NO-TILL ORGANIC MARKET GARDEN

Community Impact Study

Growing Food, Growing Futures

The Story of Joshua Bourgeois, Dexter Sapp, Coach Davison, and Lincoln Preparatory School

Lincoln Parish, Louisiana



USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

NO-TILL OMG! Organically Managed Gardening

CAMPTI Field of DREAMS

Community Leaders Profile

When Lincoln Preparatory School opened its new campus in Grambling, Louisiana, the area surrounding the school's water retention pond looked very different from what it does today.

The site designated for the school garden had recently been disturbed by construction and consisted largely of compacted fill material, exposed soil, and severe erosion. Few people would have imagined the area becoming a thriving educational garden, outdoor classroom, farmstand, and community gathering space. Joshua Bourgeois did.

As a science teacher at Lincoln Preparatory School, Bourgeois envisioned something larger than a school garden. He saw an opportunity to create a living laboratory where students could learn science through hands-on experiences while developing practical skills in food production, environmental stewardship, and community leadership.

Participation in the No-Till Organic Market Garden project provided the resources, technical assistance, and support needed to bring that vision to life. Working alongside students, faculty, volunteers, and community partners, Bourgeois helped establish a quarter-acre regenerative market garden using no-till production methods and soil health principles.

The work was challenging. The site required extensive remediation before crops could be successfully grown. Soil compaction, poor fertility, erosion, and limited biological activity presented significant obstacles. Yet these challenges became opportunities for learning and innovation.

By the end of 2024, the garden had evolved into a productive educational space that demonstrated the power of regenerative agriculture to restore degraded land while creating meaningful opportunities for students.

In 2025, Dexter Sapp assumed the role of Garden Coordinator, continuing the work begun under Bourgeois' leadership. Supported by Coach Chauncey Davison, school administration, students, volunteers, and community partners, Sapp continues to build upon the foundation established through the project while creating new opportunities for students to learn, grow, and lead.

"It belongs to the school. It is their garden."
— Joshua Bourgeois



Learning Through Innovation

The Lincoln Prep Garden became a place where students could learn by doing.

Every season provided opportunities to observe how regenerative practices influence soil health, plant growth, biodiversity, water management, and food production. Students participated in planting, harvesting, composting, mulching, cover cropping, soil monitoring, and general garden maintenance while applying concepts learned in the classroom.

One of the most important lessons was that healthy soil can be rebuilt.

The project introduced students to a variety of soil-building practices, including composting, vermicomposting, biochar applications, cover cropping, and continuous soil cover. Rather than relying on intensive tillage, the garden focused on biological approaches that encouraged soil life and long-term resilience.

The garden also became a demonstration site for collaboration.

Early in the project, Konda Mason and the Jubilee Justice team donated approximately two cubic yards of biochar and provided equipment, labor, and technical support to help apply soil amendments and plant the garden's first cover crop. Their contributions helped establish the biological foundation that would guide future soil-building efforts.

Students witnessed firsthand how partnerships, conservation practices, and long-term stewardship can work together to transform degraded land into productive growing space.





Key Findings

- Transformed a compacted construction site into a productive educational garden
- Established a quarter-acre regenerative no-till market garden
- Implemented biochar, compost, cover crops, mulch, and biological soil-building practices
- Reduced erosion and improved soil function
- Created hands-on learning opportunities for students
- Demonstrated the value of community partnerships in conservation projects

Building Healthy Soil

The transformation of the Lincoln Prep Garden began below ground and took time.



Years of construction activity had left the site compacted and biologically depleted. Building healthy soil became the foundation for every decision made in the garden.

Students and volunteers applied compost, vermicompost, biochar, cover crops, and wood mulch to rebuild soil structure and encourage biological activity. Thick mulch layers helped protect the soil surface, suppress weeds, and conserve moisture, while cover crops added organic matter and helped stabilize areas prone to erosion.



The garden also benefited from the generosity and expertise of fellow project participants. Konda Mason and her team assisted with early soil-building efforts, while other producers shared seeds, planting materials, and practical knowledge throughout the project.

One particularly memorable educational activity was the Soil Your Undies Challenge, recommended by NRCS Soil Scientist Rachel Stout Evans. Before students were able to access the newly constructed campus, Joshua Bourgeois buried cotton underwear in the garden plot and along the fenceline to measure biological activity. The dramatic differences in decomposition provided a powerful visual demonstration of soil health and later became a valuable teaching tool for students learning about living soils.



Over time, students observed healthier crops, improved water infiltration, increased biological activity, and reduced erosion. The garden became living proof that degraded soils can be restored through regenerative management and patience.





Growing a Farm and a Community

Although the garden began as an educational project, it quickly grew into something much larger.

Students, teachers, volunteers, nonprofit organizations, local farmers, and community members all contributed to its success. Together, they created a space that connected education, food production, environmental stewardship, and community engagement.

One of the most important partners was the Ross Lynn Charitable Foundation, led by Executive Director and Founder Jane Watts. Through volunteer coordination, fundraising, and community engagement, the Foundation played a critical role in the garden's development.

Volunteers contributed thousands of hours supporting garden activities, educational programs, and infrastructure improvements.

Fundraising efforts led by the Foundation helped secure resources for benches, outdoor learning spaces, and the greenhouse/farmstand that now serves as a centerpiece of the garden. Combined volunteer labor, donated materials, and community support contributed more than $204,000 in volunteer labor, donated materials, fundraising support, and in-kind investment to the project.

The garden also became a model of farmer-to-farmer collaboration. Anthony Pollard shared seed potatoes and planting materials with the program, while producers across the state contributed ideas, resources, and encouragement. Waylon Breaux worked alongside volunteers to design and construct the greenhouse and farmstand, creating a permanent structure that expanded educational opportunities, supported local food access, and strengthened the garden's long-term sustainability.

Image top: Greenhouse with farmstand
Image bottom: Anthony Pollard assisting Dexter Sapp with fruit trees for the school garden.

As harvests increased, the school farmstand created opportunities for students and community members to access fresh produce grown on campus. More importantly, it demonstrated how local food systems can strengthen communities while providing valuable educational experiences. The garden became more than a place to grow vegetables.

It became a place to grow leaders.



Looking Forward

Today, the Lincoln Preparatory School Garden continues to evolve.

Under the leadership of Dexter Sapp and with ongoing support from Coach Chauncey Davison, school administrators, students, volunteers, the Ross Lynn Foundation, and community partners, the garden remains an active educational resource and community asset. Future goals include expanding student participation, increasing food production, strengthening soil health, enhancing outdoor learning opportunities, and continuing to integrate regenerative agriculture into science education and community engagement activities.

The greatest success of the project may be the culture of stewardship it has created. Students who participate in the garden learn that healthy communities begin with healthy soil, collaboration, and a willingness to invest in the future.



Coach Davison and his Agriscience class harvesting okra.



Key Lessons Learned

- Healthy soil can be rebuilt, even on highly disturbed sites.
- Hands-on learning creates lasting educational experiences.
- Community partnerships amplify impact.
- Regenerative agriculture is a powerful teaching tool.
- Small projects can inspire lasting change.

Key Themes

- Youth Leadership
- Outdoor Education
- Soil Health
- Community Partnerships
- Food Literacy
- Environmental Stewardship
- Regenerative Agriculture
- Growing the Next Generation

Closing Reflection

The Lincoln Preparatory School Garden demonstrates that regenerative agriculture can do more than restore soil. It can strengthen schools, connect communities, inspire students, and create opportunities that extend far beyond the garden gate. What began as a compacted construction site has become a living classroom where students learn not only how to grow food, but how to care for the land, work together, and contribute to something larger than themselves. Through the leadership of Joshua Bourgeois, Dexter Sapp, Coach Chauncey Davison, Jane Watts, the Ross Lynn Foundation, and countless students, volunteers, and community partners, the garden continues to grow both food and futures.