

## School Garden Initial Readiness Checklist

The following checklist outlines the components essential to establish a successful school garden. Areas where the answer is unknown are likely to be trouble spots that may impede success.

### Stakeholders – Organize a garden committee and support base

- \_\_\_\_\_ Principal approval/support – This is non-negotiable. Demonstrated plan regarding how school leadership will support and develop teachers teaching outdoors. They must set aside time for the whole staff and grade levels to plan how their learning gardens will be integrated with TAKS and the district's curriculum. Commitment should be made to use the learning garden regularly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Committed Teachers – At least a few with buy in is non-negotiable. Demonstrate a well thought out plan on how all grade levels and subject matters can be taught outdoors in conjunction with state education standards.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Garden Committee – a garden team composed of teachers, parents/volunteers, and the principal. This group is non-negotiable. This group will deal with major decision making issues surrounding the garden. Example of roles can be:
  - Lead garden coordinator – main contact person and decision maker
  - Lead budget and finance coordinator – person responsible for maintaining the financial aspects of the garden. This is an ongoing position.
  - After school garden club coordinator – person responsible for maintaining the Junior Master Gardener program. Establishing and maintaining the after school program could be critical to the success of the garden.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Active internal organizations – demonstrated successful involvement from internal groups such as PTA, Site Based Boards and student clubs in areas such as fundraising and scheduled activities

### Funding and Fundraising Plan

- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine startup and maintenance costs and whether there are any funds immediately available. Considerations:
  - Is there an accounting system established?
  - Obtain a list of grants and determine who will research, write, and facilitate grants - This is a regular, ongoing activity
  - Long range fundraising plan to sustain the garden beyond the first year - This is a regular, ongoing activity
  - Who will keep track of the budget? This is a regular, ongoing activity. Typically, ongoing school garden costs average \$500 per year.
    - Budget considerations include:
      - Expenses related to installation to include water, clearing land, tilling, bed installation - One time expense
      - Soil testing and amendments - Expense may occur every 1-3 years
      - Organic material to improve soil - Annual expense
      - Tools - Annual expense
      - Water - Regularly occurring expense
      - Seeds, plants - Annual expense
      - Protection, fencing, row covers - Annual expense
      - JMG books - Annual expense
      - Material for handicap accessible walkways - Annual expense
      - Mulch - Annual expense



- Containers - Annual expense
- Labor - Regularly occurring expense

### Site Improvement Plan

\_\_\_\_\_ Establish a projects list, realistic timeline for completion of tasks, and specific objectives.

### Professional Development

\_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrated commitment to measurement and tracking. The school should be committed to measuring and tracking garden usage and educational results every year. The following educational presentations are considered helpful for a successful garden and are available through the Dallas County Master Gardener Association:

- Composting
- Vermi-composting
- Water harvesting
- Drip irrigation installation
- Vegetable production
- Fruit production
- Perennial garden – native and adapted plant selection & maintenance
- Bird and butterfly habitats and life-cycles, including pollination and beneficial insects
- Junior Master Garden training

The following is offered by other organizations:

- Training is offered through the Dallas Arboretum. More information is available at <http://www.dallasarboretum.org/ChildrenEducation/index.htm>
- 4-H and Youth Development offered through the AgriLife Extension. More information is available at <http://dallas-tx.tamu.edu/4-h-youth-development/>
- Real School Gardens offers educational information on their website. More information is available at <http://www.realschoolgardens.org/>

### Ongoing Maintenance

\_\_\_\_\_ Year Round Maintenance Schedule – School leadership should commit to maintain the garden year round, including the summer. This requires a watering/weeding/composting year round schedule developed by the garden team and supported by all teachers, staff, and community volunteers. Considerations should also be made if there are animals, such as fish, chickens, or rabbits, that are part of the garden.

### Active school garden club

\_\_\_\_\_ School leadership should commit to established an after or before school garden club. DCMGA recommends Junior Master Gardener program.

## Additional Resources

The following contains additional resources which may be helpful to establish and maintain a successful school garden.

How to Grow a School Garden: A Complete Guide for Parents and Teachers -- Arden Bucklin-Sporer

kinderGARDEN -- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kindergarten/index.html>. This is the Aggie horticulture site just for children

EarthKind-- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/>. Information about EarthKind practices

Real School Gardens -- <http://www.realschoolgardens.org/Resources.aspx>. Valuable information regarding workshops, plant databases, and curriculum ideas. At the bottom of this page, are links to grant resources.