

TIME
KIDS

YOUR



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FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR KIDS



Green Bronx Machine founder Stephen Ritz (back row) and his students display the harvest from their school garden.

FRESH LESSONS

Green Bronx Machine, in New York City, teaches students the skills to grow food—and profits.

Growing Brighter Futures

Students in the Green Bronx Machine program, in New York City, are turning produce into profits and gaining money-smarts along the way.

Picture a classroom filled with green plants growing from floor to ceiling. Fish are swimming back and forth in a tank. Kids are pedaling stationary bikes that power blenders and a TV screen.

This classroom is located in Community School 55, in the South Bronx section of New York City. It is one of the neediest neighborhoods in the U.S. Fast-food restaurants are everywhere, but fresh vegetables are hard to find. Science teacher Stephen Ritz is working to change that. In 2010, he started Green Bronx Machine. The gardening program has transformed his school.

Students have learned to grow vegetables like tomatoes and eggplants in their classroom in tall tower gardens, as well as outside in garden boxes when the weather is warm. They harvest what they grow, learn to cook it for friends and family, and even sell some of their crops. In the process, they are picking up healthy habits and business skills.

Growing Dollars from Pennies

Recently, students had the opportunity to test their sales skills. They set up shop in the school and marketed their fruits and vegetables to the community. Later, a nearby Whole Foods Market allowed them to sell their produce in its store. Students took charge of the entire process, setting prices for the products, designing advertisements, and counting the profits. They also decided how to spend the money they had made.

A recent sale netted a class of second graders a \$62 profit. "They thought about buying ice cream," Ritz explains, "but decided to use the money for something sustainable instead." Their choice? A pet rabbit for the classroom, whom the students named Truffles. With the money left over, they bought school supplies and seeds to keep the garden going.

That was an important financial lesson, Ritz says. Students saw firsthand how to turn a one-cent watermelon or eggplant seed into produce worth several dollars. And by reinvesting some of those dollars on more seeds, their profits, like the plants in their garden, could continue to grow.

FAMILY CHALLENGE

Be Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise

Discuss a healthy habit your family can adopt that will also save money. For example, cook a meal together instead of eating out. Take a weekly walk or bike ride instead of watching a movie. Brainstorm ideas that work for you.

Healthy Futures

Since the start of Green Bronx Machine, attendance rates at the school have soared.

Students have met leaders from New York City. Some kids even visited the White House. Past participants have used what they learned to land jobs at companies like Fresh Direct (a food-delivery service) and get accepted to college. Each week, kids bring a bag of produce home, so families benefit too.

Now Ritz would like to see Green Bronx Machine schools around the country. "When you give a kid a seed, you're making a promise," says Ritz. And that promise is not just about better test scores or making money in the here and now. It's about showing kids how to grow their way to a happier, healthier future.

POWER WORDS

market verb: to advertise or promote something

net verb: to receive by way of profit

—By Ellie Schroeder



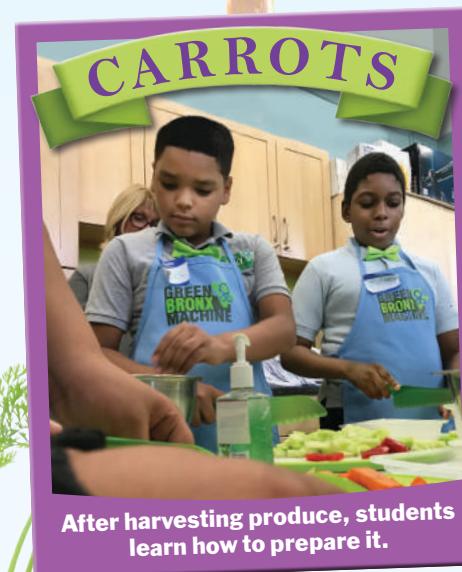
COURTESY GREEN BRONX MACHINE (9)



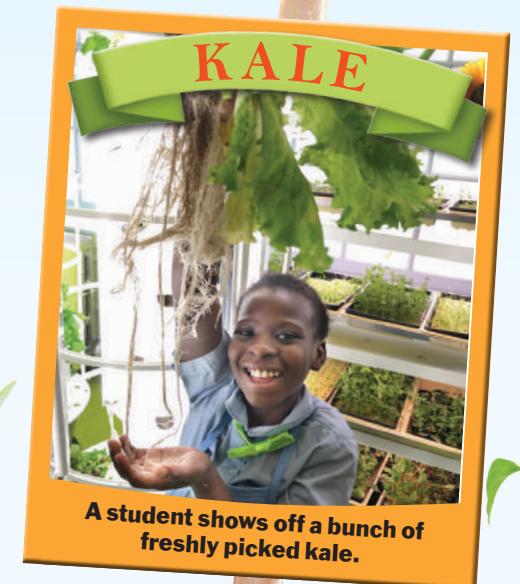
A student and her mother harvest squash.



Lettuce is grown in vertical tower gardens.



After harvesting produce, students learn how to prepare it.



A student shows off a bunch of freshly picked kale.

GETTY IMAGES PHOTO COLLAGE BY SHAPIRO DESIGN

Your Health, Your Wealth

Healthy choices can save big bucks. Here's how.

Save \$2,500 per year by staying active.

Moderate exercise saves money on medical costs. Plus, it boosts your brainpower. You'll perform better at school, and that could lead to a brighter financial future.

Save \$1,900 per year by cooking at home.

The cost of eating out adds up quickly. Not to mention, you can't control what's in your food. Cook at home using fresh ingredients to save money and eat healthfully.

Save up to \$4,000 per year by not smoking.

Cigarettes are expensive. Adults also pay more for health care and insurance, since smoking is known to cause disease. Plus, older smokers could even lose income because employers are more likely to hire nonsmokers.



HERO IMAGES—GETTY IMAGES



ASK JEAN

Jean Chatzky is a money expert.

If we don't have all of the money for it, how do we buy a house?

—Ainsley, 9, Windsor, Colorado

Ainsley, very, very few people have enough money in the bank to buy a house. Instead, most people become homeowners by saving enough money to pay 10 to 20% of the price of the house in cash (this is called a down payment), then borrowing the rest using a loan called a mortgage. The interest rates on mortgages are much less expensive than those on credit-card loans and—because the U.S. government wants people to be homeowners—you get a tax deduction for paying that interest. The most popular mortgages are 30-year loans. These give buyers a long time to pay back what they borrow. As a result, more people can afford to buy homes.

Do you have a question? Write to Jean at tfkasks4you@timeforkids.com.

Grow Your Own Garden

Want to grow your own fruits and veggies to eat or sell? Here's advice from Stephen Ritz.

- Start small. Find out what types of produce are in season and will grow well in your climate. Then start with just a couple of plants.
- Eat what you grow, or sell to people you know. That's safer than selling to strangers.
- To start a school garden, find an enthusiastic teacher or principal to support the project.



TOM WERNER—GETTY IMAGES

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