

## **4-H Sustainable Schools Garden Teacher/Volunteer Handbook Communicator Award-Educational Piece Team**

Most Oregonians recognize that a strong investment in high quality formal and informal education is essential if we are to prepare our children for productive employment, healthful lifestyles, knowledgeable and contributing citizenship, strong family formation, and other adult responsibilities. Major reforms in organizations that serve children and families, the sum total of institutional response to these problems, have thus far been inadequate. To some extent our shortcomings can be attributed to a lack of essential services, less funding during an economic down turn and diminishing resources. If all children and youth are to flourish as a society we must do a better job of publicly supporting families and communities.

In communities across Oregon families and schools are facing challenging times. Oregon ranks third in the percentage of hunger. Close to one third of Oregon schools qualify for free and reduced meals as reported on the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) website. Childhood obesity is growing at epidemic proportions and many families face food insecurity. Limited natural resources and a growing concern about a generation of youth who are largely disconnected from nature is at an all-time high. Oregon residents now more than ever are looking for new ways to address these issues, live more sustainably, and prepare the next generation for a world with more limited resources. It is widely recognized that attention to living sustainably will require all Oregonians to actively be aware of the environmental, social and economic needs of our present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The OSU Extension 4-H Sustainable Schools program is an innovative program that is training a cadre of adult volunteer 4-H Sustainable Schools **coaches** to work with teachers and students to create, use and maintain sustainable living projects and gardens on school grounds. Today during lunch breaks, after school and on weekends, young people are working side-by-side with adult 4-H Sustainable Schools Coaches to transform 41 small plots of land into wildlife habitat and food gardens. They promote 1) learning to support what is happening in the classroom across all areas of the curriculum 2) healthy living and 3) stewardship among youth by inspiring, educating and connecting communities, schools and organizations.

The 130-page 4-H Sustainable School Gardens Teacher/Leader Handbook is a new curriculum designed for volunteers and teachers who are creating, using and sustaining food and wildlife gardens on school grounds.

### **Objectives:**

- To provide teachers and volunteers with the research-based information, tools and resources to create, use and sustain food and wildlife gardens on school grounds
- To ensure school gardens endure over time by giving teachers and volunteers the tools they need to ensure “best practices” are used when creating and using school gardens for education

### **Publishers Requirements**

In order to meet the above objectives, the requirements for this educational piece was to:

- Use the research-based information, knowledge and best practices of the 4H youth program, FCH program and Master Gardener programs.
- Design the curriculum for using online by incorporating links to websites and a table of contents that allows the reader to link directly to websites from the online document (please note: the attached document has been transferred to a pdf file so links will not work).
- Provide flexibility so that as new research emerges the document can be easily updated and the different modules could stand-alone.
- Ensure that the chapters and units coincide with the training modules in the 4H Sustainable Schools Garden training (a 24 hour training program).

### **Impact Results**

This education curriculum is being used for the first time this year. However, early evaluation results through informal surveys with teachers and leaders reveal that this educational piece is very worthwhile and is used frequently by the 4-H Sustainable School Garden Coaches. Several coaches reported that they have shared this curriculum with other parents and teachers and administrators at their school.

A recent survey was sent out to 9 counties in Oregon to 4H leaders, FCH volunteers, Master Gardeners

and OSU Extension school partners to assess the need and interest in school garden training and support. To date over 74 Oregonians have responded. Seventy-nine percent of those who responded reported that curriculum and research materials for school gardens from OSU Extension is very to extremely important. This strong demonstration of need for school garden curriculum was true for all respondents whether their school had no school garden or they already had an existing vibrant school garden. In fact 70% of the 24 respondents who reported that they have a vibrant and robust school garden also felt that curriculum and resources from OSU Extension was very to extremely important. This new curriculum helps meet these needs.

### **Target Audience**

This educational piece was distributed to all teachers, parents and community partners who participated in the 4-H Sustainable Schools Teacher/Leader Training. The curriculum is designed to be updated and used with all volunteers and teachers who participate in OSU School Garden programs.

### **Current Population**

- 28 parent and teacher volunteers participated in the Fall 2011 4H Sustainable School Gardens training and received the curriculum
- An additional 157 active 4-H Sustainable Schools Garden coaches are eligible to receive this curriculum at their request.
- The table of contents is shared with all prospective teachers, school administrators, parent volunteers and community partners who are interested in partnering with OSU Extension 4-H.

### **Methods used**

This educational piece was developed, copied on jump drives and distributed to new 4-H Sustainable School Garden *coaches* (teachers/volunteers).

The 4-H Wildlife Stewards Volunteer Handbook, developed, written and distributed with a grant from National Science Foundation, served as a model for the development of this new curriculum. Many of the original writers of the 4-H Wildlife Stewards handbook served on the team for writing this handbook.

The Handbook team met 3-4 times over the course of 4 months to review teacher/volunteer evaluations and input on their educational needs. They also reviewed current and emerging research in the school garden movement. The evaluations were conducted following the three 4H Sustainable School Garden trainings that were conducted in 2010. Based on the current and emerging research and the feedback of these newly trained volunteers and teachers, the Handbook team developed a list of 20 “most important” education modules. Once the group was able to narrow down the education modules to 20, each faculty member was assigned one or more modules. These assignments were based on the expertise of the faculty member. The faculty members spent the next four months developing their education modules. This included writing for the curriculum handbook, developing a lesson plan for the training, and developing any support materials or handouts.

Photos collected from a variety of sources- 4-H faculty, teachers, and 4H leaders- were incorporated into the curriculum. The photos and curriculum modules were then brought together, edited and put in an eye pleasing design using Microsoft Word. In order to save time and money, the curriculum was published on a jump drive and each participant received a jump drive of the curriculum, power point presentations and curriculum appendixes. 40 copies of the curriculum were printed on the jump drive.

### **Production Costs**

Approximately \$1500 in staff time for a temporary staff to edit and prepare the final educational piece from faculty contributions. The curriculum was copied and printed on jump drives. Each jump drive cost \$7.00.

### **Applicants Role**

The applicants for this award provided leadership to deciding on the needed curriculum modules, developing curriculum guidelines and then writing specific sections of this educational piece.

NOTE: Due to the size of the file, only a sample of the curriculum handbook has been submitted for review