

# Preparing and Writing in the Airy Garden

By Lidia Paris, Special Education Instructor at Dirksen Elementary

**Summary:** Students (1) explore the garden independently and prepare bins for planting plants. Students (2) write or draw to communicate their observations and reactions to being in the garden.

**Objective:** Students become familiar with working in the school garden and practice writing/drawing (depending on age) to communicate their experience and observations.

**Grades:** 1-8; Special Education

**Time needed:** 3 class periods; 1 hour each

## Standards met:

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI7:** Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on relevant topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own ideas clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L1:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

## Background:

This garden is referred to as the “Airy Garden” because in the garden there is open place where air can move freely.

**Preparation:** Walk through the garden space to ensure it is ready for your students. Where will you be asking your students to go? Are there any defined borders? What will you be asking your students to do and touch? Do you have access to all the equipment you need?

Bring equipment to the garden or classroom to be taken outside, and make sure you have seeds for planting.

## Materials Needed:

- Gardening tools
- Seeds
- Pencils
- Journals or loose sheets of paper
- Clipboards

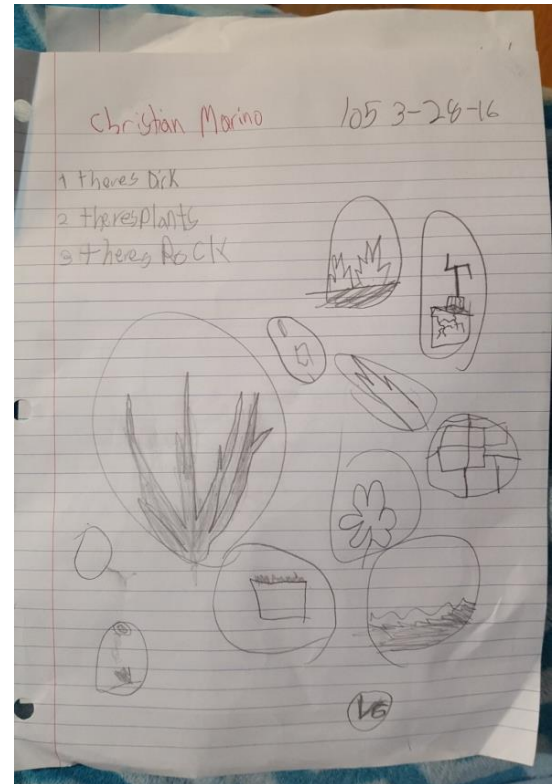


Dirksen elementary students planting in the school garden.

## Procedure:

### Day One

- 1.) Explain to students that class will be in the school garden today. Students should brainstorm rules and/or best behavior for the garden (i.e. listening, following directions, boundaries, etc.). Explain why they are going outside and what they are going to do (1. Observe the garden – looking for what is starting to grow; 2. Identify plants vs. weeds; 3. Pull weeds out of the garden; 4. Mix the soil in planters, using tools or hands; 5. Plant seeds; 6. Write and/or draw what you saw in the garden).
- 2.) Students should record the progress in their journals or on paper. When going outside, the instructor should take enough materials for the class.
- 3.) Observation: Pass out pencils, paper or journals, clipboards before going outside. Students are to walk around the garden area, observe, and record what they see. Students have 15 minutes to record their observations.
- 4.) Discuss what students observed – new growth, little greenery.
- 5.) Walk around the garden with students identifying plants and identifying weeds.
- 6.) Allow students 10 minutes to pull out some weeds from the garden.



Journal example of Dirksen student.

### Day Two

- 7.) Using gardening tools and hands, have students loosen up soil for planting.
- 8.) Instruct students on how to plant seeds. Have students plant provided seeds in the garden.
- 9.) Once all students had a chance to plant a row(s) of seeds, allow students 15 minutes to write about the experience while still in the garden area. Return to the classroom. Do not forget to bring in equipment and other materials back into the school.
- 10.) In the classroom allow students to look over their notes. Students should share their experience and any feeling they had while in the garden. Allow students 10 minutes to finalize their notes with any additional information.

## Assessment:

- 11.) Students are to write a paragraph(s) as their final assessment using their notes. Students are to present their final papers to the class (possibly in the garden).

## Extensions:

- 12.) Day Three: When the plants are ready to harvest have the students write paragraph(s) about their experience gathering the harvest and enjoying the “fruit” of their labor.



Dirksen students enjoying the harvest.