

PROGRAM EXPANSION

YR.1 2ND+5TH GRADE

YR.2 KINDERGARTEN+4TH

YR.3 1ST+3RD

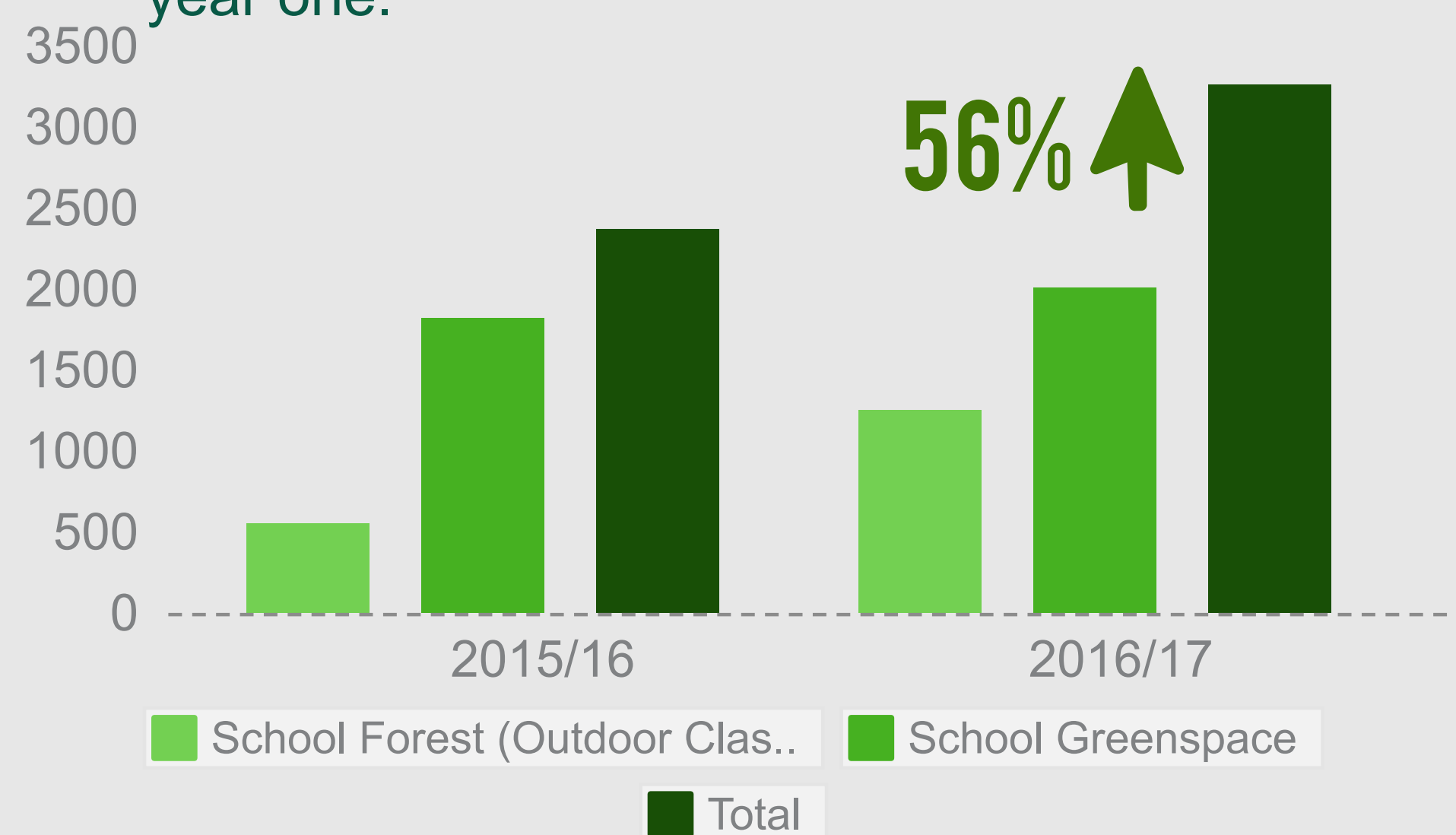
During year two, the Scientist in Residence, Megan Johnson, worked with Kindergarten and 4th grades across all five elementary schools focusing on similar techniques for integrating more outdoor learning. Additionally, she continued to build relationships by co-teaching and mentoring 2nd and 5th-grade teachers who began to engage techniques gained in their first year of the program.

It is anticipated that in five years time, the SIR will support all K-12 grades.

WITH BIG GOALS TO:

INCREASE USE OF OUTDOOR SPACE

During year two, use of the District's Outdoor Classroom increased by 56% while use of school green space increased by 34% from year one.



Total # of Students Reached in West Bend School District through Scientist in Residence Over Time

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS

Our process theory of change states:

In order to integrate experiential, outdoor learning into classrooms and school culture, an embedded SIR is needed to build relationships, develop curriculum, and show broader understanding of how outdoor environments can support student learning.

During year two, we saw the following outcomes from teachers related to outdoor learning.

85%

Increase in teacher confidence integrating outdoor learning in all subjects (n=18).

20+

Collaboration with the SIR to develop over 20 specialized outdoor lessons.

1/4

Of the total school days (170) were spent outside (40) across grades.

IMPROVED STUDENT OUTCOMES

In addition, teachers reported a shift in mindset from the beginning to the end of the school year, where:

60%

Teachers were 60% more likely to believe students who learn outside are better behaved.

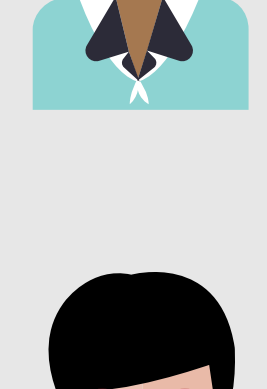
60%

And, teachers were 60% less concerned about safety as a barrier to learning outdoors.

We asked teachers, "how does the program benefit you and your students?"



"It's about engagement...everything we do with the SIR is hands-on, which helps students make connections at home and at school."



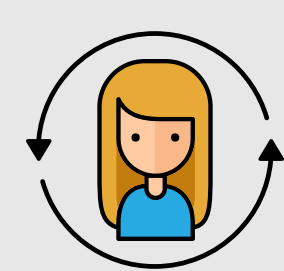
"It's great because we can be local- using the [school] grounds right around us. We don't have to go anywhere or gather permission slips."



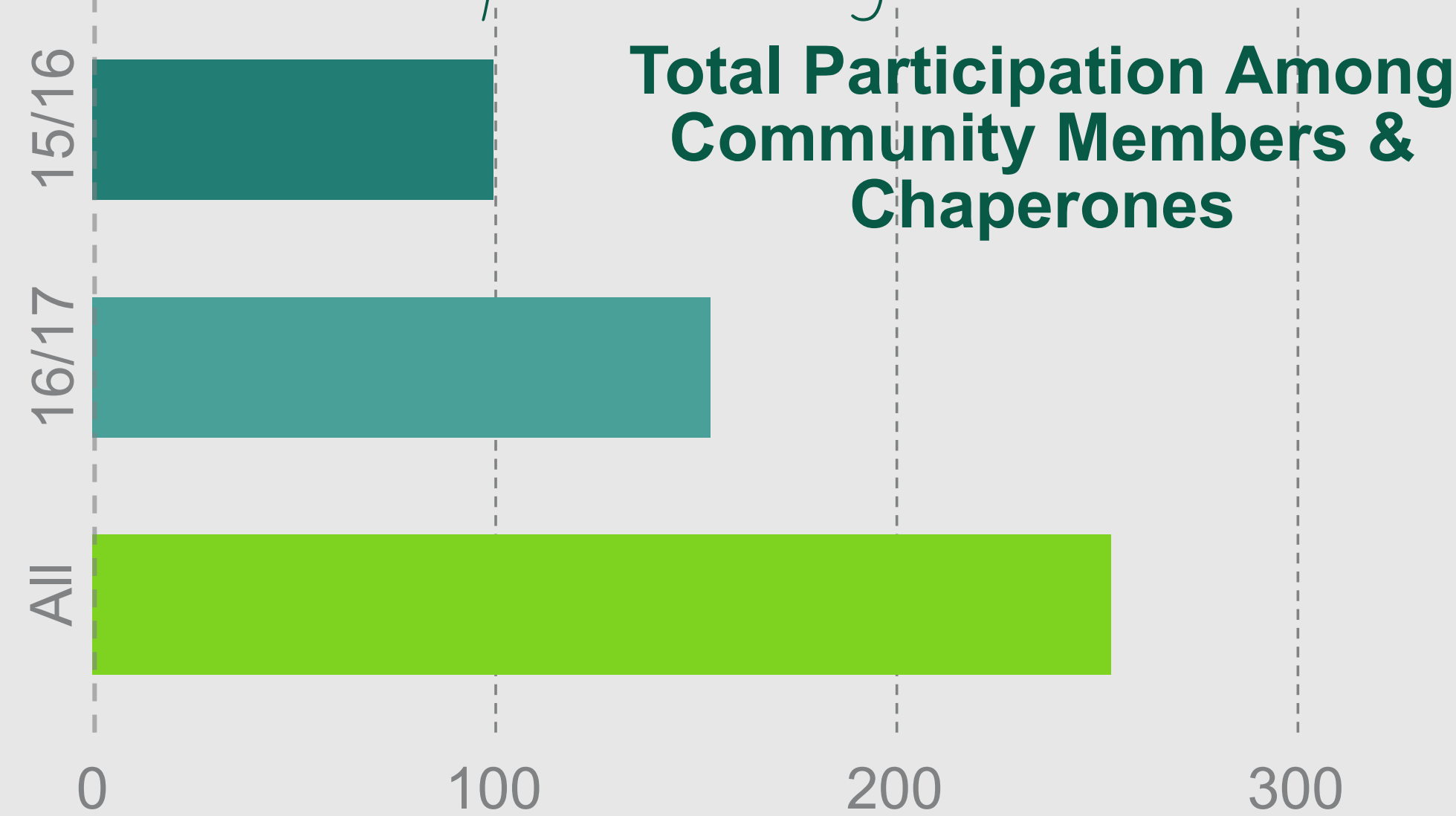
"It saves time in your day not having to travel and [the SIR] having resources to be able to bring them to us", and, "really get the kids out in the field instead of in the classroom."

GAIN COMMUNITY AWARENESS

The SIR held an Outdoor Movie Night during spring 2017 to invite the community to experience the school district resource.



"Many of the students had been to the outdoor classroom on field trips and were excited to share the place with their families."



The SIR program was featured on Milwaukee Public Radio. You can listen to the recorded version on the WUWM website.



CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

COMMUNICATION



Results from the focus groups with teachers found:
1) Some teachers from elementary grades believe that they can only utilize the SIR program at the Outdoor Classroom rather than at other nearby natural areas that may be more easily accessible, and/or;
2) Some teachers assume that the program can only be integrated into science curriculum (the program was initially coined "Naturalist in Residence" and the title was changed at the request of the district).



CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

Unfortunately, we have seen some major turnover within the administration and teaching staff of the WBSD. Particularly, there was a turnover in the administrative position that supervises and supports the SIR position during the 2016-17 school year. While the goals of the SIR program were inherent to the previous administration due to their direct involvement in its visioning and inception, the turnover created a bit of a learning curve and increased the overall time dedicated to bringing the new staff up to speed. In order to provide support for continued growth of the SIR model within the district, this mutual partnership with administration will be essential.

SOLUTIONS TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

Since its inception, it has been assumed that there will be early adopters and those who buy into the program later in the five-year timeline. It is anticipated that each year of the program will positively influence the number of teachers who are actively participating in the program.

To overcome the challenges stated, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, the SIR will:

1.

Rotate schools on a weekly basis to provide increased visibility and face-to-face interaction with teachers and students.

2.

Attend quarterly meetings with principals and administrators to strengthen partnerships that will help ensure an impactful change in the district's outdoor learning culture.

3.

Provide summer professional development series for teachers that will support outdoor learning techniques to further increase their comfort levels and likelihood of future implementation.

Documentation of resources, curriculum modifications, school greenspace mapping, and other tools will continue to be logged to ensure program sustainability beyond the five-year educator placement.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

In five years time, we see students in West Bend healthier, happier, more creative, and inspired by the world around them.

We envision a school system where the outdoors is integrated into everyday activities.

We witness schools that do not have to make the choice between less recess and more reading time because teachers have learned ways of transforming their local outdoor spaces into classrooms for learning.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

West Bend Mutual Insurance Company Charitable Foundation
Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Richard E. Stephenson Fund
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