Leadership: Principals as Champions of School Gardens

Principal Panel
Thomas Benson  *Pilot Knob Elementary*
Brian Ingemann  *Oak Grove Middle School*
Micheal Thompson  *Gordon Parks High School*

Kirsten Saylor, Facilitator  *Gardening Matters*
Pilot Knob Elementary Garden
Principal Benson’s Checklist: Top 5 Things to Think About

- Will you have teacher buy-in and support, and how will you create it?
- How will you keep deer and rabbits out?
- Where will you keep the tools?
- What will you do in the summer (watering, harvesting, etc.)?
- How can you sustain and replace materials (seeds, garden tools, etc.)?
Principal Benson’s Top 5
“I wish I would have thought about”

- Where will we keep the tools
- Our short growing season
- How to start plants with grow lights
- How to keep bug pests away
- How to get teachers to take active roles in the garden
Principal Ingemann’s Checklist: Top 5 Things to Think About

- Connection to curriculum and student learning
- Teacher engagement to maintaining and using the garden
- School engagement as a whole to see the value and purpose of the garden
- How to coordinate resources to support the garden
- The time involved to plant, water, weed, and harvest the garden
Principal Ingemann’s “I wish I would have thought about”

What to plant to achieve the desired results for our FACS classroom and not have an over abundance of produce
Why Should Principals Engage?

“Gardens create a real world connection to learning that all students can engage in.”

“Growing a school garden also helps create deeper meaning for students about 7th grade life science that all students are exposed to.”

Brian Ingemann, Principal
Oak Grove Middle School
Principal Thompson’s Checklist: Top 5 Things to Think About

- Level of integration into the mission and curriculum of the school
- The big picture of urban agriculture: equity, social justice, urban environment
- “Perennial” not just “annual”
- Community partnerships are vital
- Stroke your racehorses
Principal Thompson’s
“I wish I would have thought about”

- Beyond volunteerism earlier
- More upfront integration
- Keep community central to planning
- Adaptive solutions (not just technical planning)
Why Should Principals Engage?

“For urban schools working with disadvantaged kids, this is a big equity and access issue (food, lack of urban green space, etc.).”

“Food and food systems and environmental systems are central to an understanding of our place on Earth as well as to our economic literacy.”

Micheal Thompson, Principal
Gordon Parks High School
“We learn from our gardens to deal with the most urgent question of the time: How much is enough?”

“Our model citizen is a sophisticate who before puberty understands how to produce a baby, but who at the age of thirty will not know how to produce a potato.”

Wendell Berry