

# Grove Foundation Garden to Table Program School Support Network Tool Kit

Encouraging healthy eating habits in our children can be challenging. More and more parents and communities are realizing that advertising which targets kids and promotes foods of minimal nutritional value is contributing to escalating rates of childhood obesity and preventable diseases. The industrialization of the food system has also left children disconnected from the food they eat. The Grove Foundation is working to counteract these negative trends by providing opportunities for children to learn where food comes from, how it is grown, and what dietary choices they can make for personal and planetary health. Our programs are helping to ensure the wellbeing of our children—now and in the future.

## Garden to Table Program

One of the easiest ways for people to enjoy a lifetime of wellness is to cultivate healthy lifestyles during childhood. Healthy eating habits are built on personal experiences with growing food, learning about nutrition, and preparing and eating fresh meals. The Garden to Table program supports these early life experiences by guiding elementary schools through a detailed process that brings teachers, parents, students, and community together. The theme-based program allows teachers to integrate lessons with core curriculum and provides students with hands-on learning opportunities that lead to wellness and connection to their community and natural environment.

## Garden to Table Components

The goal of the Garden to Table program is to enrich student education, build strong communities, and foster a school culture in which students live healthy and environmentally sustainable lifestyles. Four components help us achieve our goal. The first one is connecting children to people in the community who understand how to work in harmony with nature to grow food. The second component provides students with knowledge about how their lifestyle choices affect personal and planetary wellness, through education about organic gardens, nutrition, culinary traditions, and the importance of environmental sustainability. The third component of our work focuses on skill-building activities such as gardening, cooking, healthy eating, and environmentally sustainable practices. Finally, the fourth component empowers students to apply what they have learned in our programs to their everyday lives.



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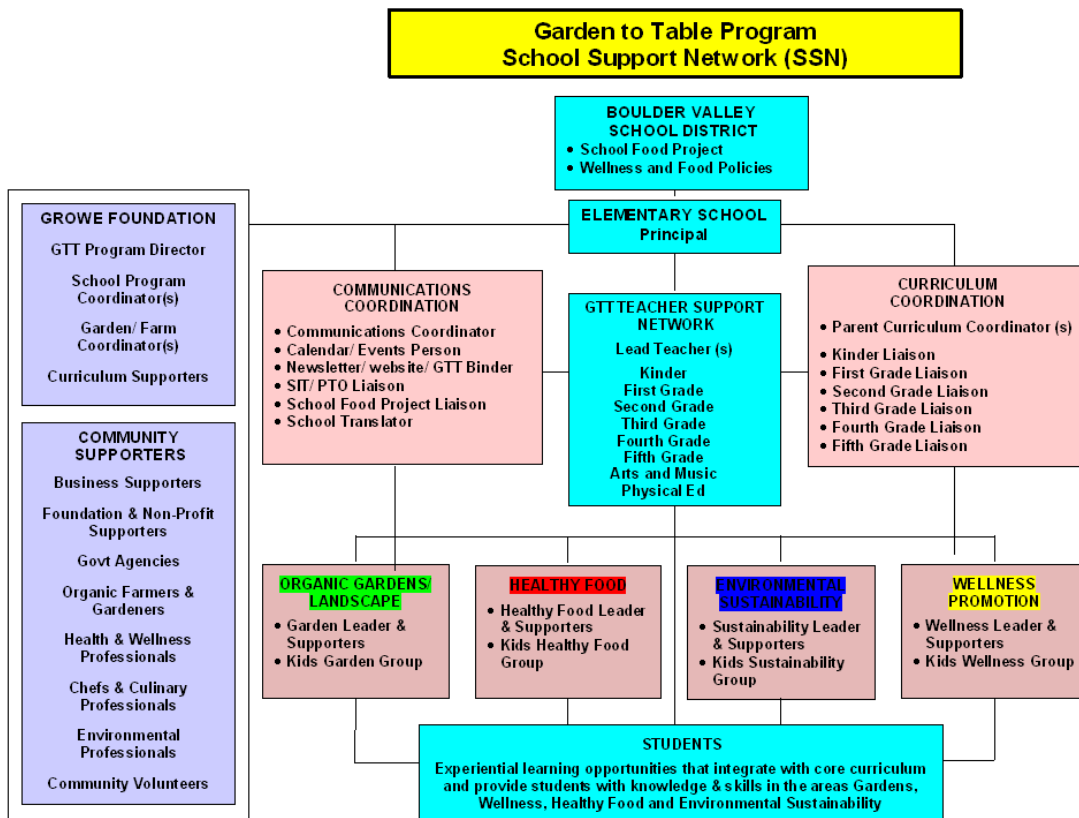
## Garden to Table- Four Areas of Focus

The Garden to Table program aims to build knowledge and skills in four areas that are essential to children living healthy and sustainable lifestyles. The four areas of focus are:

1. **Organic Vegetable Gardens:** Through hands-on learning opportunities, children develop a connection to the food they put in their bodies. They also gain knowledge about the ecosystems that support its growth by learning about the complex interrelationships between plants, insects, soil and people. Students develop the skills needed to grow an organic garden by participating in planting, weeding, and harvesting.
2. **Wellness Promotion:** Lessons on personal wellness teach students about their nutritional needs and how to make healthy eating choices.
3. **Healthy Food:** Meal preparation skills, combined with knowledge of different culinary traditions, encourage students to practice making healthy food choices.
4. **Environmental Sustainability:** Students become good stewards of the planet by learning about biodiversity, the scarcity of natural resources, and the skills needed to live an environmentally sustainable lifestyle.

## Garden to Table - School Support Network

School personnel, parents, students, and the community work together with the Grove Foundation to implement the Garden to Table programs and to make them successful. Providing students with meaningful learning experiences requires careful planning and coordination of activities. The School Support Network, outlined below, provides the infrastructure needed for schools to successfully implement and manage their programs.



Each of the roles below has been created to fulfill a specific purpose, while ensuring that each person's workload is manageable and that the whole network runs efficiently. The Grove Foundation works carefully with each school to recruit skilled and motivated people, taking care to not duplicate the efforts of existing

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committees and school activities. Participants in the School Support Network interface with each other and are responsible for coordinating activities, implementing tasks, generating ideas, solving problems, and communicating in a timely manner.

### Grove Foundation Roles

The role of the Grove Foundation is to provide the program model, professional expertise, training and resources for schools to successfully implement and manage their own Garden to Table (GTT) program. These Grove Foundation personnel have the following roles and responsibilities:

- **GTT Program Director:** The Program Director oversees the relationships between the Grove Foundation and our community supporters (businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies) and schools with Garden to Table programs. The Program Director is also responsible for managing the relationships between Grove Program Coordinators and individual School Support Networks.
- **School Program Coordinators:** These individuals help schools with the implementation and management of their Garden to Table programs. Program Coordinators provide schools with advice during the setup of the School Support Network, assist with training participants in their roles, and help with goal setting and overall program management. They are responsible for helping schools develop the scope of their program through the building of knowledge, skills, and best practices. The school program coordinators can help coordinate people from the curriculum support team to help schools with curriculum integration activities.
- **School Garden/ Farm Coordinators:** These individuals are responsible for helping the Garden Group, Curriculum Coordinators, and teachers plan their gardens. They work with the Master Gardeners and other Community Partners to help the Garden Group successfully create and maintain their onsite organic vegetable gardens. The coordinators monitor the schools' Garden Schedule, attending activities whenever possible and providing schools with material resources and expertise. They can also assist with farm-school visits and relationships. **Curriculum Support Team:** Individuals with specific areas of expertise relevant to the Garden to Table program act as a support resource for School Support Networks. These people are available to assist School Support Networks with developing hands-on learning opportunities and lesson plans that tie into core curriculum. In addition to their knowledge, these people are often role models and share meaningful experiences with the students that create lasting memories. Experts who have volunteered for the program include gardeners, nutritionists, chefs and environmental scientists.

### Community Supporter Roles

The Grove Foundation works with the community and an array of supporters to make our program possible. They include:

- **Business Supporters:** Businesses assist the program through their generous funding, in-kind donations, and employee volunteers.
- **Foundations and Non-Profits:** These organizations support the program with grants and strategic alliances that strengthen our operational and program effectiveness.
- **Organic Farmers and Gardeners:** Farmers and gardeners offer their expertise in creating and maintaining healthy organic gardens. They also provide in-kind donations and farm visit opportunities.
- **Health & Wellness Professionals:** Individual experts and representatives from local organizations assist the program by sharing their expertise with schools. These professionals include doctors, nurses, nutritionists, and athletes.
- **Chefs & Culinary Professionals:** Chefs from local restaurants and culinary schools enrich the program by sharing their expertise on how to prepare healthy meals from the school gardens.
- **Environmental Professionals:** Individual experts and representatives from local organizations assist the program by sharing their expertise in environmental sustainability with schools.
- **Community Volunteers:** Citizens from the community donate their time and skills to support the program through a variety of tasks for Grove Foundation.

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## District and School Roles

Garden to Table programs provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships between schools and the community and to positively impact education in the areas of health and social and environmental responsibility.

- **Boulder Valley School District:** The role of the district is to assist the Garden to Table program by creating policies and providing resources that support healthy and sustainable living in schools. School district personnel can ensure that the program is successful by supporting the professional development of teachers and by providing departmental assistance for our programs.
- **Elementary Schools & Principals:** The role of the schools is to partner with the Grove Foundation by providing access to the people (staff, parents, and students) who can help teach children about health and environmental issues. The Garden to Table program gives parents an opportunity to get more involved in the education and well-being of their children. This helps to strengthen the school environment and to minimize the development of at-risk behaviors in youth. The role of the principal is to provide the leadership necessary for the successful implementation and management of a Garden to Table program at the school. The principal is responsible for decision-making processes within the School Support Network, for supporting teachers with curriculum integration to benefit student learning, and for supporting parents and students within the program in order to promote a healthy school environment.
- **GTT Teacher Support Network:** The Teacher Support Network is a professional learning community of teachers that works collaboratively on the Garden to Table curriculum. This group keeps faculty informed of program activities and seeks parent/community support for Garden to Table lessons via the Parent Curriculum Coordinator(s) and/or Grade Level Liaisons. Class Teachers are responsible for integrating curriculum units with the Garden to Table program and for providing students with meaningful hands-on experiences that enrich learning and meet content standards.
- **Students:** The role of students is to work with their peers and to mentor younger students in Garden to Table activities, during recess and before or after school. Students who have an interest in nature can be involved in gardening, weeding, and research of insects. Those who enjoy sports, fitness, and health can get involved in wellness-related activities such as biking, running, and soccer. Students who are interested in food and cooking can help teach other students to make healthy food choices and how to prepare healthy meals or snacks. Finally, students who are passionate about protecting the environment can get involved in activities related to sustainable living, such as reducing energy use, zero waste, and composting.

## School Support Network Roles

The role of the School Support Network is to maintain the infrastructure necessary for successfully implementing and managing the Garden to Table program at the schools. By carefully selecting and managing participants, the School Support Network is able to effectively plan, communicate, and coordinate activities and to assess the program's success. There are a variety of roles and responsibilities within the School Support Network:

- **Communications Coordinator(s):** This individual is responsible for Garden to Table communications and marketing within the schools. The Communications Coordinator sends information to the various School Support Network participants, ensures that all program activities are well coordinated, and makes sure that Garden to Table accomplishments (news, stories, photos, etc.) are included in school agendas, websites, Friday folders, etc. The person who serves in this role should be a strong community organizer, communicator, and promoter. We recommend a co-coordinator and the development of a Communications Support Team to help with some of the following tasks:

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- Keeping a School Master Calendar that includes BVSD holidays, School Events, and Garden to Table program activities (planting, harvests, etc.).
- Marketing the Garden to Table program to potential parent volunteers.
- Advertising program news and progress to the school community via school newsletters, bulletin boards, websites, and the school's GTT Notebook.
- Updating committees or representatives (such as PTO, PTA, and SIT) on GTT program accomplishments and progress with jointly shared goals.
- Interfacing with district initiatives such as the Parent Engagement Network, the School Food Project, and Coordinated School Health.
- Outreach to parents and students for whom English is a second language.
- **Curriculum Coordinator(s):** This individual is responsible for coordinating teachers and parents in all matters related to class lessons and curriculum integration. The role of this person(s) is to support teachers' Garden to Table lessons by coordinating parent/community volunteers and by procuring materials and anything else the teacher may need to provide students with hands-on lessons. In an effort to keep the tasks of the Curriculum Coordinator (s) manageable, we recommend recruiting parent liaisons for each grade level or class. The Curriculum Coordinator and Grade Level Liaisons should be great organizers, good communicators, and have an interest in the academic learning of students. These liaisons will be able to help the Curriculum Coordinators with:
  - Supporting teachers with their curriculum integration efforts by procuring materials and people to help during hands-on lessons.
  - Helping the Communications Coordinator to keep class parents informed of Garden to Table news, activities (planting, harvests, etc.), and volunteer opportunities.
- **Organic Gardens/ Landscape Group:** This group is responsible for managing the school vegetable gardens and any other learning landscapes. They interface with community supporters (farmers, master gardeners, landscapers, etc.), teachers, and students. This group plans and organizes garden and landscape activities (planting, harvesting, etc.) and may assist teachers during outdoor lessons in the garden. This is the group for people who enjoy the outdoors, gardening, and landscapes.
- **Wellness Promotion Group:** This group is responsible for promoting wellness to students, families, and staff within the schools. They interface with program partners from the community (health experts, nutritionists, athletes, etc.) and are responsible for organizing wellness activities such as Walk to School, Bike to School, Wellness Nights, and other events. This group assists teachers with wellness promotion during any health and nutrition lessons and is for people interested in fitness, nutrition, and health.
- **Healthy Food Group:** This group is responsible for organizing and coordinating activities related to eating healthy food. They interface with community supporters such as restaurant chefs and are responsible for organizing activities that help students develop meal preparation skills and knowledge of different culinary traditions. The group encourages students to practice making healthy food choices at school events and during any culinary lessons. This group is for people with an interest in food and cooking.
- **Environmental Sustainability Group:** This group is responsible for environmental sustainability activities at the school. They interface with program partners from the community and are responsible for organizing activities such as zero waste, solar energy projects, school worm bins, and other projects. This group assists teachers with lessons related to environmental sustainability and is for people interested in nature, environmental issues, and sustainability.
- **Garden to Table Volunteers:** Every participant in the Garden to Table program has an opportunity to be a positive role model to others through their contributions, actions, and commitment to the program. Everyone is responsible for sharing knowledge, skills, resources, and ideas so that the program can meet school and student needs. Volunteers are valued for their caring, respectful, and responsive behavior towards other Garden to Table participants.