Planning Your School Garden Program
Trainer Outline

Section Theme

This is potentially the most significant section of the training. Using the information and resources that have been presented, participants ideally work in school teams to develop their vision and action plans for starting and sustaining their school gardens. This guided planning process moves through three distinct steps in which participants begin broadly by developing a vision and end specifically with team members assigning defined tasks to complete over the next few months.

Logistics

Time: 60-90 minutes depending upon level of discussion. This can also be accomplished in separate shorter sessions, for example as 15-minute periods spread throughout an entire workshop day. For a team that meets regularly, these exercises can be spread over weekly meetings. In addition, any part of this could be conducted with children or youth or in a mixed group that includes both students and adults.

Location: Table work space, either indoors or out
Workshop goals addressed:
- Participants will have an initial plan for their school garden program.
- Participants will believe that creating and sustaining an educational garden program is an attainable goal.

Handouts:
- Developing a Vision for your School Garden
- Thinking Ahead: Setting Your Garden Goals
- Building a Support Network
- Breaking it Down to Build it Up: Planning Your Next Steps Forward
- Year-Round Garden Guidelines and Tasks

Gardens for Learning pages:
- Planning Your School Garden, 13 – 19
- Sustaining Your School Garden 78 - 92

Web Resources
- Check for web resource on Planning School Garden Programs
  at www.lifelab.org/csgt

Materials:
- CSYSG handouts and resources from other sections may be useful during this final planning section and should be available.
- (Optional) Price List from local supplier of garden tools and building materials

Introduction

(Discussion)
Give brief introductory comments that address broad issues such as the following:

- Having a plan is important. Plans provide continuity in schools where volunteers, teachers, and students come and go. The planning process requires that teams articulate priorities and chart a path forward together.
- It's okay to take baby steps. Things generally take longer than you expect them to, so set reasonable goals.
- Keep the child in mind throughout. This process is about them and their school, and they can be engaged in meaningful ways throughout.

Remind participants of the types of information they may need to consider or consult in planning. Some of these are covered in other workshop sections. They include:
- Garden design information (site selection, beds and paths, storage, compost systems, gathering space)
- Supplies and funding (tools, bed materials, seeds and plants, teaching materials)
- Guidelines for developing the garden (building beds, setting up irrigation, planting)
- Planting and harvest times for both annuals and perennials
- Connections to curriculum (choosing grade levels and content areas)
- Ideas for celebrations (harvesting and eating, garden parties, spreading the word)

Developing a School Garden Plan

(Team planning session)
Handouts: Developing a Vision; Thinking Ahead: Setting Your Goals; Breaking it Down to Build it Up: Planning Your Next Steps; Year-Round Garden Guidelines and Tasks

How your group approaches the work of planning will depend upon your group size, how many schools they come from, how far along they are in the process of school garden development, and how well they already know one another.

It is best if participants can work with their school teams for this activity. If that is not possible, have individuals work on these prompts keeping their entire team in mind, and suggest that they complete these same prompts at a later date with their school team.

During the workshop, try matching participants from different schools with gardens at a similar stage of development and have them work together and discuss issues. Review your registration ahead of time and if possible, plan for ways you might group participants to make the most out of this session.

Developing a Vision and Goal Setting
Start with "Developing a Vision." Have everyone work first as individuals and then come together in school teams or as described above to respond to prompts on the handout. This will guide them to an initial shared vision. Then they move on to "Thinking Ahead: Setting Your Garden Goals," which guides them through setting goals for the next several months, the next year, and the next five years.

Building Your Support Network

Next, have participants consider who is on their broader school garden team and those people they are currently missing on their team. Briefly discuss basic points about teams and the necessity and value of teams in a school garden program. It is crucial to think in terms of a broad team of support in the wider school and community that will sustain a program over the long haul.

Facilitate a brainstorming session on how schools will build a team and keep it alive and thriving. Use the following questions.   Write them on a board in three columns:

WHO can be a resource for your garden program?	HOW can you involve these people to build a team?	HOW can you KEEP people involved?
This includes both people who will eventually be team members along with people who can provide intermittent support.	PTA meetings, Back-to-school nights, announcements, celebrations, work days, etc.	This includes everything from divvying up tasks to newsletters and media to seasonal celebrations.

Share ideas from different school contexts. Wrap up this exercise by using "Building a Support Network" to check that your brainstorm has been comprehensive.

Planning Next Steps

With vision and goals set and a support network in mind, teams can move on to determining specific tasks needed to accomplish a goal during this next year. Using "Breaking it Down to Build It Up: Planning Your Next Steps Forward," they fill in details for each task. Participants can refer to "Year-Round Garden Guidelines and Tasks" and other resources to help integrate timing of plantings, garden maintenance and harvests when needed. They can use cost estimates for materials and supplies to plan for funding needs.

While teams fill out worksheets, trainers circulate around the room to answer questions, check progress, offer suggestions, etc.

Wrap-up

(Large Group Sharing)
Group comes back together for a wrap up. There are many ways to do this effectively. The trainer may have to choose at the moment what is appropriate, given time and group dynamics. *Do* allow for brief, meaningful sharing but avoid a report-back session that becomes tedious before all groups have had a chance to present. One strategy for this is to ask to hear just two visions, and up to 3 tasks. Alternatively, you can have groups or individuals pair up to share, listen, and troubleshoot their "Breaking it Down" tasks with each other.

Congratulate everyone on their completion of hard planning work and encourage them to accomplish their stated goals.