



PTO Project Proposal

Submitted By: Sarah Eichberger and Parent Garden Team ; Date Submitted: September 21
Submission Cycle (circle one): October 1st

Description:

This proposal seeks funds to **support re-establishing a school garden** at Eastern Elementary. Funds requested will support one-time purchases needed to establish infrastructure. A more detailed proposal is attached.

Key points to share: 1) Support from Principal Ruskowski, a group of 17 parents and a handful of teachers, and community groups have been identified. 2) Published research helps to support and demonstrate benefits associated with school gardens. These benefits include physical health and mental well-being, willingness to try and eat vegetables, academic achievement, and food literacy. 3) A site has been identified on the south end of the school next to water access and with solid sun exposure. This site has also been surveyed with Eastern facilities and Principal Ruskowski. 4) The parent team has developed a draft vision, mission and values statement which offer purpose and direction.

Our Vision is that the Eastern Elementary School Garden is a place where students, staff and parents can grow community and connection, support health and wellness and serve as an opportunity to deepen knowledge and experience on how food grows.

Our Mission is that the garden will serve as a place to support curiosity and foster opportunity for fun and memorable hands-on learning in an outdoor environment, while serving as a source of pride and beautification.

Our Values are to be welcoming, intentional, and respectful.

Budget:

An amount of \$1,876 is requested to support key infrastructure needs.

Metal raised beds, 4, 17" 6 x 2 - \$796

Soil and compost – \$250-300

Small garden equipment - \$400

Vegetable seeds and starts (anticipate some donated)- \$200

Split rail fencing and posts - \$205

Landscaping fabric - \$25

*Note, a local donation request for some of these items has also been submitted to the Traverse City Lowes in late September. Currently waiting to hear outcome.

Timeline:

Fall/early winter: Further garden planning and preparation if funds are secured. Build awareness and continued interest among the school community. Students will be encouraged to participate in aspects of planning such as plant selection and spacing and other leadership opportunities.

Students and interested classrooms can engage in starting seeds for spring in the classroom.

Spring: Garden beds, soil/compost and small equipment ordered. Inclusive and fun workdays scheduled and organized.

Early planting of hearty vegetables.

Classroom engagement.

Plan for summer maintenance.

Late spring and summer: Continued planting, harvesting and maintenance. The possibility of a summer garden club is an opportunity with support from MSU Extension.

Does this proposal support Eastern Elementary School PTO's bylaws (see below)? Yes

- To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child.
- To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, and the community.
- To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for every child the highest advantages in physical, mental, and social education.
- To secure and distribute funds to enhance the educational opportunities at Eastern.

For PTO use only:

Approved: Yes No Principal Approval: _____ PTO Approval:

_____ Requires a Vote: Yes No

September 2022

Prepared by: Sarah Eichberger MPH, RDN and Eastern Parent with support from Eastern Parent School Garden Team

Proposed activity: Re-establishing a school garden at Eastern Elementary

Summary

This proposal aims to summarize key ideas and information associated with the proposed activity of re-establishing a school garden on the grounds of Eastern Elementary.

School gardens can serve as an instructional tool and as a hands-on, interdisciplinary classroom for students of all ages. Published research has noted several benefits. Among the list includes positive relationships between school gardens and academic achievement, increase in child willingness to try and consume fruits and vegetables, supportive of physical activity and behavior, mental health and well-being. School and community gardens are also associated with fostering a sense of connection and community.

Eastern School Community Interest and Engagement- Gathering Support

Two short surveys were distributed among Eastern staff and parents in May/June 2022 to determine a level of interest and possible future engagement among parents and educators. Overall, results of the surveys were supportive of interest and participation.

Teacher survey results at a glance:

- 7 total responses
- All responses indicated some level of interest, with 3 of the 7 noting “great”, 2 “moderate” and 2 “minimum”
- Science was the primary discipline noted for possible garden connection, followed by a variety of other topic areas
- Respondents selected a range of possible support topics of interest, including youth empowerment, connecting with classroom learning goals, and garden-enhanced nutrition education.
- 4 staff indicated they would be interested in participating on a future garden team

Parent survey results at a glance:

- 32 total responses
- 60% of responses indicated their level of interest in a school garden as “great”
- When it comes to ways parents would like to be involved, the top 3 were 1) support garden development, maintenance, and harvest, 2) participate in a garden club with students, and 3) help purchase, or acquire donated supplies/materials. Many parents noted they'd be happy to help in more than one way.
- 17 parents indicated they would be interested in participating on a future garden team

In addition to this input, Principal Ruskowski has offered supportive guidance as well as an opportunity to identify an interested “teacher champion” to support connection to school curriculum and learning.

Community Assets

Our greater community includes other organizations that could lend expertise and be supportive of a school garden. Some of these include:

- The Friendly Garden Club of Traverse City, potential support for some funding and expertise
- The Botanic Garden at the Historic Barns, support offered in areas of plant selection
- Northwest Educational Services [Farm to School](#) Team
- [MSU Extension 4-H](#) lead special interest club - Junior Master Garden
- MSU Extension Northern Michigan [Master Garden](#) Volunteers

Gathering a Team and Establishing Purpose

A team of dedicated supporters, or an Eastern School Garden is needed to help direct elements of establishing, maintaining and celebrating a school garden. To date, the group of interested parents have helped by measuring the proposed space, identifying other potential sources of funding, and contributed to the development of a vision, mission and values.

Our Vision is that the Eastern Elementary School Garden is a place where students, staff and parents can grow community and connection, support health and wellness and serve as an opportunity to deepen knowledge and experience on how food grows.

Our Mission is that the garden will serve as a place to support curiosity and foster opportunity for fun and memorable hands-on learning in an outdoor environment, while serving as a source of pride and beautification.

Our Values are to be welcoming, intentional, and respectful.

Proposed Size and Placement

The location shown here has been identified as the best option based on access to water and sun exposure. This site is on the south side of the school, near the playground, currently an area of mostly dirt and some grass. Water could be accessed via a “water key.” Additionally, this site could be aesthetically enhanced by future garden beds, somewhat protected by the school walls and also has more flexibility in bed placement and possible future growth.

Using metal raised beds has been offered as an option. The 17” tall 6’ x 2’ options will lend well to young



children using them and general accessibility of the bed. An example of this raised bed style can be [found here](#). The garden could start with a few with the potential to expand to additional beds given teacher interest and space.

Potential Timeline

Fall/early winter: Further garden planning and preparation if funds are secured. Build awareness and continued interest among the school community. Students will be encouraged to participate in aspects of planning such as plant selection and spacing and other leadership opportunities. Students and interested classrooms can engage in starting seeds for spring in the classroom.

Spring: Garden beds, soil/compost and small equipment ordered. Inclusive and fun work days scheduled and organized.

Early planting of hearty vegetables.

Plan for summer maintenance.

Late spring and summer: Continued planting, harvesting and maintenance. The possibility of a summer garden club is an opportunity with support from MSU Extension.

Proposed Initial Garden Cost Range:

| Item | Cost Range | Item |
|--|-----------------|--|
| Metal raised beds (4) if using the 17" tall 6 x 2 metal option | \$796 | vego garden 17" Tall 6 In 1 Modular Metal Raised Garden Bed Kit - Pearl White VB6N117W - The Home Depot 17" Tall 9 in 1 Modular Metal Raised Garden Bed Vego Garden |
| Soil and compost for appropriate levels for 4 raised beds | \$250-300 | Krull's Composting (krullscomposting.com) . This site will deliver and has worked with other TCAPS school gardens. |
| Vegetable seeds and starts - anticipate some donated | \$200 | |
| Wood chips | No cost - TCAPS | |
| Small garden equipment -mix of donated used items and purchased (watering cans, hose and nozzle, shovels, trowels, etc.) | \$400 | |

| | | |
|--|-----------|--|
| Landscaping fabric and cardboard layers | \$25.48 | Sta-Green Premium Landscape Fabric (Common: 3-ft x 100-ft; Actual: x 100-ft) in the Landscape Fabric department at Lowes.com |
| Split rail fencing and posts | 205.44 | Severe Weather 2-in x 4-in x 10-ft Western Red Cedar Wood Fence Top Rail in the Wood Fence Rails department at Lowes.com |
| Plant starts and seeds - seeds are often donated by companies for school gardens | \$150-200 | |

Total cost range: \$1,876

Proposed funding sources:

- Eastern Elementary Parent Teacher Organization Budget
- The Friendly Garden Club of Traverse City
- Traverse City Lowes
- School garden grants, [like these](#) and others which mostly open January-March of the year.