

# School Garden Toolkit

## A "Whole" Approach to School Gardens



### Aligning your School Garden to the WSCC Model

The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's (ASCD) framework for addressing health in schools. It is student-centered and emphasizes the role of the community in supporting the school, the connections between health and academic achievement, and the importance of evidence-based school policies and practices.

Action for Healthy Kids' "A 'Whole' Approach to School Gardens" toolkit provides an overview of 7 WSCC components along with specific examples for implementation of how school gardens can impact health and well-being as it relates to the WSCC model. Additional resources are provided for family engagement, gardening at home, gardening year-round, and creating active gardens.

## Get Moving with Gardening

**Physical education and physical activity** – refers to comprehensive programming among staff, family, community, and students to provide opportunities for PE and PA before/during/after school

- **Incorporate your school garden into your physical education program.** Gardening provides the perfect example for lessons centered around active lifestyles, since it is a form of light to moderate exercise that can be performed at any age!
- **Offer garden hours** throughout the day including before, during, and after school for additional movement opportunities at your school.
- [10 Tips for an Active School Garden](#)

## Improve Nutrition Education and Food Access

**Nutrition environment and services** – includes teaching healthy eating through nutrition education and messages about healthy eating choices, as well as providing healthy food and beverage options for students through vending machines, concession stands, school stores, food carts, the cafeteria, classroom parties, celebrations, and fundraisers.

- **Use what you grow!** Based on the size of your harvest, determine the best way to distribute whether that's through school meals served in the cafeteria, at grab 'n' go kiosks, for purchase at school stores and concession stands, or for use as classroom snacks.
- **Celebrate by hosting a [harvest festival](#), [taste test](#), or [cooking class using your garden goods!](#)** Consider ways you can celebrate the individual students, classes, or grade bands who helped to grow the produce such as posters, banners, or grower awards.
- **Connect it to the Curriculum!** Check out [USDA's](#) list of free farm-to-school curriculum offerings.

## Create Opportunities for Employee Wellness

**Employee wellness** – supports student health by encouraging staff to serve as healthy role models. Fostering the health of staff increases employee effectiveness and productivity

- Brainstorm garden benefits for educators and school staff. For example, **allow staff to take home discounted or free produce.**
- **Design an outdoor teacher's lounge** located within or near your school garden.
- Gardens are also an opportunity for school staff to **practice self-management skills.**

## Transform your Physical Environment

**Physical environment** – refers to the physical condition of a school in terms of safety and addresses contaminants in the air, water, and soil

- **Before physical activity or gardening, assess and inspect the area for any hazards.** Clear walkways and other areas of any potential trip hazards. Also, check weather conditions to ensure that the air quality and weather is appropriate for outdoor activities.
- **Post garden safety rules or agreements.** Regularly reference the safety rules to ensure everyone knows how to work safely in the garden.
- **Ensure that everyone working in the garden has the appropriate protective clothing and equipment.** Gloves, long pants, and closed-toed shoes should always be worn when gardening. Make sure that any equipment is in working order, if it is not, discontinue use of the tool.
- **During the growing season, ensure your soil is healthy.** There are simple tests that can help determine if soil is healthy enough to garden.

## Strengthen Social Emotional Health

**Social and emotional climate** – refers to how students engage in school and relate to staff and other students

- **Set collective growing goals as a school.** Encourage students to create SMART goals that help to help achieve the school's total growth goal. (self-management)
- Gardening can be a great way to de-stress during the school day, but it can also be a lot of HARD work! Take time after gardening to practice [Mindful Breathing Exercises](#). (self-management)
- **Measure your community impact!** Have students analyze their community's health and identify issues that their school garden may help to address such as food access or environmental health. Have students begin by researching their chosen topic to help set goals for addressing it. Provide students with the data to evaluate their impacts such as the quantity of food grown and estimates of food consumed versus wasted. At the end of the year, students can share their success stories and celebrate their impact! (Responsible decision-making, social awareness, self-management)
- For days when students can't get out in the garden, have them create [A Garden of Their Own](#).

## Increase Family and Community Engagement

**Family engagement** – emphasizes the role staff have in working together with families to support students in their learning and development

**Community involvement** – encourages partnerships between schools and community groups, local businesses, universities, government agencies and other organizations to support students

- **Host a Farmer's Market.** Invite local vendors, farmers, nutrition experts, and community artists to join in the fun.
- Educate families on the many benefits of starting your own [Garden at Home](#).
- Additional [Tips for Family and Community Engagement](#).