



# County Extension Agent Toolkit



## Responsibilities and Volunteer Information

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



## Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! County Extension Agent Toolkit Project Responsibilities and Volunteer Information

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## Introduction to Using Volunteers in Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!

Volunteers are an important part of extending the educational initiatives of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and of local school districts. Parents, family members, and community neighbors/partners can help provide much needed support for prolonging the life of project like Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! in schools.

The items included in this toolkit are meant to provide support for recruiting volunteers at the school level.

Local county Extension staff will help to train volunteers on topics relevant to the school's needs, and based on the volunteers interest. Teachers and school staff will work with the volunteers and county Extension staff to provide opportunities for the volunteers.

Volunteers with Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! can assist teachers and families with educating students about increasing behaviors associated with healthy lifestyle, while increasing personal knowledge about gardening, nutrition and physical activity benefits to health.

Suggestions for using the attached tools:

Letter from schools to parents endorsing project and asking for volunteers, along with feedback forms: Schools are encouraged to use this letter, tailored to their school and printed on school letterhead, to send home with students at the beginning of the school year. This will demonstrate the schools enthusiasm and endorsement of the project.



## AGENT INVOLVEMENT DESCRIPTION

**Purpose:** To improve learning and healthy behaviors through collaborating with other agents and teachers on gardening, nutrition, and physical activity programs using Master Volunteer support.

**Responsibilities:** Work collaboratively with other agents to support integrated program implementation at schools.

<b>Gardening – Horticulture Agent &amp; Youth Agent</b>	<b>Nutrition – FCS Agent/ BLT Assist. or EFNEP Agent/Asst.</b>	<b>Physical Activity – FCS Agent</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsible for gardening program/curriculum and gardening volunteers (MG and parent volunteers)</li> <li>- Train Master Gardeners on engaging parents for garden build and support</li> <li>- Assist with planning school kick-off event</li> <li>- Provide opportunity for parent trainings by MG’s related to gardening</li> <li>- Assist schools in recruiting volunteers for gardening portion of the project</li> <li>- Schedule and coordinate demonstration of installing garden bed, planting, and harvesting; utilizing school and community volunteers</li> <li>- Assist teacher and volunteers with creating maintenance plan for garden</li> <li>- Provide technical assistance to teacher with garden curriculum questions</li> <li>- Assist with planning school celebration event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsible for nutrition program/curriculum and nutrition volunteers</li> <li>- Assist in planning school kick-off event</li> <li>- Assist schools in recruiting volunteers for nutrition portion of the project</li> <li>- Train volunteers</li> <li>- Prep food for recipes or tasting with volunteers</li> <li>- Provide recipe demonstration and tasting for class</li> <li>- Provide training on nutrition topics for teachers</li> <li>- Provide technical assistance to teacher with nutrition curriculum questions</li> <li>- Assist in planning school celebration event</li> <li>- Provide parent trainings related to nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsible for WAT program and WAT volunteers</li> <li>- Provide training for teacher/volunteers on WAT</li> <li>- Assist teacher with how-to chart classroom miles on a map of Texas</li> <li>- Assist with school kick-off event</li> <li>- Coordinate registering school teams on the Walk Across Texas website</li> <li>- Follow-up weekly on WAT website updating - entering weekly classroom mileage and entering bonus miles from families</li> <li>- Provide technical assistance to teacher with physical activity/GO Strong! curriculum questions</li> <li>- Assist in planning school celebration event</li> <li>- Provide parent trainings related to physical activity</li> </ul>

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

## TEACHER INVOLVEMENT DESCRIPTION

Purpose: Improve learning (science, math, language arts) and healthy behaviors through classroom and family focused garden, nutrition, and physical activities.

Benefits of being a Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! (LGE) classroom:

- Generate enthusiasm with children and families about new school learning experiences.
- Assist students and their families in learning about healthy lifestyle behaviors.
- Increase personal knowledge about gardening, nutrition and physical activity benefits to health.

Time required:

Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! includes 10 teaching concepts. The TEKS correlated activities are to be implemented in order with some time flexibility. Learning activities supplement math, language arts, social studies, health, science, and physical fitness concepts related to the STAAR readiness and supporting standards. Hands-on gardening and recipe demonstrations are supported with volunteer engagement.

General	Gardening	Nutrition	Physical Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assist with planning school kick-off event</li> <li>- Implement curriculum</li> <li>- Provide feedback on lessons and activities</li> <li>- Assist in coordinating pre- and post-surveys of students and family members</li> <li>- Promote parent trainings</li> <li>- Complete BLT Match Forms when applicable</li> <li>- Assist with planning school celebration event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Educate students on building garden beds, planting, and harvest through curriculum in classroom and time at school garden</li> <li>- Work with agent to develop garden maintenance plan and have classroom follow plan</li> <li>- Prep garden supplies before class</li> <li>- Store garden supplies after class</li> <li>- Provide or assist with tool safety and usage demonstrations</li> <li>- Coordinate gardening activities with agent and volunteers as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Educate students on healthy nutrition habits through curriculum in classroom, food tasting, and food demonstrations</li> <li>- Coordinate tasting and food demonstration days with agent or assistant</li> <li>- Assist with recipe demonstrations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Register school teams and keep track of weekly miles on the Walk Across Texas website (or coordinate this effort with volunteer)</li> <li>- Lead walking and other physical activity events</li> <li>- Chart classroom miles on a map of Texas</li> <li>- Teach GO Strong!/WAT lessons highlighted in weekly concepts.</li> </ul>

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

## VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title: Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! Volunteer

Advisor: County Extension Agent

Purpose: To extend Texas A&M AgriLife Extension’s educational programs in preventing childhood overweight through the areas of gardening, nutrition, and physical activity.

Benefits of being a LGEG Volunteer:

- Assisting teachers and families with educating students about increasing behaviors associated with healthy lifestyle
- Increasing personal knowledge about gardening, nutrition and physical activity benefits to health.

Responsibilities:

The LGEG program has three areas of focus that volunteers are able to assist with. Volunteers may choose one or more of these areas to assist with classroom tasks. The three areas are gardening, nutrition, and physical activity. Specific tasks volunteers may choose from include:

Gardening	Nutrition	Physical Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assist with building garden beds</li> <li>- Assist with planting</li> <li>- Prep garden supplies before class</li> <li>- Store garden supplies after class</li> <li>- Assist teacher in the classroom with garden curriculum activities</li> <li>- Assist with garden maintenance (watering, weeding, care) during school breaks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manage nutrition exhibit during school kick-off event</li> <li>- Assist with shopping for food*</li> <li>- Prep food for recipes or tasting by cleaning, chopping, etc.*</li> <li>- Organize recipe demonstration supplies/equipment prior to demonstration</li> <li>- Assist with a recipe demonstration*</li> <li>- Clean and return recipe demonstration supplies/equipment following demonstration</li> <li>- Assist teacher in classroom with nutrition curriculum activities</li> <li>- Manage nutrition exhibit during school celebration event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Register school teams on the Walk Across Texas website</li> <li>- Assist with school kick-off event</li> <li>- Enter weekly classroom mileage</li> <li>- Enter bonus miles from families weekly</li> <li>- Chart classroom miles on a map of Texas</li> <li>- Assist in the classroom with Walk Across Texas and CATCH activities</li> <li>- Assist teachers and school staff with newsletters</li> <li>- Assist with school celebration event</li> </ul>

Qualifications:

Able to participate in Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! volunteer training. Willing to work with teachers, students, parents, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension staff on providing education, assistance, and information related to the project. School district background check requirements must be met by all volunteers prior to engaging in activities that require contact with students in the schools. Must consent to and pass a criminal background check. For recipe demonstration and food tasting volunteers, individuals must be willing to work under guidance of County Agent and pass food handlers course, when applicable and required.

Time required:

Volunteering with LGEG can be short- or long-term. You can decide what fits your schedule and other responsibilities. LGEG consists of 10 teaching concepts. Volunteers may choose to assist weekly or may choose specific activities that interest them to volunteer with.

Date

Dear [Insert Name of School] Parents and Guardians,

We are excited to share that our classroom has been chosen to participate in a project titled: Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! is a health and nutrition program supported by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and [Insert Name of ISD].

As a family, you have a great opportunity to join in the excitement and participate in this valuable project! This program promotes physical activity and builds an alliance of parents, students and school personnel to teach children and families how to be healthy for a lifetime. The Junior Master Gardener (JMG) classroom curriculum focuses on teaching classroom subjects like math, science, reading and writing through gardening lessons, hands-on gardening activities, vegetable tastings and cooking demonstrations at the school. As a family, there are many opportunities for tasting the different vegetables and sharing recipes that you can prepare for your family. Walk Across Texas (WAT) encourages people of all ages to develop the habit of walking to increase physical activity. Any physical activity during the school day, including P.E., is charted. Parents and family members of students are encouraged to provide bonus miles to their child's class by walking or being active with their children.

As a parent, how can you help? Have you ever done landscaping or carpentry work? Can you dig? Use a shovel? Are you excited to see recipe demonstrations and help the students as they taste new vegetable recipes? Do you enjoy planning and helping with class activities and kick off celebrations? Can you spend a few minutes a week entering classroom miles into an online computer program? If you can say, "Yes!" to any or all of these questions, OR if you are willing to learn how to do any of these activities, we would appreciate having your talent! Please complete and return the attached form to your child's teacher and come help us build our classroom gardens, explore new food flavors and vegetable recipes, and/or assist in the project events and kick-off celebration activities for nutrition and exercise!

Who?                      \*Students and Teachers                      \*Parents and Family Members  
                                 \*County Master Gardeners                      \*School and Community Volunteers  
   \*Anyone interested in the new classroom gardens  
   \*Anyone interested in vegetable tastings and recipe demonstrations

What?                      \*Bring with you your enthusiasm and work gloves to help us build our new garden space  
   \*Organizational skills in the kitchen  
   \*Creative ideas to celebrate health, nutrition and exercise in a kick- off event

Where?                      \*[Insert Name of School]

When?                      \*<Insert information of date and time once planned with local county staff>



## Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! Parent Feedback Form

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to help in the following ways:

\_\_\_\_\_ assist with the building of vegetable garden beds

\_\_\_\_\_ assist with the recipe/cooking demonstrations and veggie tasting needs

\_\_\_\_\_ assist with WAT materials and the planning/organizing of our kick-off celebrations

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I can't help at this time but I wish to be involved at a later date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Classroom Teacher's Name



**Our school is excited to participate in Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! A partnership with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.**

Students will enjoy planting a garden, being a part of recipe demonstrations, walking across Texas, and tasting new vegetables, all while learning!

Classroom teachers are looking for volunteers to help out with this new project.

How can you help? Have you ever done landscaping or carpentry work? Can you dig? Use a shovel? Are you excited to see recipe demonstrations and help the students as they taste new vegetable recipes? Do you enjoy planning and helping with class activities and kick off celebrations? Can you spend a few minutes a week entering classroom miles into an online computer program? If you can say, "Yes!" to any or all of these questions, OR if you are willing to learn how to do any of these activities, we would appreciate having your talent!

Please tell a teacher or any school administrator know if you would like to volunteer and be on the lookout for future Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! events.



## Other Opportunities for Identifying Volunteers

Volunteers can be identified and recruited through various methods. Each school has their own ideas for volunteer recruitment and things that have worked in the past. Please, use those experiences, in addition to the materials we have provided to do what is best at your school.

Other opportunities to recruit volunteers may be:

- Conferences between teachers and school staff (parent support specialist or liaisons, principals, counselors) to identify individuals who have volunteered in the past
- Recruitment flyers posted on classroom doors or bulletin boards
- Volunteer information booths at kick-off events, parent-teacher nights, school festivals, etc.
- PTA or PTO members

## LGEG Volunteer Training Guide Food and Gardening Demonstrations

### Food Demonstration Step-by-Step

#### Prior to demonstration or tasting event:

1. Confirm with teacher date, time, location, and number of students for tasting or demonstration.
2. Communicate date, time, and number of students tasting with Teacher for purchasing.
3. Work with Agent to determine date, time, and location to meet to pick-up food or plan to grocery shop together.
4. Wash and prep any food for demonstration or tasting.
  - a. If you are going to prepare the recipe for a large number, you may choose to prep as much of the recipe as possible, or even pre-make the recipe in order to have adequate samples. You would then only need to prepare the recipe one time at the site in order to provide the demonstration, but the samples could be stored and ready to pass out.
5. Properly store food and samples in refrigerator and make plans to safely transfer them to the school in an ice chest.
6. Gather all supplies and utensils needed for the food demonstration, and utensils needed for the tasting (cups, plates, napkins, forks, spoons, etc.).

#### Day of demonstration or tasting event:

1. Wipe down demo site with disinfectant wipes.
2. Demonstrate to the students that you will wash your hands (or use sanitizer).
3. Conduct food demonstration as written on recipe.
4. Assist students with hand sanitizer/hand washing.
5. Help to portion food into appropriate tasting samples and pass out to students.
6. Pour water into paper cups and pass water out to students.
7. Assist in cleaning up classroom and packing supplies.
8. Wash and clean all supplies and utensils used during the demonstration and securely store them.



## Gardening Demonstration Step-by-Step

Prior to garden planting and/or garden care demonstration:

1. Confirm with teacher date, time, location, and number of students for garden planting and/or garden care demonstration.
2. Communicate date, time, and number of students/classes with Teacher for purchasing of supplies, if supplies are needed.
3. Work with Agent to determine date, time, and location to meet to pick-up supplies or plan to shop together.
4. Plan for total number of volunteers needed to adequately assist total number of students/classes during the planting and/or garden care demonstration.
5. Survey garden area prior to the garden planting or garden care demonstration.
  - a. Consider space and how to best locate the students in the garden area for best viewing of planting and/or demonstration.
6. Gather all supplies needed for the garden planting and/or garden care demonstration.

Day of garden planting and/or garden care demonstration:

1. Organize all garden supplies on site prior to the arrival of the students/classes.
2. Demonstrate to the students the proper safety and rules for using gardening tools
3. Conduct garden planting and/or garden care demonstration.
4. Assist students with their planting and/or care activities following the modeling of how to perform activity by you, the volunteer.
5. Assist students in cleaning up garden area and packing supplies.
6. Inventory all garden supplies and materials used during the planting and/or demonstration and securely store them.

\*\*\*School district background check requirements must be met by all volunteers prior to engaging in activities that require contact with students in the schools.



## Suggestions and Tips

- The best start to the project will come with a **STRONG KICK-OFF** at each school.
  - Kick-off is the opportunity to recruit parent volunteers
  - Coordinate with school event that may already be happening (Meet the Teacher Night, etc.)
  - Utilize booths and exhibits you already have...make it fun and interactive
  - Have a designated spot to recruit volunteers and ask them what area they are interested in
  - Get the school excited about the project
- Offer parent education events in order to extend the educational effort from the school to the home and recruit volunteers during educational classes:
  - FCS and EFNEP Agents - coordinate education events for community members and all school parents/guardian (BLT or EFNEP series, include parents in WAT, etc.)
  - 4-H Agents - use this opportunity to recruit non-traditional 4-H members
  - Horticulture/Ag Agents - use this opportunity to train parent volunteers on home or container gardening
- Use volunteers!
  - Bring in current MWV or MG to help with project
  - Recruit new volunteers – through kick-off and by finding out what parents are already volunteering and target them
- Empower teachers to make the curriculum their own
  - Not each teacher has to implement the same concepts on the same day – the only requirement is that the concepts are implemented in sequence
  - Some teachers may prefer to spread them over a week, others may choose to do them all at once
- Interacting with the schools
  - Determine the best method by talking to the teachers and principals.
  - Things to think about:
    - Should each teacher directly contact the agent in charge of a program area or should they go through the lead teacher and the lead teacher make the contact?
    - Email, text, or phone calls?
    - Regular scheduled meetings?