Next Steps from a School Gardening Partnership Conference (AGES: Academic Gardening to Enrich our Students): Expanding the Impact of School Gardens Through Higher Education, K-12 School and Community Coalitions

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Next Steps from a School Gardening Partnership Conference
(AGES: Academic Gardening to Enrich our Students)
Expanding the Impact of School Gardens Through Higher Education,
K-12 School & Community Coalitions

Why a Conference?
- School gardens are valuable: ↑ veggie consumption, friendships, respect for other cultures, science achievement
- The local Regional Environmental Council (REC) supports gardens at 25 Worcester schools with construction, seeds, volunteers, in-classroom curricula and direct programming. REC identified summer maintenance as a big challenge.
- Worcester State University, Rep. Jim McGovern & Worcester Food Policy Council teamed up to promote partnerships to support gardens

Preparation
Assessments
What do K-12 schools need? (REC Assessment)
Volunteers, knowledge, partnerships, summer watering, parent involvement, CORI checks
How can higher ed. benefit?
- Student projects (nutrition, Natural Sciences, Education, Urban Studies, Biology
- Problem solving, interdisciplinary learning, applied learning
- Challenges: Other priorities, time, funding, knowledge

A Model Partnership
Worcester State University Teaching Garden
- Management: The Urban Action Institute (Urban Studies)
- Mission: Inclusive learning, food & environment education, shared commitment to food justice
- Programming: 1-credit courses, community days, summer programs, class visits, "CSA"
- Partnerships: Chandler Magnet Elementary, Bet Shalom, Girls Inc., Community Connections, REC
- Funding: Stable year-long university funding

Participant Ideas for Next Steps for Worcester School Gardens
1. How can partnerships keep gardens going?
   - Fund a Coordinator of Volunteers to connect assets, people and information
   - Share seeds, tools, knowledge, volunteers
   - Seek new funding together

2. How do we build school gardens into the fabric of our community?
   - Reach out to places of worship, Senior Center, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, food pantries for volunteers
   - Join the local school garden networks with REC
   - Network/collaborate with potlucks, problem solving

3. How can greater collaboration address food security & food justice in our city?
   - Grow food for diverse communities by students & families making planting decisions, new seeds, translating information, inviting local gardeners
   - Increase food security by suburban/urban partnership, corporate sponsorships, larger gardens, sharing produce with food bank
   - Urban Agriculture!
   - Edible landscaping with apple and other fruit trees
   - Teach about gardening, cooking, eating, nutrition
   - Create and Share – New garden plans?
   - Solve problems - New watering ideas?

Join Us! Share your research ideas, action ideas, time! Contact Grace Sliwoski (REC): grace@recworcester.org