

WISCONSIN SCHOOL GARDEN NETWORK BRIEF: INCORPORATING SCHOOL GARDEN LANGUAGE INTO A SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY



Research supports school gardening as a strategy to improve childhood health. Incorporating school garden language into a school wellness policy increases the sustainability of the school garden. Such language ensures students far into the future will benefit from the garden. This document serves as a guide for effectively integrating school garden language into a school wellness policy. To learn more about the importance of school wellness policies and the garden-related activities they support, see the Wisconsin School Garden Initiative Brief: *Improving Health with School Wellness Policies*.



1. EMBED SCHOOL GARDEN LANGUAGE INTO EXISTING SECTIONS

One way of integrating school gardens into a local school wellness policy is by embedding garden language into the required goals and guidelines. Below are excerpts of school garden language in wellness policies from Wisconsin school districts.

Wellness Policy Requirement: Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness.

Nutrition Education:

“Goals include, but are not limited to . . . Utilizing instructional gardens to provide students with experiences in planting, harvesting, preparation, serving, and tasting foods, including ceremonies and celebrations that observe food traditions, integrated with nutrition education and core curriculum, and articulated with state standards” -*Shorewood School District*

“Schools should provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that: includes enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant, participatory activities, such as contests, promotions, taste testing, farm visits, and school gardens.” - *Tomorrow River School District, School District of Rhinelander*

Other School-Based Activities:

“Educational activities regarding sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices (e.g., school gardens, recycling, etc.) shall be included at various times throughout the curriculum when appropriate.” - *Madison Metropolitan School District*

2. ADD A NEW SECTION DEDICATED TO SCHOOL GARDENS

A second option for integrating school gardens into a local school wellness policy is by creating a new section highlighting the school garden as a school-based activity that promotes wellness. The following is an example of school garden language which can be inserted into the school wellness policy.

Sample School Wellness Policy: School Gardens Section (Public Health Law Center¹)

School Gardens

1. The school district will support the use of school property to promote nutrition, physical activity, and curricular and co-curricular activities through school gardens. The school district will support the sustainability of school gardens through activities including, but not limited to, fundraising, solicitation of community donations, use of existing resources, and allocation of school district funds.
2. School gardens ensure students have the opportunity to experience planting, harvesting, preparing, serving, and tasting self-grown food that reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the student population. The school district supports the incorporation of school gardens into the standards-based curriculum as a hands-on, interdisciplinary teaching tool to influence student food choices and lifelong eating habits.
3. The superintendent has the authority to designate school property as a school garden and negotiate the terms of the agreements and licenses needed to create and maintain a school garden. The superintendent will ensure that the development of a school garden includes necessary coordination with appropriate representatives of the school buildings and grounds department.
4. The superintendent, with the assistance of the School Health Council [aka School Wellness Committee], will develop guidelines for school gardens. These superintendent guidelines will include:
 - a. Explanation of how the school garden program fits the standards-based curriculum and curriculum guidelines of the school district;
 - b. How the costs of the school garden, including materials, supplies, water, and personnel, will be funded;
 - c. How the school garden will be maintained during and outside of the school year, including identification of school staff who will supervise and maintain the garden; and
 - d. How the school garden will be used and how the harvest of the garden will be distributed.
5. The superintendent or designee will review existing school board policy and recommend updates to any other school board policies to incorporate the goals and objectives of school gardens, including school grounds, curriculum and community use policies.

¹ Retrieved July 15, 2013, from <http://publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/ship-fs2-schoolwellnesssamplepolicylanguage-2011SchoolGardens.pdf>

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