

School Gardens Policy and Practice

BACKGROUND:

Schools are becoming increasingly important to educators and communities because they can achieve many objectives. Examples include:

- Provide hands-on food and food system education
 - Integrate into standard curricula (math, science, history and language arts)
 - Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables
 - Encourages environmental stewardship
- The National Gardening Association's school gardening registry lists more than 1,200 school gardens in the U.S.
 - School gardens that stem from policies are typically associated with farm to school and/or wellness initiatives.
 - Issues facing school gardens can include funding, supplies, land availability, staff to start up and maintain the garden, and lack of knowledge of how to integrate into existing school programs and curricula.
 - Many resources exist today for school gardens but these alone cannot support their growth. Policy must exist at the federal, state, and local level with funding to support school garden initiatives.

SCHOOL GARDEN POLICIES:

Federal:

(2004) Section 122 of the 2004 Child Nutrition Act includes Farm to Cafeteria legislation entitled, "Access to Local Foods and School Gardens" which creates a seed grant fund to cover the initial costs of a Farm to Cafeteria project. This grant provides for equipment, labor costs, nutrition education, and school gardens. The program has not yet been funded.

State:

California (1995): The Department of Education launched a Garden in Every School Initiative. Several bills were enacted following this Initiative to promote instructional school gardens: (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/gardenoverview.asp>)

Washington State (March 2008): Passed the Local Farms - Healthy Kids Legislation, which promotes school gardens. The act states, "school districts may operate school gardens or farms as appropriate for the purpose of growing fruits and vegetables to be used for educational purposes, and where appropriate to be offered to students, through the district nutrition services meal and snack program." (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6483&year=2008>)

Oregon (Pending): This bill requires the Department of Education to establish the Oregon Farm-to-School and School Garden Program. The programs will help schools utilize Oregon food products and produce from school gardens, promote food and garden based educational activities, and work with the state department of agriculture to develop farm-to-school related programs. This bill would appropriate \$95,000 of the General Fund for this program. (<http://www.leg.state.or.us/08ss1/measures/hb3600.dir/hb3601.intro.html>)

Local:

Los Angeles, CA (July 2007): LA Unified School district passed a resolution to support the creation and sustainability of school gardens. The resolution allows the use of school garden produce in school cafeterias.

San Francisco, CA (November 2003): Proposition A provided two million dollars for building green design areas and schoolyard gardens in seventeen elementary schools.

SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAMS/ INNOVATORS:

Edible Schoolyard (Berkeley, CA): A garden and cooking program incorporated into the curriculum of the Martin Luther King Junior Middle School. The website includes resource information for school gardens (supplies, grant information, tips etc).
<http://www.edibleschoolyard.org/>

Urban Harvest (Houston, TX): A non profit that teaches organic gardening techniques, helps neighborhoods build community gardens, creates outdoor classrooms at schools, provides fresh, locally grown food, and encourages responsible land use. <http://www.urbanharvest.org/>

Food For Thought: The Ojai Healthy Schools Program (Ojai, CA): A grassroots, community-driven effort, working in partnership with the Ojai Unified School District. The program consists of five elements: a farm-fresh salad bar, nutrition education, garden-based learning, agricultural literacy, and trash reduction. <http://www.foodforthoughtojai.org/index.html>

The Harvest of Dreams community garden (New Haven, CT): The garden is an integral part of the Warren Elementary School curriculum and community. Teacher and parent supported and grant funded, the school donates a portion of the vegetables to a nearby soup kitchen and food bank. http://ct.gov/Dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2708&q=323920&depNav_GID=151

Troy Howard Middle School (Belfast, ME): A model for combining gardening into school curriculum, the student run garden produces food for the school's cafeteria, as well as providing food for local soup kitchens. Students also staff a school based farm stand to help fund the garden. http://www.sad34.net/%7esteve_tanguay/garden.html

The Garden Initiative (Chicago, IL): Horticulture experts collaborate with schools to start gardens in the inner city. Teachers integrate the garden into the curriculum and students gain hands-on experience. http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr313.shtml

RESOURCES FOR GETTING STARTED OR EXPANDING A SCHOOL GARDEN

Center for Ecoliteracy: <http://www.ecoliteracy.org/programs/rsl.html>

Rethinking School Lunch Program: provides a framework for a comprehensive curriculum.

National Gardening Association (NGA): <http://assoc.garden.org/ag/>

Adopt a Garden Program provides resources and in kind grants to school garden projects.

USDA FNS Team Nutrition: <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Educators/Garden/index.html>

Get Growing- From the Ground Up! Offers guidelines and suggestions for gardening and publicity.

American Horticulture Society: http://www.ahs.org/youth_gardening/index.htm

Provides resources like activities/programs, books, curricula, financial assistance, garden designers, magazines/newsletters/journals, multi-media resources, and supplies. Provides an annual National Children and Youth Gardening Symposium (2008-Growing Fertile Minds and Communities).

Slow Food: <http://www.slowfoodusa.org/education> Provides resources for school gardens.

National Agricultural Library: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/services/request.shtml>

Offers resources related to gardening with children.

Garden Mosaics: <http://www.gardenmosaics.cornell.edu/> Garden resources and activities for educators, youth, and individuals.

School Garden Wizard: <http://www.schoolgardenwizard.org/> Online guide to help start a school learning garden or enrich an existing program.

American Community Gardening Association (ACGA): www.communitygarden.org

The website includes sample letters of support to protect community gardens.