

YOU CAN'T RUSH **GROWTH**



GENERATION GROWTH

FLYING MAN PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS STEPHEN RITZ IN "GENERATION GROWTH"

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www.generationgrowthfilm.com

Discussion & Resource Guide

GENERATION GROWTH

Flying Man Productions presents Stephen Ritz in **Generation Growth**

Poor health, diet-related diseases, food insecurity, and underperforming education continue to plague low-income and marginalized communities across the United States. Stephen Ritz, a Bronx educator who believes teachers change lives, is on a mission to change all that. He developed an incredibly successful whole-school curriculum, aligned to a data-driven indoor academic gardening program that allows children to grow vegetables in school, improving academic performance, changing eating habits, increasing classroom engagement, and providing pathways for 21st century employment. **Generation Growth** follows Ritz as he expands his low-cost, easily replicable program throughout the country, bringing passion, purpose, and hope to the communities, students, and teachers who need it most.

Run Time: 97 minutes

Hashtags: #GenerationGrowthFilm #GreenBronxMachine #StephenRitz

Instagram: [@GreenBronxMachine](#); [@StephenRitz](#)

Facebook: [Green Bronx Machine](#); [StephenRitzOfficial](#)

Twitter/X: [@greenBXmachine](#); [@StephenRitz](#)

YouTube: [@GreenBronxMachine](#); [@gbmkids](#); [@StephenRitzOfficial](#)

LinkedIn: [@GreenBronxMachine](#); [@StephenRitz](#)

Stephen Ritz Website: [stephenritz.com](#)

Green Bronx Machine Website: [GreenBronxMachine.org](#)

Film Impact Hub: [GenerationGrowthFilm.com](#)



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GRANT PORTAL

Find the Grant that Works for You!

Seek funding for your school or community projects. Visit Green Bronx Machine's website for a [list of educational, agricultural, and community development grants](#).



About Green Bronx Machine

Founded by lifelong educator and community advocate **Stephen Ritz**, **Green Bronx Machine** is a revolutionary, impact-driven, for-purpose organization dedicated to building healthy, equitable, and resilient communities through inspired education, local food systems, and 21st-century workforce development. One student at a time, one classroom at a time, one school at a time, and one community at a time, Green

Bronx Machine cultivates minds and harvests hope by integrating urban agriculture into whole-school, all-subject curriculum aligned to key school performance indicators and social determinants of health. Their innovative approach grows high-performing public schools, happy, healthy children, and engaged teachers who together transform fragmented and marginalized neighborhoods into inclusive and thriving communities.

With over 275,000 pounds of vegetables grown and another 200,000 pounds distributed, Green Bronx Machine's impact extends far beyond the classroom, fostering academic excellence, community engagement, and economic empowerment. Through strategic partnerships with leading companies and organizations, Green Bronx Machine continues to expand its reach, scale its programs, and empower individuals to be agents of change in their communities.

Together, we can grow something greater and create a world where everyone has access to fresh, nutritious food, and opportunities for success. Ready, set, GROW!

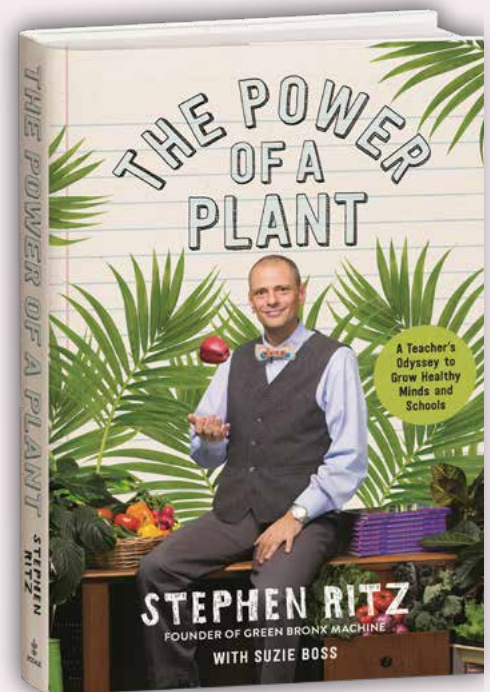


Green Bronx Machine has earned the standing of No.9 in the Not-for-Profit category on Fast Company's 2024 *Most Innovative Companies* list.

Books By Stephen Ritz

"The Power of a Plant" by Stephen Ritz & Suzie Boss is a compelling narrative that chronicles Ritz's transformative journey as an educator in the South Bronx and ultimately, around the world, from a Bronx greenhouse to the Obama White House, and from hope to The Pope! Through the lens of urban agriculture and hands-on, project-based learning, Ritz demonstrates how he transformed his teaching approach and continues to empower teachers and students by integrating gardening into his overarching, daily classroom curriculum. The book serves as an inspirational testament to the potential for positive change when innovative ideas take root in the most unlikely of places.

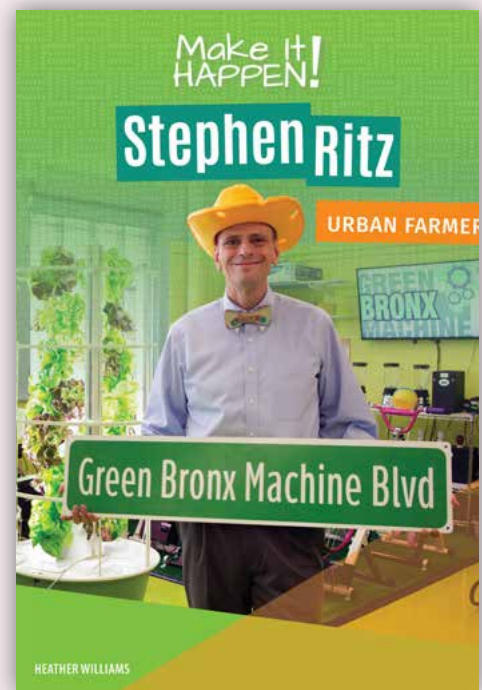
The book [is available here](#) & on [Audible](#).



"Make It Happen!" is an abridged version of Stephen Ritz' Green Bronx Machine story of passion, purpose, and hope! It's easy-to-read and designed for classroom read-alongs.

- Arranged in themed chapters with activity ideas for all ages
- Packed with lessons and community extensions in every chapter
- Includes a glossary, bibliography, Depth of Knowledge assessments, and more
- Available for different grade levels
- Purchase a single copy or as a classroom set (with bulk discounts!)

[Place an order today!](#)



Letter from Stephen Ritz

Dear Friends and Family:

Thanks so much for being here and thanks so much for being you. Speaking of thanks, I want to thank [Quest Diagnostics Foundation](#) for helping to make this website possible and for bringing Green Bronx Machine programming to communities across the nation. I've always said, the most important school supply in the world is food; and that children will never be well read unless they are well fed. Food access and public education are the equalizers - they level fields, create opportunities, and end poverty. Let us always remember that our teachers, parents, and elders change lives and that they too, need support, respect, and resources. **That's what makes this film, *Generation Growth*, so special: *it celebrates the power of teachers, students, parents, communities, and you!* Along with all the potential within - EVERYWHERE! Let's embrace the moment!**

Let me be very clear, ours is the first generation that will not outlive our parents simply due to what we are eating. With obesity, diet-related diseases, self-esteem issues, death, disease, dis-ease, extraction economies, mental health crises, and failing public schools, all at unprecedented levels, it's time for us to stop being the canaries in the coal mines and for us to shape and reclaim our own destinies. It all starts with a seed. We are those seeds and I hope this film encourages you to grow, blossom, bloom, restore, and regenerate. Each and every one of us has amazing potential - just like a seed filled with genetic potential - and it is time for us to seize our individual and collective power. **Each and every one of you everywhere represents GENERATION GROWTH!**

The stakes have never been higher - and in so many ways! Food justice, racial justice, economic justice, environmental justice, health equity, climate change, you name the issue, almost all can be addressed by simply looking at what is at the tip of our forks! Cheap and convenient is becoming costly and chronic - we are killing ourselves, our communities, and our planet by the food choices we make daily. When we change our food, we change everything! Within that context, the greatest resource in the world is the untapped potential residing in under-resourced communities across this nation and around the world. **I'm hoping that with this film and aligned resources, together, we can flip this moment into a movement and MAKE EPIC HAPPEN!**

Moving forward, we must be the change! If not us, who? If not now, when? Bite by bite, step by step, classroom by classroom, school by school, block by block, every drop of change helps fill our collective cup! And the way we can change just one thing is the way we can change everything! Best of all, you're already here with us and on the right page. I'm so inspired by [New York City's Food Education Roadmap](#), which prioritizes food education and access in public schools. NYC Mayor Eric Adams says it best: "It's no longer your birthplace - it's your breakfast, it's no longer your lineage - it's your lunch, and it's no longer your DNA - it's your dinner that determines health outcomes in life!" **Let everyone, everywhere, eat properly, reach their genetic potential, learn, succeed, and thrive!**

As you watch the film, think about the small, simple changes you can make in your daily diet. How you can help yourself, help a neighbor, and help the planet? I've lost over 160 pounds and reversed many of my health problems by changing my diet with children in public school. I've seen children's and parents' lives changed with access to healthy food. I've seen communities reclaimed and become self-reliant with community gardens & urban farms and the joy that growing, harvesting, and sharing food brings to people everywhere. Please think about how we all can support teachers, learners, and public schools. Teachers and students, think about how we can make classrooms and learning



jyous, epic, meaningful, personal, and grand! **Remember that you, me, and we are GENERATION GROWTH!** You don't have to be great to start, but you have to start in order to be great! **You can't go from seed to harvest, without cultivation in the middle! Get out there and MAKE EPIC HAPPEN!**

GENERATION GROWTH teaches us what happens when people come together for a collective, greater good. I hope you use the tools and resources within this guide along with the film to challenge the status quo, to create discussion and opportunities in your communities, and to connect with others. I'm rooting and cheering for all of you. I'm also available for you as well; feel free to reach out and connect. Let's work together to bring our best selves to all that we do! My prayer is a simple one, rooted in the words of Maya Angelou: "My wish for you is that you continue. Continue to be who you are, to astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness. Be loving and strong. Be fierce and be kind. And don't give in and don't give up!" We are the folks we are waiting for!

Together, we can do this! THIS IS OUR MOMENT! With love, let's do this!



How To Use This Guide

Thank you for watching *Generation Growth* and sharing it with your community!

This guide is designed to help you navigate and facilitate conversations about your thoughts, questions, and reactions to the film. It contains information about the film, resources for further learning, and discussion questions to deepen your understanding of the topics explored, as well as encourage education and action on urban (+ rural) agriculture, food justice, nutrition and sustainability.



STATISTICS & DATA

Stephen Ritz's Testimony to U.S. Congress

On September 15, 2021, Stephen Ritz delivered a testimony to the U.S. Congress in support of their initiative on *Ending Hunger In America: The Role of Schools in Ending Hunger and Improving Nutrition*. The statistics and data presented below were included within his testimony, and were validated via third party research. The data outlines the comprehensive impact of Green Bronx Machine's educational initiatives focused on nutrition, gardening, and culinary skills within school communities, and highlight the transformative effects on student behavior, knowledge acquisition, and teacher feedback resulting from these programs. They also emphasize the importance of early exposure to healthy food practices, the cultivation of sustainable behaviors, and the role of schools in promoting health and wellness among students. [Click here to read or to watch the full testimony.](#)

Behavioral Impact Data (after a trial with 30K students):

- **96%** of students understand the importance of eating fruits and vegetables.
- **87%** of students are knowledgeable about growing food.
- **66%** of students report eating better, and **58%** are consuming 3-5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily.

Implementation Results:

- **94%** of students express a desire to repeat the program.
- **86%** of students can now read and understand nutrition labels, a significant increase from **13%**.
- **75%** of students now choose to eat fresh fruits and vegetables daily, up from **37%**.

Teacher Feedback:

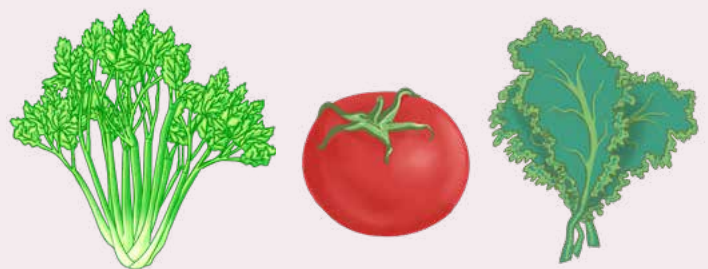
- **100%** of teachers believe the program exceeded expectations.
- **100%** of teachers would recommend the program and curriculum to colleagues.
- **100%** of teachers claim students changed their eating habits because of program participation.

Educational Observations:

- Increased interest in science as a favorite subject.
- **82%** of students report discussing healthy eating habits with their families, up from **29%**.

Community Impact:

- Over 100,000 pounds of food accessed and delivered during COVID school closures.



"The most important school supply in the world is food... Children will never be well read if they are not well fed."

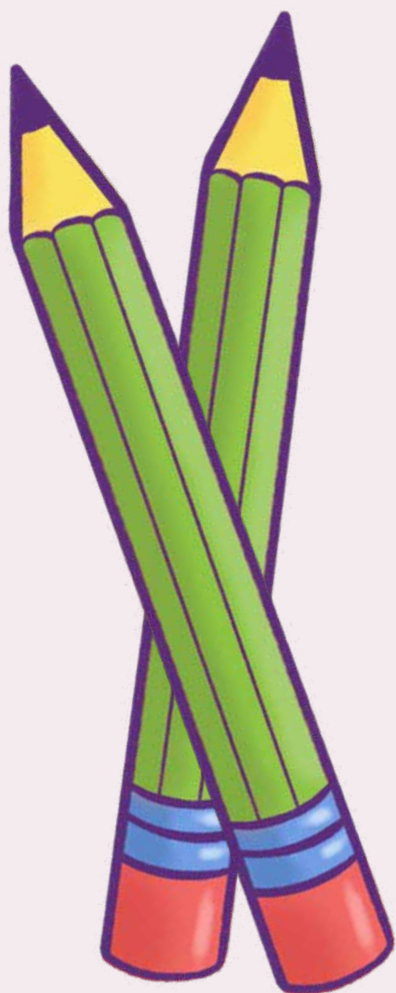
Stephen Ritz



Empowering Students & Classrooms

These figures highlight the positive effects of providing hands-on learning opportunities for students as a way to foster empowered students and classrooms.

- Schools that implement student empowerment programs experience **15% lower dropout rates and 10% higher graduation rates** compared to those that do not (Source: OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment).
- Research indicates that students who feel empowered in their learning process demonstrate **40% higher levels of motivation and 30% higher self-efficacy** (Source: NIH).



Empowering Educators & School Leaders

This data highlights the positive effects of supporting teacher empowerment through providing alternative styles of professional development, and how it can yield higher performance for both educators and students.

- A study published by the US Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences concluded that **student achievement can improve by as much as 21%** when teachers participate in well-designed professional development (PD) programs. (Source: National Math & Science Initiative).
- Schools with empowered educators and leaders see **20% higher teacher retention rates and 25% lower teacher turnover costs** (Source: Learning Policy Institute).
- Data shows that schools with strong leadership and empowered school leaders achieve **15% higher student performance scores** on standardized tests (Source: National Center for Education Statistics).
- Teaching is very demanding, professional work—with teachers making **1200-1500 decisions a day**, most of them unforeseen and requiring complex decision-making and more time to plan, study, and refine their practices. This highlights the significant cognitive load and complexity of decision-making that teachers face on a daily basis and the need for continuously educating and empowering them. (Source: EducationWeek).

Urban Agriculture & Community Nutrition

Here is an analysis of urban agriculture's positive role in combating food insecurity, promoting nutrition, and building community resilience, supported by empirical data.

- Urban agriculture contributes to **10-15% of the world's food supply**, providing essential nutrition to over 800 million urban residents worldwide (Source: USDA Climate Hubs).
- **73% of Americans say they bought locally grown fruits and vegetables** in the past month, indicating a growing interest and support for locally sourced and potentially urban-grown produce. (Source: Pew Research Center).
- Families who participate in community gardening are able to offset typically **30-40% of their produce needs by eating food grown in their own gardens**. This not only promotes healthier eating habits but also contributes to significant savings for these families. (Source: PolicyLink).
- As per the USDA, students with access to a salad bar at school are likely to consume more than 40% additional fresh fruits and vegetables throughout their lifetime compared to peers without such access. This opportunity to positively influence their health and future trajectory is well-documented (Source: USDA).

Sustainability and Environmental Impact

This data exemplifies sustainable farming's impact on environmental preservation, resource conservation, and climate change.

- Sustainable business practices can result in **20-30% reductions in energy consumption and 15-20% reductions in water usage, leading to \$4.5 billion in annual cost savings** for companies (Source: Environmental Protection Agency).
- Companies that prioritize sustainability and environmental stewardship outperform their peers financially, achieving **18% higher returns on investment and 50% higher market value** (Source: McKinsey & Company).
- By 2030, transitioning to sustainable energy sources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions could **save \$26 trillion in global economic benefits and prevent 1.5°C of global warming** (Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).



What Industry Experts Say

"Stephen Ritz and Green Bronx Machine are opening minds to science, nutrition, and wellness everywhere."

Jane Pauley, CBS Sunday Morning

"We are a greater community and city because of Green Bronx Machine, they are our local heroes and we need to support them across the city and the nation."

Vanessa Gibbons, Bronx Borough President

"You are inspiring so many people each and every day - this should be done in all of our schools!"

Eric Adams, Mayor, New York City

"This is an oasis in the Bronx, if we had programs like Green Bronx Machine in places like Buffalo, Rochester and across New York State, our kids would be in a much better situation."

David Frank, Assistant Commissioner, New York State Dept of Education

"I would love to see GBM expand to every single school in the United States and around the world and then, expand to public housing, community & senior centers and everywhere there is a need - this solution is proven, perfect and truly replicable."

Charles Platkin, Founder & Executive Director Center for Food as Medicine; Former Exec. Director, NYC Food Policy Center

What Industry Experts Say (CONTINUED)

"Such a simple yet elegant solution, these young GBM farmers are making themselves and the city healthier, and more livable - BRAVO!"

Kari Byron, Mythbusters/EXPLR/National STEM Challenge

"What GBM has done for the Bronx and NYC is simply incredible and you've got a Mayor who is the number one champion for this!"

David C. Banks, Chancellor, New York City Schools

"It is tangible, you can see it, the kids love it! This is not bluster, what GBM does is not hyperbole, this is for real, the lives that are being changed are in the Bronx and beyond!"

Ruben Diaz Jr., Former Bronx Borough President; Sr Vice President, Montefiore Medicine

"I love what GBM is doing to get students to make the connection between what is going on their bodies and coming out of the earth; it changes the trajectory of their diets and frankly their entire lives."

Seth Goldman, Chief Change Agent, Eat The Change

"This one solution addresses so many problems. I hope that Green Bronx Machine can scale across the US and in countries everywhere there is a commitment to getting children to eat and access healthier food."

Michiel Bakker, Vice President of Workplace Strategy, Innovation, and Sustainability, Google

2023 BY THE NUMBERS

"Partnering with Green Bronx Machine has helped move our entire school into new paradigms of academic success - our test scores are up, teacher satisfaction has increased, and there is now a schoolwide emphasis on health, wellness, and building community. Everyone loves the program."

- Justin Armitrage, Elementary School Principal, Indianapolis, Indiana



3

NEW HEALTH, WELLNESS,
& LEARNING CENTERS
LAUNCHED



825

GBM SITES
AROUND THE
WORLD



275,927

STUDENTS RECEIVED
GBM INSTRUCTION



1,306

NEW TEACHERS
RECEIVED DIRECT
TRAINING



100%

SATISFACTION RATE IN
GBM PARTICIPATING
SCHOOLS



867,310

SERVINGS OF FRUITS &
VEGGIES EATEN BY GBM
STUDENTS IN THE BRONX



2,262

EMERGENCY FOOD &
HYGIENE KITS FOR
FAMILIES IN NEED



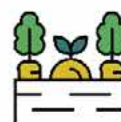
592

NEW
VOLUNTEERS



198

FIRST-TIME
DONORS



18,000+

POUNDS OF FOOD
RESCUED AND
REDISTRIBUTED



17,823+

POUNDS OF PRODUCE
GROWN LOCALLY IN
NEW YORK CITY



WON ANOTHER
BEST OF THE BRONX
AWARD - AGAIN!



LAUNCHED A NEW
YOUTUBE CHANNEL:
GBM KIDS!



DEBUTED A NEW ANIMATED
SEASON OF LET'S LEARN
WITH MISTER RITZ



FEATURED IN MAYOR
ADAMS' NYC FOOD
EDUCATION ROADMAP



GBM INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOLS WON TWO
GLOBAL AWARDS

Discussion Questions

STUDENTS

1. Which teacher in the film would be the most fun to learn from? Why?
2. What activities in the film did you enjoy the most?
3. How has this film changed your views of classroom gardening and food & health?
4. How can urban gardening help tackle food insecurity and boost nutrition in your community?
5. What challenges might you face in starting a school garden? How can you overcome them?
6. How does composting and saving water in your garden help the environment?
7. Caring for plants changes how we see our planet. What else can you do to help the environment?
8. How can kids contribute to providing healthy food in their neighborhood? What can *you* do to help?
9. How might you contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals through what you learned in this film?



Discussion Questions (CONTINUED)

EDUCATORS & SCHOOL LEADERS

1. How can integrating classroom gardening into the curriculum enhance student engagement and academic achievement across different subject areas?
2. How does classroom gardening boost student engagement and learning in different subjects and at different grade levels?
3. Before seeing this movie, did you think that growing fruits and vegetables in the classroom could be tied to academic results with critical skill acquisition? Did you consider how school gardening could benefit students' social and emotional well-being?
4. Having seen the film, how would you adapt the teaching methods you've seen to suit your classroom?
5. Think about your classroom:
 - a. How many students arrive at school hungry or needing food assistance?
 - b. How many students rely primarily on school meals/free lunches for food?
 - c. How would you address food insecurity and hunger among your students?
 - d. Why would you now implement strategies to integrate gardening and nutrition education into your curriculum?
 - e. Which would you prioritize: providing access to fresh, healthy food options, or expanding nutrition education initiatives? Does the film make you realize how you can do both with Green Bronx Machine programming?
6. Which teaching methods have most effectively promoted environmental awareness and sustainability among your students, and why?
7. What are the key resources and support needed for schools to start and maintain any innovative classroom program?



Discussion Questions (CONTINUED)

8. How can local partnerships and resources be utilized to enhance the impact of ANY project or special sustainable gardening initiatives, as depicted in the film?
9. In what ways can gardening projects encourage collaboration among teachers and staff from various disciplines?
10. How can educators and school leaders advocate for policies that encourage health, wellness, and community building in education, considering schools' role in community resilience?
11. How can schools and school leaders elevate and support a variety of effective teaching practices in schools?
12. Which teacher or school administrator was your favorite? Why? What about them would you most want to emulate?
13. How do you foster the sense of community in the classrooms you loved most in the film?
14. What is your take on teacher autonomy? How can we give teachers autonomy and maintain standards and accountability?
15. Did it surprise you that such a simple program could have such spectacular results? What does that teach us about innovation? Leadership?





Discussion Questions (CONTINUED)

FAMILIES, COMMUNITY MEMBERS & NON-PROFITS

For these questions, ask about the film first and then ask about how this transfers into your community.

1. How did Stephen and how does Green Bronx Machine value the lived experience of the communities they served? What worked and why? How can this approach be emulated and adapted everywhere?
2. How can community-based sustainable agriculture initiatives in your neighborhood contribute to addressing food insecurity and promoting healthy nutrition within under served neighborhoods, especially for young people?
3. What strategies have you found effective in building partnerships and fostering community engagement around sustainability, health and wellness, or food access projects?
4. Reflecting on the film's depiction of successful health and wellness programs, how do you envision leveraging local resources and community assets to create sustainable food systems and resilient neighborhoods?
5. What are some potential challenges and barriers faced by community led sustainability initiatives, and how can they be overcome through collaborative action and advocacy efforts?
6. How can nonprofit organizations and community groups play a role in advocating for policies that support equitable access to food, land, resources, and funding for community resilience projects?
7. What are the most effective specific roles of nonprofits, schools, and corporations? How can folks "stay in their lane" while most effectively supporting each other?
8. Considering the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic factors, what opportunities exist for cross-sector collaboration and collective impact in promoting health and wellness, sustainable agriculture, and food justice initiatives at the community level?

Discussion Questions (CONTINUED)

CORPORATIONS, FUNDERS, SPONSORS & FOUNDATIONS

1. How does Green Bronx Machine's impact make you think about corporate giving and public-private partnerships?
2. How does your organization prioritize corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives?
 - a. What is the true level of your ambition? Do you believe, like Stephen, that business done right, can change the world?
 - b. Do you believe supporting sustainability projects aligns with your mission and values?
 - c. Discuss some of the projects and organizations you have funded over the past few years.
3. Stephen speaks about impact over income, evolution over enterprise building. Given the ever-changing and increasingly complex nature of philanthropy, does this resonate with you? Why or why not?
4. Reflecting on the film's portrayal of successful partnerships between schools, nonprofits, and corporate sponsors, what opportunities do you see for your company or foundation to contribute to similar collaborative efforts in promoting community resilience and environmental stewardship?
5. In what ways can corporate philanthropy and employee engagement programs be leveraged to support sustainable agriculture projects and address pressing issues such as food insecurity, public health, and climate change within local communities?
6. As a corporate leader or foundation representative, how do you envision measuring the impact of your investments in communities through education, urban farming initiatives, and sustainable food systems, and what outcomes are you most interested in seeing?
7. Green Bronx Machine has a unique take on what it means to be a successful nonprofit, and has generated incredible impact for their size and budget through mutually beneficial corporate partnerships. Does that model appeal to you? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions (CONTINUED)

8. Considering the growing interest among businesses in supporting social and environmental causes, what advice would you offer to other companies looking to get involved in sustainable agriculture and community nutrition projects?
9. How can corporate partnerships and cross-sector collaborations be structured to maximize mutual benefits for businesses, nonprofit organizations, and the communities they serve, while also advancing shared goals related to sustainability and social equity?
10. In what ways do you believe nonprofit work is not as effective as it could be or should be, and what reforms would you like to see?



Discussion Questions (CONTINUED)

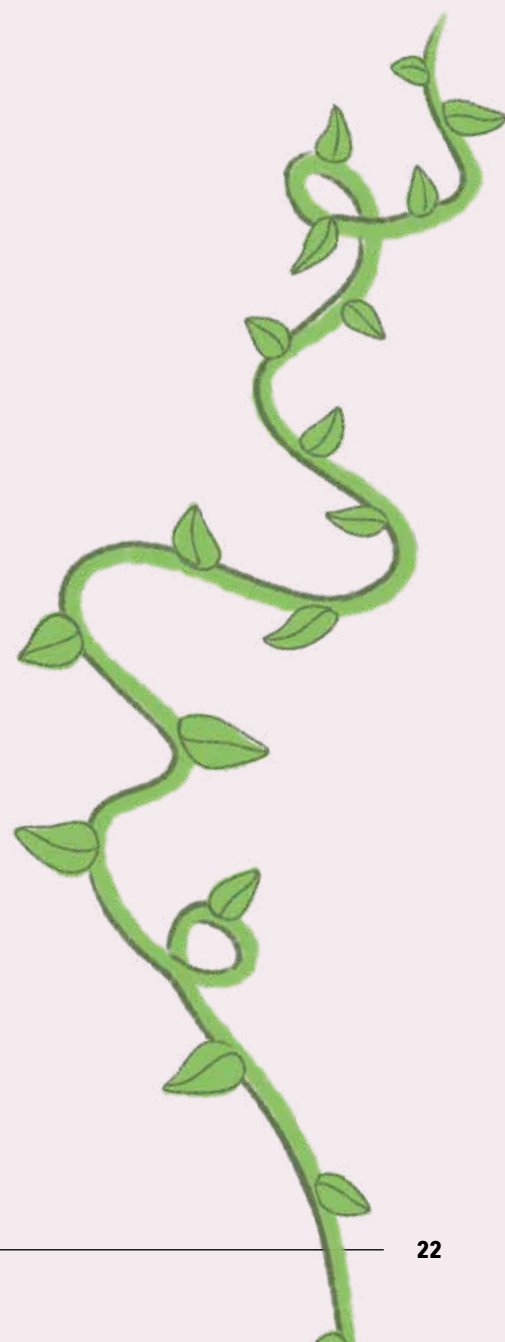
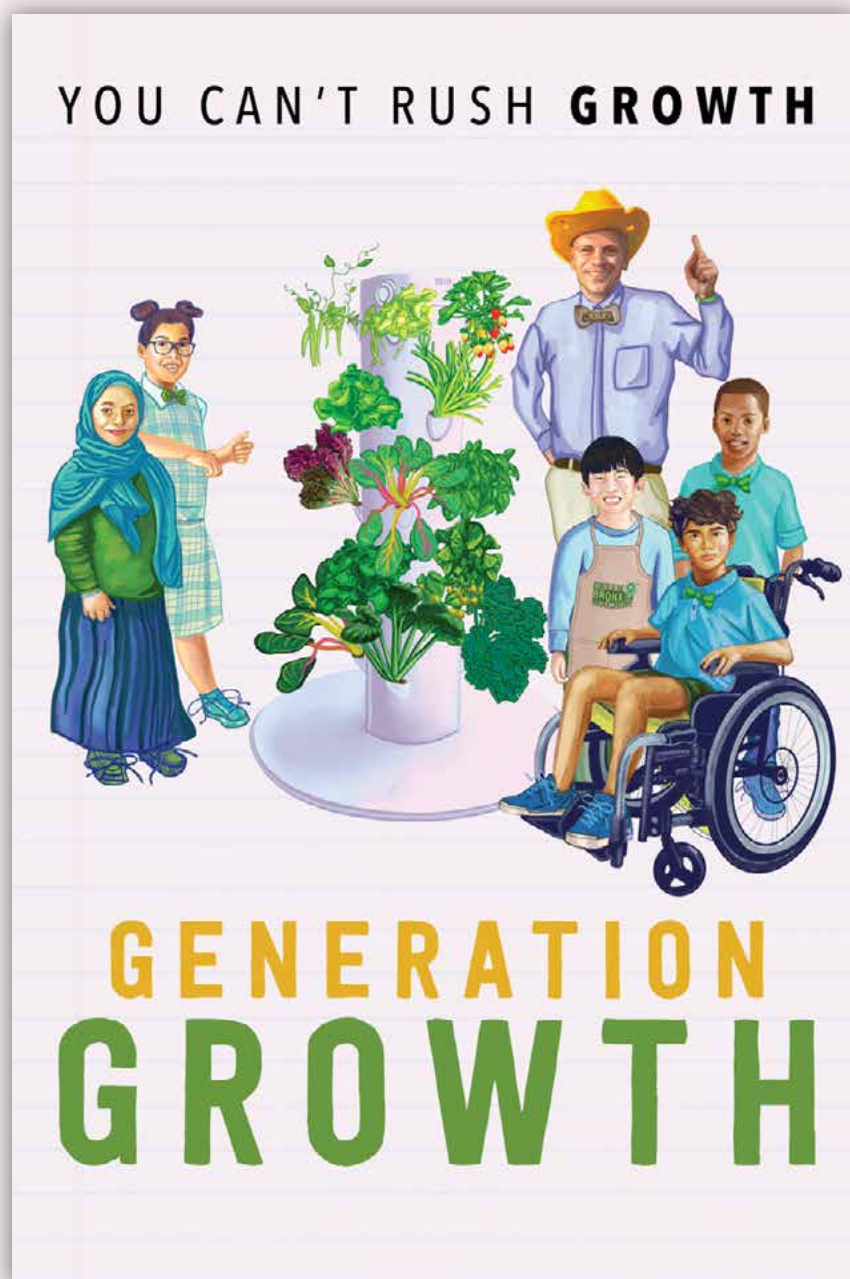
QUESTIONS FOR EVERYONE, FROM STEPHEN RITZ

1. What should school look like / feel like?
2. What does leadership look like?
3. What kind of principal / superintendent would you want to work for and why?
4. Similarly what kind of principal / superintendent would you aspire to be like and why? Does it correspond with above, or who you want to work for?
5. Mr. Ritz wears a cheesehat as a symbol of his teaching magic. What is your cheesehat?
 - a. How do you put it on?
 - b. How do you show love?
 - c. How do you get love?
6. How do you pull magic out of *your* hat?
7. Besides Mr. Ritz, which teacher from the film do you admire most and why?
8. Of all the communities featured in the film, which do you feel is the most challenged and why?
9. Who has the most difficult job in this film and why?
10. If Mr. Ritz came to your community, would you want him to be your teacher or principal? Where would he be the most effective? Why?
11. What teacher or community member reminds you most of Mr. Ritz? How do you support them?
12. How can the school and community better support teachers like Mr. Ritz?
13. How does it feel to see a school named MLK Jr. Academy for Boys largely staffed by Caucasians?



Discussion Questions (CONTINUED)

14. How do we deliver on the promise to do the most good with every student, teacher, class, school?
15. How do you think Mr. Ritz did in school as a child? In college? As a first year teacher? As an experienced teacher? What kind of challenges do you think he faced in his career?
16. After watching the film, what is your biggest takeaway?



Take Action

EVERYONE

- **Watch** and **share** the [trailer](#).
- [Request a free screening](#) for your community.

Do you or someone you care about suffer from self-esteem or confidence issues related to food access or diet related issues?

A national resource you could benefit from is the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) website. NAMI provides a wealth of information, support resources, and tools for individuals dealing with mental health challenges, including those related to self-esteem and confidence. Their website offers articles, educational materials, online support groups, and helplines that can provide assistance and guidance to individuals in need. Additionally, [NAMI has local chapters](#) and affiliates across the country, making it a valuable resource accessible to people nationwide.

STUDENTS

- **Honor** everyone's right to healthy food at all times. Challenge your assumptions about hunger and join the [Food Dignity](#) movement.
- **Get involved** in your school's gardening club or start one if it doesn't already exist. [National Garden Clubs](#) has great tips on how to get started.
- **Advocate** for green spaces and community gardens in your neighborhood. Learn more from [UGREEN](#).
- **Get Involved:** Explore workshops and volunteer opportunities in your community to learn about sustainable farming practices. Visit [National Young Farmers Coalition](#) to find upcoming events and volunteer opportunities. [Kidzsmart](#) also has fun sources!
- **Take Action at Home:** Practice sustainable food habits by composting food scraps at home, and shop at local farmers markets to support your community. Learn about [sustainable living tips here](#).
- **Join the Movement:** Become part of youth-led movements advocating for food justice and environmental sustainability in your community. Connect with [organizations like these](#) to join campaigns and make a difference in your area.
- **Join [Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences \(MANRRS\)](#)** today to be a part of shaping the future of agriculture and related sciences while empowering yourself as a student.
- **Register to vote! Your voice matters - make it heard with [vote.gov](#)!**

Take Action (CONTINUED)

EDUCATORS & SCHOOL LEADERS

- **Order the Green Bronx Machine Curriculum & Tower Garden Bundle** for your school.
- **Incorporate sustainable agriculture and environmental education** into your curriculum. Read more about the GBM Curriculum and additional resources.
- Connecting with #TeachSDGs, a global community of practice focused on engaging students in addressing UN Sustainable Development Goals
- **Advocate for and Help Fund School Gardens and Nutritious Meals:** Get involved in advocacy groups like the SGSO Network and review educator grants here to learn about policies & grants supporting school gardens and nutritious meals for students.
- **Learn Sustainable Farming Practices:** Enroll in workshops or training sessions to gain knowledge and skills in sustainable farming practices and environmental stewardship. More information and resources here.
- **Promote Healthy Eating in Your School:** Access resources from the CDC to implement sustainable food practices in your school cafeteria and foster healthy eating habits among students.
- **Understand Local Social Benefits:** Make sure all students, staff, and families in your school who are eligible for social benefits understand and receive them. The USDA has a list of FNS Nutrition Programs, including SNAP and WIC.
- **Join the Movement for Food Justice:** Connect with community organizations and schools to collaborate on grassroots movements for food justice and environmental stewardship in your area. Here is a handy list from Food Tank.

FIND THE GRANT THAT WORKS FOR YOU!

Seek funding for your school or community projects. Visit Green Bronx Machine's website for a [list of educational, agricultural, and community development grants](#).



Take Action (CONTINUED)

FAMILIES, COMMUNITY MEMBERS, & NON-PROFITS

- **Partner with National Garden Clubs:** Explore the opportunity to collaborate with National Garden Clubs, Inc. through their Plant America Community Project Grants. These grants provide funding for projects that enhance public areas and community gardens, promoting environmental education and fostering community pride. You can apply for grants of up to \$2,000 to support initiatives such as beautification, school gardens, and environmental education events.
- **Learn more about supporting local sustainable agriculture:** Explore opportunities to support local sustainable agriculture projects and community gardens by donating or volunteering through organizations like [4H](#) or [New York Agriculture in the Classroom](#).
- **Learn about the role of local government** in creating healthy, livable neighborhoods [here](#).
- **Stay informed and advocate:** Stay informed about policies promoting urban farming, food access, and environmental sustainability at the local and state levels. Advocate for these policies by engaging with organizations like [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#) or [Tufts Food & Innovation Institute](#).
- **Subscribe to USDA emails** on [farmers.gov](#) to access resources and grant opportunities for urban and innovative producers, aimed at strengthening local food systems and ensuring access to healthy, locally grown food regardless of community size or location.
- **Attend educational programs:** Attend community workshops and educational programs on urban agriculture and sustainable food systems - [check out this list](#) courtesy of [Food Tank](#).
- **Adopt sustainable practices:** Learn about sustainable food practices and implement them at home. Encourage others in your community to do the same by [sharing resources](#) from organizations like Center for Biological Diversity and learning from [this great video by PBS](#) celebrating indigenous practices. For our friends overseas and globally, check out the work of [Future Food Institute](#).
- **Join grassroots movements:** Join or initiate grassroots movements focused on addressing food justice and environmental issues in your community. Connect with [food justice organizations](#) like [NRDC](#) to get involved and make a difference.



Take Action (CONTINUED)

CORPORATIONS, FUNDERS, SPONSORS & FOUNDATIONS

- Provide financial support to local urban agriculture projects and Green Bronx Machine's Food For Others Garden through corporate donations or sponsorship.
- Advocate for policies that support urban farming, food access, and environmental sustainability in the areas where your company operates. Check out this report from PolicyLink for additional information.
- Organize employee volunteer opportunities at local urban agriculture projects or community gardens.
- Implement sustainable food practices in company cafeterias and promote eco-friendly initiatives among employees. Google has lead the way addressing food choices, sourcing, and reducing food waste.
- Partner with nonprofit organizations and community groups to support grassroots movements for food justice and environmental stewardship. Learn more here.



Take Action (CONTINUED)

IF YOU LIVE IN NEW YORK STATE

- The Center for Food as Medicine aims to bridge the gap between traditional medicine and the use of food as medicine in the prevention, treatment, and management of disease, while also increasing access to these treatments thereby creating a more equitable food system that will improve health outcomes. Subscribe to their newsletter to receive weekly food & nutrition news and research.
- The mission of the New York State Education Department is to raise the knowledge, skill, and opportunity of all the people in New York. Their vision is to provide leadership for a system that yields the best educated people in the world. Visit their Office of Teaching Initiatives Website for training and certification opportunities.
- The NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy works to increase food security; promote access to and consumption of healthy foods; and support economic opportunity, environmental sustainability, and equity in the food system. Read about Food Forward NYC, a comprehensive 10-year food policy plan they laid out to reach a more equitable, sustainable, and healthy food system by 2031.
- The Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center develops intersectoral, innovative and evidence-based solutions to prevent diet-related diseases and promote food security in New York City and other urban centers. Check out their Food Resource Guide to find a support center in your NYC community.
- The mission of the Teachers College at Columbia University is to empower committed learners and leaders to build a smarter, healthier, more just and equitable world through multidisciplinary knowledge creation, policy engagement, and practice innovations across education, psychology, and health. Read about how they Take Action for Sustainability.



Featured Schools

Below are the schools featured in ***Generation Growth***. The status and details of the schools featured below may have changed since the time of filming.



Community School 55, Bronx, NY



Moores Hill Elementary School, Moores Hill, IN



Holy Angels Catholic School, Indianapolis, IN



Martin Luther King Jr., Academy for Boys, Toledo, OH



Marshall STEMM Academy, Toledo, OH



Stepping Stones Residential Center, Lavelette, WV



PS 721X - Stephen McSweeney School, Bronx, NY

Featured Participants



Lizette B. Ritz

Executive Director, Green Bronx Machine, Bronx, NY

"We are Green Bronx Machine. It is who we are. We will always be Green Bronx Machine, and we will be Green Bronx Machine, Idaho, we will be Green Bronx Machine, Los Angeles, we will be Green Bronx Machine, *everywhere*, because there's a Bronx everywhere!"



Michaela Ritz

Volunteer, Green Bronx Machine, Bronx, NY

"I think my Dad finds kids really relatable. He sees how children are really pure and just need an opportunity. He has this ability to connect. Empathy is really crucial to what he does."



Dr. Sara Bleich

**Vice Provost, Special Projects, Professor of Public Health Policy, Harvard University
Director of Nutrition Security and Health Equity, Biden White House**

"There is no question that diet is a driver of poor health outcomes. Having a poor diet has huge ripple effects across all areas of one's life."



Dr. Jacob Ham

Director, Center for Complex Trauma, Mount Sinai Hospital, NY, NY

"It is as if these children have been through war. These small acts of healing, over and over, every day, make a difference. You see small acts that redeem hope."



Dr. Pam Koch

Professor of Nutrition and Education, Director, Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education, and Policy, Columbia University, NY, NY

"Higher rates of obesity are not because of people but because of the food supplies in their neighborhoods. Nutrition education, when it is project-based, when it is hands-on, and kids get to experience food, that is when they connect with it."



Reverend Al Sharpton

National Action Network, Civil Rights Activist, MSNBC, NY, NY

"This is how change happens, access to healthy food, one person, one community at a time."

Featured Participants (CONTINUED)



Seth Goldman

Founder, Honest Tea, Eat the Change, Just Ice Tea, Bethesda, Maryland

"I love what Stephen does, especially with students and young people, to get them to appreciate the connection between what goes into their body and what comes out of the earth. For them to make that connection, you've changed the trajectory of their diet, and frankly, of their lives as well."



Ruben Diaz Jr.

Bronx Borough President / VP Community Affairs Montefiore Hospital

"The public school system has become boring for our children. That is why we lose so many of them. It does not speak to their talents or their interests. We need to bring talented adults to the classroom. Kids are so excited about eating healthy, and they are learning science and math while they are doing it, Steve Ritz has it right."



Hon. Gustavo Rivera

NYS Senator, 33rd District, Bronx, NY

"The pedagogical strategies that Ritz has developed and all the things that connect together in a classroom like this and the impact that this can have on one school, this needs to be replicated everywhere."



Hon. Michael Blake

NYS Assembly Member, 79th Assembly District / Founder: Atlas Strategy Group

"Who is that white guy walking around the neighborhood, in a cheese hat? Once you see it the first time, you're inspired, and when you see it happening again and again, you realize something special is happening here."



Suzie Boss

Author / Educator, Transformative Learning, Portland, Oregon

"Any sort of program that makes school a place where students want to be, a place of engagement, of fun, and welcoming – you set the stage for much greater success."



Suzanne Crouch

Lt. Governor, State of Indiana

"Indiana is a big agricultural state, it contributes \$31B to our state's economy, but in spite of agriculture being big, we do have food insecurity here in the state of Indiana."

Featured Participants (CONTINUED)



Katie Howe

Indy Hunger Network, Indianapolis, Indiana

"When people don't have enough to eat, they do not perform well at work or in school. Kids when they are growing, if they do not have sufficient nutrition, it can affect them for a lifetime."



Tyler Gough

Director, Indy Urban Acres, Indianapolis, Indiana

"You look for miles in any direction and you see food growing, which makes the hunger issue in Indiana very ironic."



Leanna Phillippe

Principal, Moores Hill Elementary School, Moores Hill, Indiana

"We believe in our kids, and if you do not believe in your kids, then you are in the wrong building."



Mr. Lee

Teacher, Moores Hill Elementary School, Moores Hill, Indiana

"I learn by doing. Something like this is all hands on. Something like this is so great for these kids. Everything gets stale if you keep doing the same thing."



Katie

5th Grade Student, Moores Hill Elementary School, Moores Hill, Indiana

"It's kind of like we did most of the work ourselves. Sometimes we even figured it out without him."



Justin Armitage

Principal Holy Angels Catholic School, Indianapolis, Indiana

"You have to eat healthy to have a healthy mind. We can show them that there are healthy options out there. I have made it very clear that this all starts within these walls."

Featured Participants (CONTINUED)



Ms. Cress

Teacher, Holy Angels Catholic School, Indianapolis, Indiana

"This work, it's mentally and physically exhausting, but it is so wonderful at the same time. It takes a lot of patience and a lot of love."



Dalton

4th Grade Student, Holy Angels Catholic School, Indianapolis, Indiana

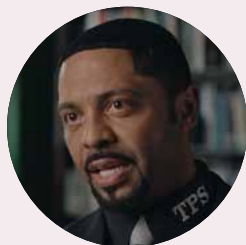
"I will eat healthy if you tell me to, but if you don't tell me, I am going to eat anything I want."



Wade Kapszukiewicz

Mayor, Toledo, Ohio

"What makes Toledo so special are its people and its potential. That is why it is so important that we have the Green Bronx Machine program going into 20 of our schools. This can only be a positive thing. We have the highest rate of homeless children in the state of Ohio. It is almost impossible to wrap your arms around the size of the problem."



Dr. Romules Durant

Supt. Toledo Public Schools, Toledo, Ohio

"Strong cities come from strong schools. When you see kids growing seeds into plants, they see themselves as that plant and growing into what they want to be."



Doug Bell

Principal, Marshall STEMM Academy, Toledo, Ohio

"They're learning, they're learning how to work together, they're learning how to present their work. They're learning without realizing they're learning"



Amy Poland

Teacher, Marshall STEMM Academy, Toledo, Ohio

"You have to keep showing up, I go home, I'm exhausted, I'm entirely depleted, but my heart is full. The moment we sit at the Harvest Feast, that is the moment we try to get to in class all year long. I use that moment for the entire school year. It's priceless!"

Featured Participants (CONTINUED)



Mr. McKinley

Teacher, MLK Jr. Academy for Boys, Toledo, Ohio

"Teachers would pay hundreds upon hundreds of dollars just to see these moments, to see these kids take over and grasp these concepts."



Deron

4th Grade Student, MLK Jr. Academy for Boys, Toledo, Ohio

"My favorite subject is science. I am a quick learner. Vegetables make you big and strong and I want to be big and strong."



Jacob Green

Superintendent, West Virginia Schools of Diversion & Transition, West Virginia

"As they age out, if they haven't received what they need educationally, vocationally, social-emotionally, they are going to end up incarcerated."



Susan Fry

Executive Director, Stepping Stones Residential Center, Lavalette, West Virginia

"This opportunity to do something different is why I wake up and come to work every day. I don't want to be seen as the place with the opioid epidemic, I want to be seen as the place building lives."



Lynn Stevens

Staff, Stepping Stones Residential Center, Lavalette, West Virginia

"We are trying to break intergenerational patterns and labels. You have to have hope for the future, because the past was not worth packing."



Andre Smith

Graduate, Stepping Stones Residential Center, West Virginia

"I could not have ever imagined making my own money and having my own place. Anything you would call on your family for, or when you need advice, Stepping Stones is that family for me."

Featured Participants (CONTINUED)



Frank DeGennaro

Principal, PS721X, Bronx, NY

"Every student here is a student with special needs. The outcome is what's the important thing in any school. We have to cater to student's needs. Going to college is not the outcome here."



Jeremy Kottkamp

Teacher, PS721X, Bronx, NY

"This is the district where the students who need the most help come to school. They stay here until they turn 21. We work to engage the student in an outcome that will make them happy and have a good life. People give up on our students. Our students want to feel good in life. Ask them what they want to do? It just might surprise you."



Rosalia N. (Julian's Mom)

PS721X, Bronx, NY

"When he came to Mr. K's class, it was like learning opened up. Now there is promise, now there is hope!"



Luis Torres

Principal, Community School 55, Bronx, NY

"For a lot of our families, education is the 5th priority. Food, shelter, safety, health, and then they focus on education. When you have so many severe needs in one community, at one time, it is very hard to focus on education."



Jeffrey "Fruit Man" Haywood

Community School 55, Bronx, NY

"I love being in this community. I love it here. In the mornings, I'm the fruit man. Ever since then, I've been Mr. Fruit. I love it. I'm not leaving, I still have plenty of work to do."



Vanessa

Former Student of Mr. Ritz, Bronx, NY

"Mr. Ritz cared not just for me, but for all the tough kids that came into that classroom and the whole building. He knew I was coming from poverty and he knew what was happening at home, and he had that empathy to reach out and help me. No matter how busy his day was, he always made sure he picked me up, and made time for me. This is what Mr. Ritz did, he *understood* me."

Stephen Ritz

Educator, Author, Farmer, Parent, Founder: Green Bronx Machine



"Zip code and skin color should not determine outcomes in life. I'm out to change that."

"Children will never be well read until they are well fed. The most important school supply in the world is healthy food, period!"

"If I can, you can. I'm not superman or a savior, I'm one man on a mission."

"This work should not be the gold standard, it should be the norm. It should not be the exception; it should be everywhere."

"The greatest natural resource in the world is the untapped potential residing in low-status and under-served communities."

"People should not have to leave their neighborhoods to live, learn, and earn in a better one."

"I am hoping to spawn the next generation of Stephen Ritz's across the nation. Enough is enough."

"You can't rush growth, you can't go from seed to harvest without cultivation in the middle."

"We all have a whole lot of love to give; all of us!"

"When kids feel your love, the door is wide open, it is game on!"



Stephen Ritz

Educator, Author, Farmer, Parent, Founder: Green Bronx Machine

"It is the little daily habits that make a huge difference."

"Communities like mine are starving for healthy, fresh food."

"We all need to put our stake in the ground, right where we live."

"It all starts with the little guy, a classroom, a teacher, a textbook, a pencil, that one kind, caring adult."

"Education is the great equalizer, but sometimes it is not always equal."

"It is the little daily habits that make a difference."

"Why is it that when children don't succeed in school, we tend to blame the child before we look at the school?"

"Showing up is very powerful."

"I like to look them in their eyes and tell them that everything is going to be ok."

"We give plants more respect than we give children!"

"Mr. Jeff is truly inspiring healthy living and healthy learning."

"I love being held accountable."

"I believe all students want to be engaged and involved with something, but sometimes you have to pull a little magic out of the hat."

"I like to turn that frown upside down and be that big, goofy guy, in the cheese-hat for those who don't have a big goofy guy in their lives."

"Children get stuck in a cycle until you pull them out. And once you pull them out, amazing things happen."

"I may be a little crazy, but all of the insanity out here has made me that way; it's not without good reason. At some point, we have to say enough is enough."

"I'll see you, in the garden!"

See more of Mister Ritz and his magic cheesehat in the acclaimed YouTube series

Let's Learn with Mister Ritz!

Perfect for students, parents, teachers, and classrooms to wonder, investigate, and learn about the world around us as Mister Ritz discovers how it works!



