academy Outdoor Classroom and Community Garden initiative, and the additional 10 school gardens built and managed by Green City Growers, help build a sense of environmental responsibility and community engagement among our students. These kinds of opportunities open so many doors for our students, intellectually, and academically, and for their careers. Partnerships like this are vital to BPS as we are innovating how Boston's young people learn, and this historic partnership helps lay the foundation for a greener, healthier future for Boston."

Additionally, BPS has recently enhanced its outdoor teaching and learning facilities utilizing federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. In 2022, BPS made significant investments in outdoor teaching and learning, building on the success of the Boston Schoolyard Initiative (BSI). The BSI, a public-private partnership among the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools, and the Boston Schoolyard Funders Collaborative, renovated 88 schoolyards and created 38 Outdoor Classrooms between 1994 and 2014. These outdoor spaces were championed by Friends of the Boston Schoolyards, the BSI's legacy

non-profit, and have become valuable resources for students and teachers, providing opportunities for art, science, writing, and ESL enrichment.

"We are so happy, in GrowBoston's first couple of years, to be kicking off a strong partnership with BPS providing new food-growing opportunities for kids at 11 schools," said **Shani Fletcher, Director of GrowBoston**. "We are excited to find more ways to collaborate in the coming years."

"We believe that school gardens are invaluable assets that not only enrich the educational experience for students but also contribute to building a sustainable future for our communities," said **Sheila Dillon, Chief of Housing**. "This new garden and the other ten school gardens across the city serve as living classrooms, where students can learn about nutrition, environmental stewardship, and the joy of growing food. We are proud to have GrowBoston collaborate with Boston Public Schools and Green City Growers to expand these school garden programs and provide our students with hands-on learning opportunities that will shape their futures and the future of our city."

Currently, BPS has 38 outdoor classrooms and 79 active school garden programs, with many of them supported by garden partners such as Green City Growers, CitySprouts, Eastie Farm, Haley House, and the Urban Farming Institute. The school district introduced 23 new school gardens in SY22-23. To support educators in utilizing these resources effectively, BPS is providing professional development, funding, and materials through the new Outdoor Teaching and Learning Champions program facilitated by the BPS Science, Technology, and Engineering Department and the BPS Sustainability, Energy, and Environment Program.

"Spaces matter to young people—they know when they are being invested in and this outdoor classroom is a tremendous gift to the students of Boston Green Academy. We are excited that more BPS schools will get to have this important resource going forward," said **Matt Holzer, Head of School at Boston Green Academy**. "Making our schools greener and more sustainable is a priority for everyone. We at BGA are grateful for the partnership of the BPS and the City of Boston in this important project."

By investing in outdoor teaching and learning, BPS maximizes school buildings, schoolyards, and the green spaces of Boston as living laboratories for sustainability education. This commitment is further reinforced by the hiring of the district's

first-ever Outdoor Teaching and Learning Manager and the establishment of a dedicated staff responsible for maintaining the outdoor classrooms.

“Green City Growers brings organic agriculture expertise into the school system and garden classroom practically. We believe garden classes provide a safe, inclusive setting in which students build important connections to each other, the earth and the food they eat,” said **Christopher Grallert, President of Green City Growers**. “GCC not only impacts the health and wellness of thousands of children, but ensures that the sustainability of the future of our food system is in good hands. Students gain skills and understanding on how to grow food in abundance. We are equipping students to participate in the transformation of our food system into a robust local food system.”

The recent ESSER investments have facilitated transformative experiences for seventh grade students, with BPS STEM collaborating with organizations such as the Boston Nature Center, Thompson Island Outward Bound Center, and Hale Reservation. These experiences have empowered students to connect with nature and foster a deeper understanding of environmental stewardship.

As BPS continues to pursue providing outdoor teaching and learning opportunities at all schools, the collaboration between GrowBoston and Boston Public Schools stands as a testament to its unwavering commitment to fostering sustainable practices and empowering the next generation of environmental leaders.

### **About the GrowBoston: Office of Urban Agriculture**

In February 2022, Mayor Michelle Wu announced the creation of the GrowBoston: Office of Urban Agriculture. GrowBoston is situated within the Mayor’s Office of Housing and works to increase food production throughout Boston; develop and implement innovative food production strategies; provide technical assistance to prospective and existing gardens and farms; develop food production resources for gardeners, farmers, and other residents; and coordinates with other City departments to expand citywide urban agriculture. GrowBoston also contributes to Boston’s efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change while addressing injustices inherent in the current food system. For more information, please visit the GrowBoston [website](#).

### **About the BPS Sustainability, Energy, and Environment Program**

The vision of the BPS Sustainability, Energy, and Environment Program is that every Boston Public Schools student will attend a healthy and sustainable school.

Comprised of the Sustainability, Energy, and Environment Divisions, the Program is responsible for leading district wide initiatives to transform the sustainability measures and environmental health of the 119 BPS schools, prioritizing critical, equitable improvements in drinking water access, indoor air quality, outdoor teaching and learning, renewable energy and efficiency upgrades, and zero waste. Learn more about BPS Sustainability, Energy, and Environment at <https://bostongreenschools.org>.

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