

# Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation

## SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAM

[www.healthiermississippi.org](http://www.healthiermississippi.org)

Since its inception in 2004, the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation (Foundation) has formed relationships with community and school leaders and other stakeholders to build a healthy Mississippi. The Foundation's targeted grant funding is provided for the following purposes: increasing health literacy, enhancing or starting farmers' markets, cultivating community and school gardens, encouraging tobacco-free environments, creating outdoor play spaces, and constructing places for physical fitness, healthy cooking classes, and health education, among other innovative project developments.

The Foundation has partnered with K-12 schools across the state to provide school gardens for healthy hands-on learning experiences. The school garden program uses the schoolyard as a classroom fully integrated into the fabric of participating schools and the academic experience of every student.

In a school garden, students become farmers, scientists, mathematicians, historians, poets, chefs and horticulturists making the full learning experience more relevant and engaging.

At one of its most innovative models, the school garden at Mannsdale Upper Elementary School in Madison County boasts a greenhouse, 39 raised garden beds, five hydroponic tower gardens and a compost bin.



### PROGRAM IMPACT:

**70** School gardens funded as of 2021

**38** Mississippi counties impacted

"We are excited to transform the Mannsdale Upper Elementary School garden and greenhouse into a year-round learning lab to encourage students to choose healthy nutritious foods. Our goal is to support health and well-being and serve as an educational hub to teach parents, students and community members the basic principles of gardening."

— Rolando Roman, physical education teacher, Mannsdale Upper Elementary School