



KICK OFF DAY OVERVIEW

Overview of the event, and responsibilities before, during, and after

Kick Off (KO) Days are fun and flexible events which are facilitated by Big Green staff and engage the school community (staff, volunteers, and students) in finishing the installation of the Learning Garden. The school community is introduced to the space, the tools, and take on the responsibility of caring for their Learning Garden moving forward from that day.

Prior to the KO Day, Big Green Garden Educators will work with your Garden Team to plan and coordinate the day.

During the KO Day, Big Green staff will remain in the Learning Garden to lead the events, while the Garden Team will oversee and coordinate the timing and movement of participating classes, school staff, and volunteers.

After the KO Day, The Garden Team assumes full responsibilities involved in caring for the Learning Garden, and Big Green staff will provide standard programming support through a continued relationship and as is outlined in the Roles and Responsibilities document.

A Typical KO Day can take from 4-6 hours and involves these components:

- A full school staff introduction to Learning Garden (Start or end of day)
- Rotating groups of students move soil into the beds and plant (6-8 classes)
- Installing the irrigation system (With classes, or by Big Green staff and volunteers)
- Garden watering training for the Garden Team (End of the day)
- Community volunteers are invited to help throughout the day (often in two shifts)

The KO Day's Primary Focus is the rotating groups of students (30 max at any one time) participating in the Learning Garden who participate 30 minutes each on a rotating schedule. Each group of students will participate in the Learning Garden through hands-on activities lead and facilitated by Big Green staff. Students will help finish the installation and setup of the garden, creating a sense of ownership and pride, and they will end the day with a fully planted garden.





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Classroom Engagement During Kick Off Days

Big Green staff will lead each class through the following steps -

- 5 minute introduction to the Learning Garden including an overview of the work to be done, and establishing Learning Garden safety guidelines and expectations for behavior.
- 15-20 minutes of hands-on activities in the garden. The focus of activities will depend on the age group and timing for their class. Please encourage students to work hard, make observations, and discuss classroom connections in the Learning Garden.
- 5 minute wrap-up with a quick closing discussion focused on developing a sense of ownership and pride among the students and staff.

Hands-on Activity One - Moving soil and installing irrigation

- Students work in teams to fill the beds with soil and install the irrigation system. Students will learn about soil, the environment, and work hard as a group.
- Typical focus during the first half of the day. When scheduling, consider this is more challenging to accomplish with younger students.

Hands-on Activity Two - Planting and watering

- Students to work in teams to plant seeds and seedlings (provided by Big Green) in their Learning Garden.
- More often scheduled during the second half of the day. Appropriate for all ages.





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Further Kick Off Day Considerations

Kick-Off Day Safety -

- Be prepared to work outside: warm clothing or sun hats if needed, clothing that may get dirty, and closed toe shoes.
- Make sure you are sun safe: apply sunscreen, wear a hat for sun, and drink water.
- The Learning Garden is not a playground, but rather an outdoor classroom. Misbehaving students may be asked to sit out for garden activities.

Expectations around Staff Orientation and Watering Training -

- Big Green expects high turnout at the school staff introduction to the Learning Garden. Effective communication is what makes a school garden successful so please have school administration request attendance!
- All Garden Team members, interested teachers, and committed volunteers should attend the watering orientation and training with Big Green staff.

Preparing classrooms to participate in the Kick-Off Day -

- Visit our Classroom Resources Webpage, and share an age-appropriate Kick-Off Day Prep Activity ([K-2nd](#), [3rd-5th](#), [6th-8th](#), or [HS](#)) with classroom teachers.
- During the KO Day, teachers are invited to participate with Big Green staff, and may be asked to help with classroom management.
- Share your final KO Day Schedule with participating teachers.

Schedule participating classrooms -

- Schedule one class at a time to work in the Learning Garden.
- Schedule classrooms in the garden for 30 minutes each.

Prior to your Kick-Off Day, Remember...

- Advertise your Kick-Off Day. Ask for volunteers; they will go a long way in the future success of your Learning Garden.
- Communicate volunteer numbers with Big Green. Our staff will need to plan the day according to the number of expected volunteers.
- Celebrate your Learning Garden Kick-Off Day. Use the excitement generated by the arrival of the Learning Garden to cultivate greater buy-in from the school community. Start growing the gardening culture at your school right away!



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Kick Off Day Planning Checklist

Your KO Day is: _____

Choose what classrooms will participate -

Choose what classrooms you will involve and ask them about their availability to participate. You can involve 6-8 classrooms in the Kick-Off Day.

- See our [Garden Models document](#) to create a strategy around the student audience you engage in the Kick-Off Day, and moving forward. If needed, request participation from the Garden Team, or the school Administration.

Finalize your KO Day Schedule and share it with Big Green staff -

1. Finalize classroom rotation schedule
2. Schedule a full-staff introduction to the LG
 - Find the best 30-minute chunk of time during, before, or after school on the Kick-Off Day for Big Green staff to introduce the full school staff to the LG space. Ideally, this is done in the LG, but could happen indoors as well. If timing will not allow day of, please find another existing all-staff meeting soon after the Kick-Off Day that Big Green staff could attend to host this introduction.
3. Schedule your 30-minute (Big Green lead) watering training during the KO Day. Invite any teachers or parents who will be heavily engaged in watering.

Prepare to water your garden after your KO Day -

1. Create and finalize a [Learning Garden Watering Schedule](#) prior to the KO Day that will keep the garden watered during the school day and the weekend. Invite participants to the watering training during the KO Day.
2. Start collecting [Up-cycled Watering Cans](#) for classroom watering (12-15 watering cans) Big Green will provide all other hoses, irrigation, and watering tools needed.

After your Kick-Off Day please remember -

1. Train all participating water volunteers and follow up with each participant as they water for their first time. If you water successfully, your garden will grow!
2. Big Green staff will be scheduling a follow-up visit 2-3 weeks after your Kick-Off Day to assess garden growth and troubleshoot any gardening, organization, or communication challenges. If you need help sooner, just reach out!
3. Big Green staff is available to you moving forward. If you have any problems such as hoses and irrigation not functioning properly, or concerns about garden growth, please communicate immediately with your assigned Garden Educator.