

Annual Report 2019-2020

Partners for Education, Agriculture and Sustainability

PEAS





A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Wow! What a year this has been! As we wrap up our fiscal year and take time to reflect, we both celebrate our accomplishments and recognize the many challenges we must face. We went into the 2019-20 fiscal year with goals of growing and strengthening our school day programming, expanding our kitchen program to reach more students, focusing more time on engaging with our school communities, planning for our summer camp pilot program, and welcoming new board members with anticipation of deepening our strategic planning process. We are coming out of the year with first hand knowledge of what it is to be a global citizens supporting schools in the middle of a pandemic.

Though we could not continue our in-person programming on school campuses, we were able to continue supporting outdoor learning and edible education with our Distance Learning pages, Resiliency Gardens program, and our summer Adventure Labs. While we are not sure what our fall programming will look like in its entirety yet, we know that now, more than ever, people need the healing powers of nature. We are enthusiastically planning and creating a menu of support we will be able to customize for our schools this coming year to assist classes and families in exploring and enjoying our natural world.

Like the rest of the country, we are horrified by the continued killings of members of our Black community and reminded that the right time to take action to work towards dismantling racism is right now. At PEAS, we stand firmly with the voices that are demanding justice against systemic racism in our country and know that to strive for a better future we must consciously and responsibly work to eradicate racism and hold ourselves and those around us accountable. To take steps towards our own accountability, we have hired and are now working with a race and equity consultant who is advising our staff and our board on an ongoing basis around examining and improving our practices and policies as they relate to being a diverse and inclusive organization that provides culturally responsive programming.

Though the spring has brought much uncertainty, I have been well supported in the work of our mission. I am humbled by the privilege I have to work this amazingly flexible team who have risen to the many challenges of changing schedules, newly added programming, and “additional duties as required” over the past three months. I have asked them to pivot so many times that I’m feeling like I’m conducting a ballet, and likely have left them a little dizzy. They have not only remained positive throughout, but they have also gone above and beyond to help look for longer term solutions for us to meet our mission and cultivate joyful connections with our community and the natural world. I am also extremely grateful for our Board’s responsiveness and for them putting in many long hours and attending last minute meetings to support our organizational needs so we will remain strongly rooted for years to come. Lastly, I want to express my sincere thanks to all of our sponsors and donors whose contributions are what make our programs possible!

With extreme love and dedication to our planet and its organisms,

Lauren Zappone Maples, Executive Director
Partners for Education, Agriculture, and Sustainability (PEAS)



PEAS' MISSION:

TO CULTIVATE JOYFUL CONNECTION
WITH THE NATURAL WORLD
THROUGH OUTDOOR LEARNING AND EDIBLE EDUCATION.

WHY OUTDOOR & EDIBLE EDUCATION?

Outdoor and Edible Education provide an authentic workspace for applied learning while engaging communities in hands-on, self-directed opportunities to cultivate and refine skills and learning across academic disciplines and beyond. Our programs promote well being and healthy living through being active outside and learning about growing and eating healthy food. We teach respect for the natural world around us and complement social emotional learning by improving self-esteem, engagement with communities, and a sense of empowerment, as well as fostering creative learning opportunities and utilizing creative spaces for life long learning. We partner and collaborate with teachers, school staff, parents, and community partners to help build support networks for the activation of outdoor and kitchen classroom spaces.



PEAS SCHOOL DAY PROGRAMS

OUTDOOR AND EDIBLE EDUCATION

We believe that outdoor education during the school-day is the most meaningful way to learn. We believe that every child deserves the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning. We believe that the foundational step to take in transforming traditional education from a system of worksheets and memorization to one which engages students in interactive project-based learning is to assist overworked teachers by providing PEAS specialist-led, year-round programming and by delivering lessons aligned to academic standards directly to students, while engaging teachers in experiential professional development during those lessons.

- PEAS provides direct outdoor and edible education to students and professional development for teachers through year-long partnerships with schools in Austin.
- Our outdoor and edible education specialists work at schools with the same students and teachers for an academic year. Lessons utilize outdoor campus features such as gardens, wildflower meadows, and outdoor classrooms or teaching kitchens to engage kids in hands-on opportunities which cultivate and refine skills in science, math, social studies, language arts, health, and more.
- By participating in lessons, partner-teachers continue to develop their outdoor leadership skills and learn how they can incorporate food preparation into their content area lessons.
- Research shows that repeated exposure to nature and green spaces is more influential than one-time experiences in building appreciation and stewardship habits. A lack of repeat exposure is associated with the development of fear, discomfort, and dislike of the environment. In our signature program, each student in the participating grades at each school experiences programming led by PEAS 12 times over the school year. (Customized programs vary.)



MORE ABOUT PEAS IN SCHOOLS

OUR GOALS:

- Improve access to outdoor and edible education during the school day through engaging students in campus green spaces and kitchen classrooms
- Mentor and energize teachers in using the outdoors as a living learning lab
- Support schools efforts to integrate outdoor and edible education as instructional strategies
- Increase student time spent learning outdoors
- Build strong partnerships that will amplify our positive impact in the community

WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE

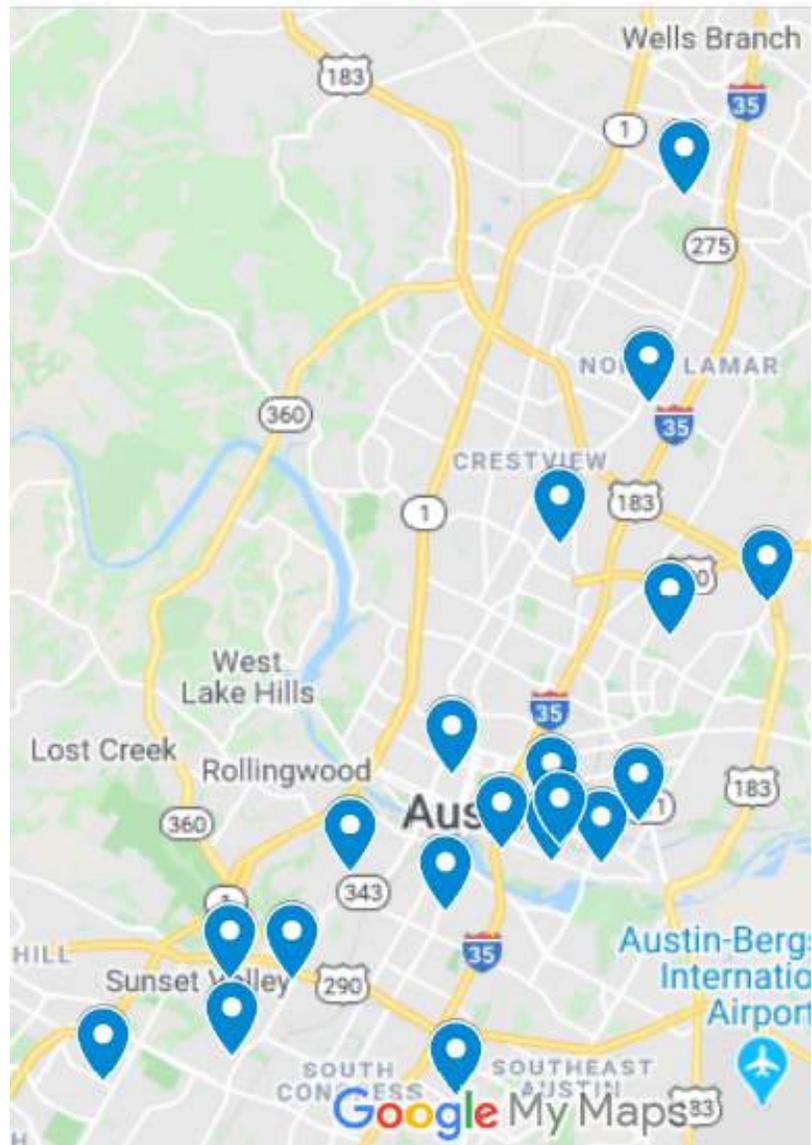
PEAS knows that teachers have a lot on their plates. We strive to support teachers by taking something off of their plates. While we deliver engaging, hands-on lessons to the students, teachers continue to develop their roles as outdoor leaders.

PEAS' year-long, in-school model of education is unique and not offered by any other organization in Central Texas. PEAS provides a thoroughly trained and experienced outdoor education specialist to schools who lead the lessons in outdoor spaces on each school's campus, utilizing a partner-teacher model. This model allows for classes to be better aligned with best practices in outdoor education which recommends the adult to student ratio of 1:10 and enables schools to fully utilize their natural spaces and wildlife habitats for student centered learning.



PARTNER SCHOOLS

- Barrington
- Blackshear
- Blanton
- Boone
- Brooke
- Cunningham
- Govalle
- Joslin
- Lively
- Metz
- Pease
- Reilly
- River Oaks
- Rodriguez
- Sanchez
- Sunset Valley
- Winn
- Zavala
- Zilker



There is a growing demand for PEAS' innovative outdoor and edible education programming. AISD and PfISD schools which receive programming are distributed throughout the City. While most schools receive the basic model where one to two grade levels receive year-round programming, three schools have moved to ensuring that their entire student body receives year-round outdoor education. PEAS is committed to ensuring equitable access to edible and outdoor education for every student, regardless of financial circumstances.



WHO WE SERVE

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Economically Disadvantaged	English Language Learners	Special Education
70%	37%	15%
African American	Latino	White
8%	67%	19%
Native American	Asian	Two or More Races
1%	2%	3%



"The students LOVED the kitchen! They loved trying new food and learning how to use kitchen tools. I had some students who eat nothing but chicken nuggets and at the beginning of the year they were so scared to try new food, and by the end, they would try EVERYTHING!" - 1st grade teacher

OTHER PROGRAMS & SERVICES:

PEAS COMMUNITY FARM & URBAN ORCHARD

The PEAS Community Farm & Urban Orchard began in 2011 when educators, students, parents, and community members came together at Cunningham Elementary, in South Austin, to develop a 2,400 square foot community garden designed to foster relationships and promote sustainability and stewardship through experiential education. PEAS Farm is operated by PEAS with support of the community and membership is open to the public on a sliding scale. Membership donations support ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the farm and gives you "pick your own" at your leisure harvesting privileges.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PEAS professional development workshops provide training for educators and advocates so they can fully utilize the outdoor spaces and gardens on their school campuses for engaging, hands-on, student centered learning. PEAS will customize our workshops for the needs of your group.

CONSULTATIONS

PEAS' school garden consultations provide customized support to garden leaders and planning for building or maintaining their garden sites, engaging learners, and creating garden communities.



NEW PROGRAMMING IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

DISTANCE LEARNING

Learning has not been canceled. In an immediate response to COVID-19, PEAS launched its Distance Learning programming in late March, 2020. Recognizing the need for socially-distanced learning, PEAS began producing videos and online learning material as a way to provide instructor-led activities for students at home. Videos are accompanied by inquiry questions that students can submit answers to virtually for review by our education specialists. All videos and activities correspond to PEAS' outdoor and edible education programming. PEAS also cultivated various activity calendars with themes ranging from gardening, culinary arts, connecting children with nature, watershed and urban forestry.

ADVENTURE LABS

In June 2020, PEAS offered its first ever Adventure Labs, a virtual learning experience that fosters community and gets kids moving between indoor and outdoor spaces. These adventure labs included energizing tasks to get children active, crafts to deepen scientific understanding, opportunities to connect with nature and others, and mindfulness practices to close the experiences. This was a great way to get children excited about science and the natural world while having fun and keeping at a safe distance. In addition to providing hands-on experience, the allowed students to connect with their peers, something seriously lacking during this time.

RESILIENCY GARDENS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges it has created in Central Texas communities, PEAS is working to supply supplemental relief to families experiencing economic challenges by providing the materials, transplants, and seeds for home-based gardens, along with live and remote support. Resiliency Gardens Cohort 2 sign-ups will begin in August with gardens delivered in September 2020.



OUR 2019-2020 IMPACT

For all of us, the 2019-2020 school year will be one that we will never forget. Despite the unforeseen changes of the school calendar, PEAS still managed to have a significant impact in our communities. Look at what we accomplished before the school closings in late March and where we went from there.



25,281

Total Student Interactions

3,117

Total Students Reached

18,961

Total Interactive Hours for Students Receiving PEAS Curriculum

OUR IMPACT CONTINUED

KITCHEN 2019-2020

After piloting kitchen programming in two schools last year, this year was PEAS' first year with a temporary Kitchen Classroom onsite at Cunningham Elementary School. The Emeril Lagasse Foundation Kitchen Classroom is in the works and should be completed by the beginning of the 2020 school year. Kitchen programming was implemented at two schools during 2019-2020, Brooke and Cunningham elementary Schools with 27 total partner classes.



Coming in Fall 2020, Emeril Lagasse Teaching Kitchen at Cunningham and PEAS Farm!

181

Total Lessons
Taught

489

Total Students
Reached

3,287

Total Student
Interactions



OUR IMPACT CONTINUED

DISTANCE LEARNING

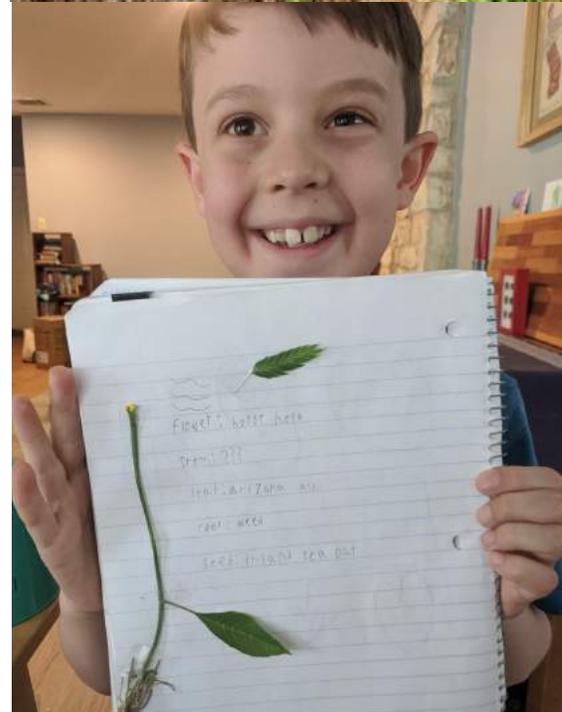
Our Distance Learning videos reached 2079 viewers with 42 youth answering our inquiry forms.

RESILIENCY GARDENS

We built and delivered raised bed gardens with tools, transplants and seeds to 9 families in May through our Resiliency Gardens program. Families are now participating twice a month virtual garden clubs and the children were invited to participate in our Adventure Labs in June.

ADVENTURE LABS

We provided 27 small group indoor-outdoor interactive lessons to children between the ages of 6 and 11 years old. Though the labs were completed remotely, they were in real-time and lead by PEAS' educational specialists.

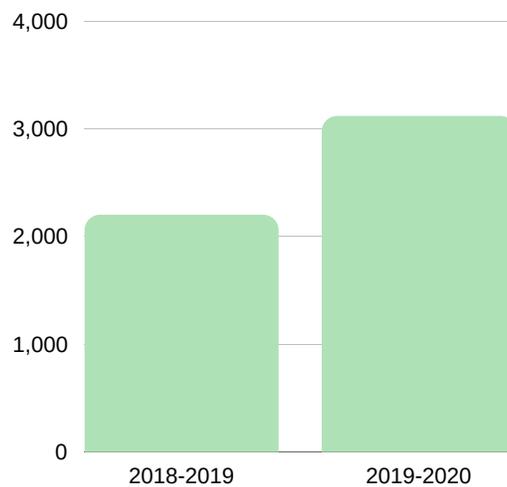


GROWTH

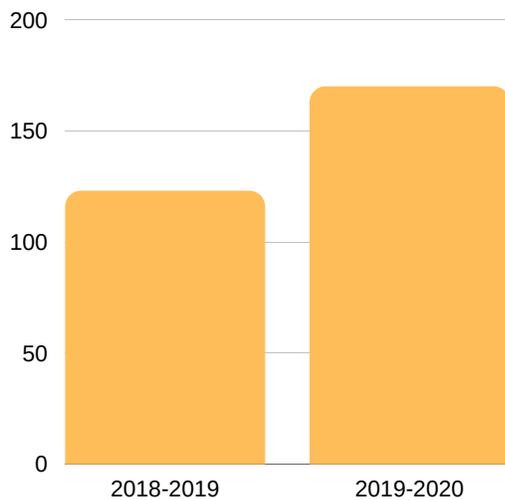
FROM 2018-19 TO 2019-20

The numbers say it all. Between last year and this past school year, PEAS has seen tremendous growth in overall access.

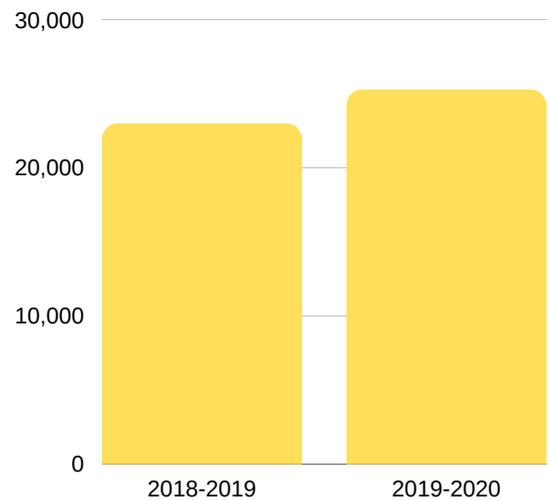
TOTAL STUDENTS REACHED



PARTNER CLASSES



STUDENT INTERACTIONS



END OF YEAR SCHOOL FEEDBACK

99% of teacher respondents rated their overall experience with PEAS great or excellent!

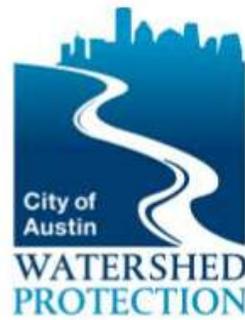
98% of teacher respondents said participating in PEAS outdoor programs has increased their confidence teaching outdoors.

100% of teacher respondents said the lessons were relevant, very relevant, or extremely relevant to the curricula they were teaching this year.

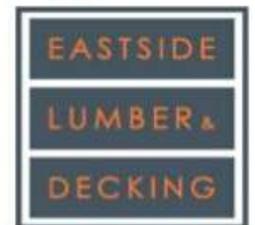
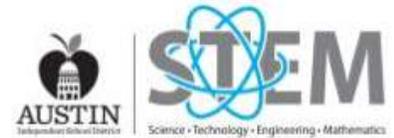


"I ENJOYED HAVING A MODEL OF OUTSIDE TEACHING ON WHICH I COULD BASE MY OWN OUTDOOR LESSONS." - 4TH GRADE TEACHER

A **HUGE** thank you to **ALL** of our sponsors
and the many individual donors
who have made our work possible!



Life's better outside.[®]
PROUD PARTNER



"THE GREATNESS OF A COMMUNITY IS MOST ACCURATELY
MEASURED BY THE COMPASSIONATE ACTIONS OF ITS
MEMBERS," - CORETTA SCOTT KING

A SHORT HISTORY OF PEAS

In the fall 2011 PEAS Community Farm at Cunningham Elementary was born of a community project instigated by former principal, Amy Lloyd, and implemented by a group of parents (including current Executive Director, Lauren Maples) with the help and support of local business owner, Randy Jewart, and his team at Resolution Gardens.

The following year, Lauren took a position teaching at Cunningham Elementary and began using PEAS Farm as an outdoor learning lab for her students. She noticed that only a handful of other teachers were using the space with their classes, and she wondered why. Asking around, she found out that some teachers were intimidated by taking their students in this open space, some weren't sure how to tie the curriculum to lessons outside, and others just felt like there wasn't time available during the school day to get out there. She began attending as many outdoor education professional development opportunities as possible, and hearing similar stories from educators at other schools.

In 2014 she applied for, and received, a Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching Grant that allowed her to study place-based outdoor education in New Zealand during the spring semester of 2015. Her goal was to compare what she saw in New Zealand with the data she gathered through survey U.S. teachers in order to provide Best Practices that would motivate teachers to take their classes outside for learning. This research confirmed that the teachers at Cunningham were not alone. Their concerns were echoed by teachers across our country along with not feeling supported by administrators and the fear that students would encounter something they have a strong allergic reaction to. The majority of U.S. teachers need support for a variety of reasons to lead successful classes in an outdoor setting. One of the biggest factors is the ratio of adults to students. Best practices in outdoor education say that ratio should be 1 to 10 while most classes have the ratio of 1 to 20 or 25.

Upon returning from New Zealand, Lauren saw an opportunity to expand the impact what she had learned through teaching at PEAS Farm to support teachers across Austin in getting their students outside for learning. She applied for and received a Fulbright Alumni Grant to continue her research into exploring place-based outdoor and kitchen educations programs across the US as she and two members of the PEAS Farm Leadership Committee (Chris Stewart and Clara Whitman) launched PEAS as an official 501c3 nonprofit in 2015. That following school year, Lauren continued teaching while starting to reach out to potential partners and funders. PEAS outreach programming began in the fall of 2016 with four schools that quickly became eight schools by the end of that October. Since that time PEAS has now provided programming for 4 years to partner-teachers and classes in nineteen Austin area schools and several other community-based outdoor and edible education programs.

